

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Discernment

Which Spirit Is Behind Your Actions?

Bill Brinkworth

“But he [Jesus] turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” Luke 9:55

Luke 9:55 should make us aware that there are different spirits in this world, and they are not all of God. In this account, Jesus spoke to James and John. Although they thought they were being protective of Jesus, He told them that the spirit in them that was doing the talking and thinking was not of God.

Christ similarly discerned that at another time, Peter was letting the wrong spirit direct his thinking (Matthew 16:23). A little knowledge of the different, unseen spirits described in the Bible can help us know if what we are dealing with is of God or another force.

There are three sources of “spirits” in this world. The most addressed spirit in the Bible is man’s nature and character. Hundreds of times this spirit was mentioned, as was the spirit of Jacob (Gen. 45:27), Elijah (II Kings. 2:15), and other people of the Bible.

Secondly, there is a spirit clearly of God. Sometimes it is referred to as “Spirit,” with capital letters because it is a

proper noun. It is God. Other names for His spirit include the Spirit of God, Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of the Lord. This spirit from God can also work in a person's life. This spirit can be recognized when a person is giving godly wisdom (Deut. 34:9). This spirit may include: a contrite spirit (Ps. 34:18), a broken spirit (Ps. 51:17), an excellent spirit (Dan. 5:2), a spirit of grace (Zech. 12:10), a faithful spirit (II Cor. 4:13) and a spirit of meekness (I Cor. 4:21).

There are also dangerous, demonic spirits of which we need to be wary and cautious. This is why Ephesians 6:23 warns of an unseen, invisible battle that is part of our everyday lives: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*

Some of the forces that are certainly not of God and are of satanic origin include spirits of:

- Confusion (I Cor. 14:33)
- Destructiveness (Mark 9:20, 26)
- Disobedience (Ephesians 2:2)
- Evil (Judges 9:23)
- Familiar spirit (what wizards and witches speak to)
- Foulness (Mark 9:25)
- Jealousy (Numb. 5:14)
- Judgment
- Lying
- Not talking (Mark 9:17)
- Perverseness

- Troubled or vexed spirit (Ec. 4:4)
- Uncleanliness (Mark 1:23)
- Whoredoms (Hos. 5:4)

Being aware of these different spirits can help one discern the source of good or evil in everyday life. This knowledge can help one know if the situation they are facing is of God, their flesh, or from a force that is against God. Proper decision-making based on considering where the influence is coming from can help one make fewer mistakes.

“Discern: To see or understand the difference; to make distinction; as to discern between good and evil, truth and falsehood.” — Noah Webster, 1828

Discerning Deceptions

Bill Brinkworth

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I John 2:4

The deceptions of men were a problem that deeply troubled John the Apostle as he discussed them in I John 2. He knew that the words that came out of some men's mouths were not actually what they believed. By experience and the Holy Spirit's illumination, he learned that their deeds and actions often reflected a person's real heart.

John discerned that a person that claimed to be a believer but did not keep God's commandments was a liar (I John

2:4). God's truth was not in him when he claimed to be a child of God but did not do the things that God had commanded him to do.

Going through life as a Christian, our ears, eyes, and discernment are often on others that claim the same faith. We are confused when we hear their profession of faith, yet see that they are not living the life they are supposed to live. Although we scratch our heads at one that says one thing but lives another, the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle's writing, says "... *the truth is not in them.*" God knows the condition of their salvation. We, and sometimes they, do not know if they are saved.

Another deception is when one claims to be a child of God but hates other saved people. God says one that does not love other born-again people "... *is in darkness even until now*" (I John 2:9). If one is saved, he will love the other members of the family of God. Real love puts up with a lot, is kind, does not envy, does not boast, and is not prideful. It also does not cause one to act improperly, does not get mad quickly, does not think the worst about another, is not happy when a person does wrong, believes people, has hope for them, and never ceases (I Cor.13:4-8). Getting bitter, holding a grudge, and wishing bad things on others is not love — no matter what one claims!

Those that love this world, more than anything, are also fooling themselves: "... *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (I John 2:15) — no matter what they say!

Another deception is one that says Jesus is not the one God promised would come (I John 2: 22). Some of the most popular religions, when examined, are deceptive in this area. Some even claim to be Christian but claim Jesus was just a good man, a prophet, or an excellent example, but not God's only Son. No matter the cult's popularity and numbers of members, as far a God is concerned (and no other opinion matters), they are liars (I John 2:22).

There is much deception in this world. Sometimes people even deceive themselves. However, adhering to what God says in His Word and using it as a guideline make it easier to see what is of God and what is not. If actions and words line up with the Word of God, then it is of God. Anything opposing it is not of Him. God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33).

“Actions speak louder than words.”

Direction

750 Engaging Illustrations, Larson

When Andy Griffith, star of the classic television program that bore his name, entered his fifties, he found it increasingly difficult to find work in Hollywood. His personal finances became tighter and tighter. He wrote in *Guideposts* that he and his wife, Cindi, decided things would be easier if they moved from Los Angeles back to Andy's home state of North Carolina. They put their home up for sale and waited for a buyer. Unfortunately, the real estate market was down, and no one gave them a decent

offer for their home. Months passed, and Andy grew depressed.

Then one day, the Lord gave Cindi an insight. “Maybe it’s a good thing we couldn’t sell the house,” she said.

“Maybe it was God showing us grace. If we moved to North Carolina now, you might never work again. What we need to do is stay here and stoke the fire.”

And stoke the fire they did. Day after day, they went together to the office of the talent agency that represented Andy. They sat in the lobby, chatted with agents, and went with them to lunch. Eventually, the work started to come in: four TV movies that year, including the pilot for *Matlock*, a show that ran for nine years.

Sometimes a closed door is a signpost from God. He has a better way for us to go.

**“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:
and he delighteth in his way.”** Psalms 37:23