

Being a Spiritually Minded Christian
Part Sixteen
Discerning the Voice of God

John 10:27 (NKJV)

²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

- *The Bible has great news for us. As followers of Jesus we can all hear His voice personally!*
- *Along with the joy and privilege of hearing God's voice comes the responsibility to develop the discipline of discerning His voice. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1).*
- *God can speak to us in many different ways. He can speak through visions or dreams or prophecies either directly or through other Christians. He can speak to us through circumstances. He can speak to us through that still quiet voice in our heart. Some have even heard an audible voice. "For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds, Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction." (Job 33:14–16).*
- *Even though God can speak to us in a number of different ways, the primary and most important way that God speaks to us is through His Word. His Word provides the framework by which everything else is to be judged and weighed. "Your word is truth." (John 17:17b).*
- *In fact it is through His Word that we evaluate our lives and receive correction. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17).*
- *The Bible exhorts us as followers of Jesus, not to stray from the Word of God but to "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2).*
- *The Bible is to be both our spiritual compass and blueprint to keep us Christ centered and to enable us to develop and maintain healthy and sound doctrine.*
- *The Bible even tells us that the time will come when some believers will not hold faithfully to the Word of God but will develop unbiblical and unhealthy doctrine to suit their own lifestyle and whims. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4).*

- *Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that his spiritual foundation had been established in the Word of God and that he must be careful to maintain and continue in the truths that the Holy Scriptures teach. “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).*
- *Apostle Paul continued by reinforcing the importance of Scripture and that the Scriptures alone are to be our source of doctrine and are able to equip us to do and accomplish all that God has intended for our lives. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*
- *The Bible’s importance to Christians cannot be overstated, not only to develop healthy doctrine but to be a measuring rod to judge and discern all other revelations and voices that we may encounter.*
- *As believers, once we leave the Word of God, the Bible, as our foundation of truth we are moving onto dangerous ground that can lead to error and confusion resulting in us becoming morally bankrupt and spiritually shipwrecked.*
- *While most believers would adamantly declare that the Scriptures are the source of doctrine and truth for their lives, we can subtly stray from that reality.*
- *“Liberal” churches deny the Scriptures based on the social sciences (the study of man). This is purely a humanistic approach to doctrine whose criteria is based on what makes people “happy” and “feel good.” This approach to doctrine disregards what God’s Word says regarding truth and morality. They determine truth by what seems “reasonable” and “fair” from man’s point of view which reflects both a selfish and worldly perspective. Truth becomes subjective.*
- *While evangelical non-charismatic churches would declare “sola scriptura” which is Latin for “by Scripture alone” referring to the theological position that the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice, they deny Scripture based on their interpretation of history. Since some or all of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues, miracles and supernatural healings, were not experienced or practiced by the founders and leaders of their movements, they conclude that these things must have ceased after the time of the apostles.*
- *Charismatic churches can end up denying Scripture based on experiences (supernatural or otherwise). Not only can we fall into error by developing doctrine around our interpretation of supernatural experiences but we can use supernatural experiences to justify our doctrine even when those doctrines are not founded on biblical truths. This can result in a theology that is very much influenced by feelings*

where doctrine and perceived spiritual truths become much more subjective than one may realize or want to admit.

- *One way we can wrongly use supernatural or miraculous experiences to validate or justify non-biblical doctrine is when we experience something supernatural we deem it as God's stamp of approval on both our lifestyle and all our doctrine. However, the test for doctrine must always be the Bible and not supernatural experiences.*
- *There are a number of examples in the Bible where people experienced the supernatural but ended up walking in error such as Balaam, who even though he conversed with God, he ended up being deceived by covetousness. (Numbers 22, 23,24).*
- *It is recorded in Galatians that Apostle Peter, for a short time, fell into error of doctrine. Although he was an apostle and was used in the supernatural, he strayed from the teachings of Jesus and the clear truths of the Word of God because of the fear of men and he began to try to keep the Law. "Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision." (Galatians 2:11-12).*
- *Even worse was that because Peter was an apostle, many other believers including church leaders, followed his example instead of following the healthy doctrine that Christ had taught them. "And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy." (Galatians 2:13).*
- *However, Apostle Paul's doctrine rested solidly on the Word of God and he was not swayed by Peter's position. Instead Paul publicly corrected Peter so the church would not stray from the truth of God's Word. "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ." (Galatians 2:14, 16a).*
- *If Paul had not corrected Peter and if Peter had not humbly and graciously received that correction there is no telling the damage that would have resulted in Peter's life personally and in the church. But Peter received Paul's correction and for the rest of his life was thankful to Paul and recognized the wonderful wisdom and insights that God had given to Paul to maintain healthy and correct doctrine, "as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you." (2 Peter 3:15).*
- *One conclusion we can draw from the error of various Christian movements is that we can easily be led away from the clear teachings of the Bible without even being aware of it unless we submit to the authority of Scripture.*

- *When skeptics note the wide sweeping differences in theology among various Christian movements, they wrongly conclude that the Bible is both ambiguous and subject to private interpretation. However, the Bible clearly teaches us, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21).*
- *We can be confident that the Bible provides us with objective absolute truth which we can know, understand, and build our lives on. However, we must be careful to study the Bible and allow God to speak to us through His Word even when it goes contrary to what we would want to hear.*
- *There are a few things we can be certain about as we study and meditate on the Word of God.*
- *There are many passages that we can confidently say that we understand clearly and which form the foundation of the Gospel message and are universal to all true Christians.*
- *There are also certain passages that we can confidently say that we do not understand and which we need to wait on the Lord until He makes them clear to us.*
- *There are also certain passages that we can confidently say we have an idea of what they mean but our understanding may be incomplete or partially inaccurate and we need to be open to receiving greater clarity, revelation, and correction.*
- *There are also certain passages that we can confidently say that can have more than one application or perspective that does not negate the other interpretations but actually complements them.*
- *We can also confidently say that if two biblical passages appear to contradict one another it means that we do not correctly understand one or both passages.*
- *For us to be able to learn to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit we must have doctrine that is healthy and clearly founded on the Bible.*
- *Apostle Paul took very seriously his responsibility of how he studied and taught the Word of God. “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully” (2 Corinthians 4:2a NKJV) or as the ESV translated this passage “But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word.”*
- *One of the ways we can be guilty of “tampering” with the Word of God is by developing doctrine using a method called “proof texting.”*

- *“Proof texting is the practice of using isolated, out-of-context quotations from a document to establish a proposition in eisegesis. Such quotes may not accurately reflect the original intent of the author, and a document quoted in such a manner, when read as a whole, may not support the proposition for which it was cited. The term has currency primarily in theological and exegetical circles.”*
- *Eisegesis is where someone interprets Scripture to support their own predetermined position. Many times only one or two verses are used to support their position while other verses that are not supportive or even contrary to their position are simply ignored.*
- *Eisegesis can result in sloppy theology at best or error and heresy at worst.*
- *Exegesis on the other hand is where we turn to the Scriptures and allow it to speak to us. The context of the verses and in fact the entire fabric of the Bible instructs us in the proper way to understand and interpret scriptures.*
- *When Apostle Paul taught the Scriptures to the churches he was careful to provide God’s Word in its entirety providing balanced and accurate doctrine. “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27).*
- *Sometimes Christians can be guilty of taking a few verses and developing obscure doctrines that are neither faithful to the Bible nor edifying to the believers. Instead, they become a distraction and cause us to stray from the straightforward truth of the centrality of Christ.*
- *When I listen to new teachings and revelations, the first question I ask is, “Where is Jesus in all of this?” Every revelation or teaching must in some way point us to Jesus.*
- *The entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation is about revealing Jesus Christ. Even the central theme of the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, is not only about the end times, but about revealing Jesus Christ in the course of the end times. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants-things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.” (Revelation 1:1).*
- *An important way to know if we understand a passage or biblical principle correctly is to ask ourselves the question, “Can I hear Jesus saying those words?”*
- *The Jewish religious leaders completely misunderstood the Word of God and more importantly the heart of God, and interpreted the Scriptures to justify their manmade traditions. In the process they developed a theology that was both powerless and burdensome, “making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.” (Mark 7:13).*

- *In Jesus' time, the Jewish religious leader's view of God was one of a harsh God who was only interested in outward actions. They didn't understand that God was interested in the hearts of men and women and wanted to redeem them from their sins so He could have a relationship with them. Thus they distorted the Word of God and developed a hypocritical theology that reflected a distant uncaring God. "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matthew 23:4).*
- *However, when we hear Jesus' words we hear something totally different. We understand the true heart of God and His desire for us. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30).*
- *Sometimes Jesus spoke strongly against sin not because He was motivated by anger or by a strong desire to inflict punishment, but because He was moved with compassion and He knew that sin crushes and destroys those who are bound by it. "Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:34-36).*
- *The early church only had what we now call the Old Testament. The apostles and other church leaders were able to construct a complete and accurate doctrine so they could fully understand all about Jesus Christ and about the salvation He purchased for us through His sacrificial death and resurrection.*
- *The entire theology of the New Testament is constructed from the revelations that are contained in the Old Testament. If one carefully studies everything from the four Gospels, Acts, all the epistles right through to the book of Revelation, one will discover they are filled with Old Testament references and quotations.*
- *"The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed."*
- *The entire Old Testament was constructed to reveal Jesus. "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."'" (John 1:45).*
- *Jesus Himself explained that the true purpose of the Law and the Prophets was to reveal Himself. "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me." (John 5:46) and "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27).*
- *Sometimes Christians can become confused about why God gave us the Law, thinking we are required to try to keep the Law and all the traditions and feasts. Clearly the*

purpose of the Law was to point to Jesus as the One who would fulfill the Law for us. “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.” (Romans 3:21-22).

- *All the Old Testament prophets knew it wasn't about the Law but the One, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of Mankind, who would come and redeem us through His own blood. “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.” (1 Peter 1:10-11).*
- *The purpose of the Law was not to lead us to the Law but to be a tutor to reveal our need for salvation and to lead us to the One who would save us. “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” (Galatians 3:24-25).*
- *God revealed even to the patriarchs, who were before the giving of the Law, the revelation of Jesus Christ. They looked forward with joyous expectation to His coming, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56).*
- *Now that we have touched on the importance of having healthy and accurate doctrine based on the Bible we can now look at how to correctly discern what is truly from God. The reason I spent so much time on having healthy biblical doctrine is because without it we will be unable to properly discern the voices and revelations which we hear.*
- *One essential component for us to properly evaluate and discern both prophecies and revelations is to allow for some degree of doubt.*
- *“A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibodies in it.” Timothy Keller*
- *For us to understand the importance of healthy doubt and how it is to function, we need to differentiate between unbelief and doubt and to be able to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy doubt.*
- *First of all unbelief is destructive because it is an antithesis to faith and is actually an unwillingness and a refusal to believe or trust God. Unbelief hinders God from working in our lives. “So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” (Matthew 13:57-58).*

- *In contrast to unbelief, doubt can take on two forms. One is an unhealthy form that causes us to be double minded and leads to uncertainty and fear. The other type of doubt actually helps to strengthen and refine our faith.*
- *One of the Greek words that is translated as “doubt” in English is διστάζω (distazō) which means “to waiver” and it comes from the Greek word meaning “twice” showing uncertainty and instability. It is always used in a negative sense. Peter, at Jesus’ command, stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water. However, he was overcome by fear when he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the stormy waves. As Peter immediately began to sink “Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”” (Matthew 14:31).*
- *Peter’s doubts reflected the uncertainty he felt concerning trusting Jesus’ words when He had him step out of the boat. In other words, Peter’s doubts were rooted in his questioning the goodness and faithfulness of God. These types of doubts are unhealthy doubts and they always lead to fear and instability.*
- *Another Greek word that is sometimes translated as “doubt” is διακρίνω (diakrinō) and it can mean, “to waver, doubt” but its primary meaning is, “to make a judgment on the basis of careful and detailed information—“to judge carefully, to evaluate carefully.” This word can mean to bring a separation in order to separate that which is true from that which is false.*
- *The Greek word διακρίνω (diakrinō) can be used in a negative sense in terms of wavering and uncertainty. “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6).*
- *However, a number of times in Scripture the word διακρίνω (diakrinō) is used in a positive sense to question, judge and discern in order to prove if something it is true, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.” (1 Corinthians 14:29).*
- *The Bible encourages and even exhorts us as believers to put into use discernment and to have healthy doubts. In fact the Bible calls those who believe everything that is said unreservedly as naïve and even foolish. “The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.” (Proverbs 14:15) But those who are not quick to believe everything that is said are referred to as wise, “The wise of heart is called discerning.” (Proverbs 16:21a).*
- *Therefore we can appreciate Timothy Keller’s quote more fully. “A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibodies in it.” If we do not have some degree of doubt we will be defenseless against revelations and doctrines when they are presented as originating from the Holy Spirit when in fact they are not from the Holy Spirit.*
- *When Paul went to Berea to preach the Gospel they didn’t simply accept whatever Paul said, but they searched the Scriptures to make sure what he was saying was true and*

for this they were highly commended. “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11).

- *A biblical example of healthy doubt is Gideon. When God spoke to Gideon about delivering Israel from their enemies Gideon asked for a sign. “So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” (Judges 6:36-37).*
- *After God had given Gideon the first sign, he then humbly asked for a second one. “Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.”” (Judges 6:39).*
- *After God had whittled the number of men that were to go with Gideon to 300 hundred, who were both unskilled in warfare and unarmed, He offered to give Gideon a third sign. “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.” (Judges 7:10–11a).*
- *The reason that God was not displeased with Gideon’s request was because of the motivation behind it. Gideon wasn’t questioning whether God was able to deliver Israel but he wanted to be certain that he was actually hearing from God. Even the sign that Gideon asked for indicated he wasn’t seeking God to prove His power, but just to confirm he was actually hearing from God. Gideon asked for two signs and God even gave him three. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” (2 Corinthians 13:1).*
- *It is not wrong to ask God questions. It is our attitude that determines whether the questions are motivated by a desire to obey or rebel. We can ask God a question with an open hand desiring to receive understanding or a closed fist reflecting unbelief and defiance. A question asked with an open hand can reflect healthy doubt that seeks clarity and confirmation so one can walk in faith.*

1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 (NKJV)

¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit.

²⁰Do not despise prophecies.

²¹Test all things; hold fast what is good.

²²Abstain from every form of evil.

- *When the Bible exhorts us, “Do not quench the Spirit” it means we are not to do anything which would stifle or suppress the moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

- *The Bible instructs us to be filled with the Holy Spirit daily (Ephesians 5:18) and not to allow anything in our lives that grieves Him. (Ephesians 4:30).*
- *When we walk in sin we grieve the Holy Spirit.*
- *When we walk in unbelief we quench the Holy Spirit.*
- *The next exhortation after “Do not quench the Spirit” is “Do not despise prophecies.” One of the ways we quench the Holy Spirit is when we despise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and especially the revelatory gifts such as prophecy. The word despise means, “to count something as contemptible, of no value, ridicule, deride.”*
- *One of the ways Christians despise prophecies is by ridiculing those who operate in those gifts. An interesting observation about those Christians who ridicule or don't believe that the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today is that they rarely if ever experience the supernatural move of the Holy Spirit. The reason that they don't experience miracles is because they have quenched the Holy Spirit. Unbelief quenches the Holy Spirit.*
- *The third exhortation after, “Do not quench the Spirit” and “Do not despise prophecies” is “Test all things.” Another way that Christians can end up despising prophecies is when we fail to actually test and discern them to determine which ones are correct and genuine. If we fail to test prophetic words after a while many people stop taking them seriously because the genuine become so intermingled with the ones that are not correct.*
- *While one extreme is to dismiss all prophecy as nonsense, the other extreme is to accept every prophetic word and experience as genuine without testing its authenticity.*
- *“Do not despise prophecies” – Don't be skeptical.*
- *“Test all things” – Don't be gullible.*
- *It is gullible Christians who make skeptical Christians feel justified.*
- *The next exhortation is “hold fast what is good” in other words once we have proven out which words and revelations are truly from the Lord we need to act upon what He has spoken or shown us and not just be a hearer of the Word but a doer.*
- *Paul is saying here that true prophecies are not only valid, but valuable and something that should be believed and acted upon.*
- *The last point of exhortation that Paul gives here is “Abstain from every form of evil.” There is always a purpose when God speaks or the Holy Spirit moves in our lives*

and that purpose is always redemptive. A genuine move of the Holy Spirit or a true prophetic revelation should produce holiness and freedom from sin in our lives.

- *As Christians who believe in and have experienced the supernatural, we can be open to receiving prophetic words or testimonies of others' experiences without reserve. However, we need to learn to be discerning and "Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines." (Hebrews 13:9).*
- *Although the Bible encourages us to be open to and even seek after a great move of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). The Bible also warns us, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." (Colossians 2:18 NASB95).*
- *If we are chasing after the supernatural we can actually become "fleshly or carnally minded" and develop a lust and even unhealthy obsession for supernatural experiences. Our primary motivation should be to draw closer to Christ and the miraculous and the supernatural will be a natural outcome.*
- *The Bible clearly teaches us that as New Testament believers "we know in part and we prophesy in part." (1 Corinthians 13:9).*
- *Many times when a prophetic word is given it is only "in part" and does not represent the whole picture. Therefore we must be careful not to fall into the temptation of adding details that God has not given us—in other words no "hamburger helper."*
- *Another reason that the Bible says, "Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said" simply stated means, "we can be wrong." (1 Corinthians 14:29 NLT).*
- *If we are afraid to be wrong we will never step out in the prophetic.*
- *If we believe we are always right, we will not be correctable and we will fall into error.*
- *If we think because sometimes we hear from God clearly we always hear from God clearly, we will fall into the trap of pride and lose the protection that accountability and correction provides.*
- *It is not sin to be wrong, but it is sin not to be willing to admit when we are wrong.*
- *In fact the best way to grow and mature in the prophetic so we can hear God more clearly is to seek to have our prophetic words evaluated by others.*

- *Christians who fail to evaluate prophetic utterance for authenticity and purity are in danger of straying into error.*

Prophetic utterances can originate from three sources:

- *1. They can come from the Holy Spirit and be a true word from God.*
- *2. They can come from our own desires and emotions and are really a reflection of our own thoughts.*
- *3. They can come from the enemy. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light with the purpose of deception. (2 Corinthians 11:14).*
- *How do we test prophetic utterances?*

2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

- *1. The first and foremost criteria is “Does it agree with Scripture?”*
- *The Bible is our only source of doctrine and doctrine is never established by personal prophetic revelation.*
- *Because the Bible is God’s Word and His revelation, then perhaps prophetic experiences may more accurately be described as “illumination” instead of “revelation.” They aren’t meant to reveal new truths, but illuminate truths already found in the Bible.*
- *2. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” Seek confirmation of prophetic utterances. (2 Corinthians 13:1).*
- *Never make decisions, especially important ones, solely based on a prophecy. Seek confirmation from the Lord through numerous sources.*
- *3. A truism is that genuine predictive prophecy is fulfilled.*
- *Some prophecies are conditional upon our obedience, but we need to be careful not to hide behind the prophecy being “conditional” to justify ourselves if it didn’t come to pass.*

- *However, just because a prophecy does come to pass does not mean it is necessarily from the Lord. In other words, just because something supernatural happens does not mean it is from God. (Deuteronomy 13:1–3).*
- *4. One should never act on a prophecy, no matter who gives it, without an inner witness of peace. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” (Colossians 3:15).*
- *5. Genuine prophetic revelation always has a purpose and the ultimate purpose is to reveal and glorify Jesus Christ. “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10).*
- *In Questions of Life, Nicky Gumbel lists five criteria:*
 - *Commanding Scripture*
 - *Compelling Spirit*
 - *Common Sense*
 - *Counsel of Saints*
 - *Circumstantial Signs.*

2 Corinthians 11:3 (NKJV)

³But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

- *“the simplicity that is in Christ” The Greek word for “simplicity” means “the quality of sincerity as an expression of singleness of purpose or motivation.” We must never lose sight of the centrality of Jesus Christ either in our doctrine or our lives.*
- *This Scripture beautifully summarizes God’s will for healthy and biblical doctrine and stability for His entire Body, His church - “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ” (Ephesians 4:13-15).*

