

Introduction

Isaiah says that the Lord gave him the tongue of a disciple, so that he knew how to sustain the weary one with a word. He goes on to say that the Lord awakens him every morning to listen as a disciple. Isaiah learned to be a good communicator. He knew how to use his tongue wisely, and he knew how to be a good listener.

(Isaiah 50:4) "The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple."

We have seen that learning to listen to God is an acquired skill. Prophets like Samuel and Jeremiah all learned and honed their skills to listen. It is part of becoming a disciple. We have been looking at the various ways that God speaks to us. In the Scriptures God spoke to men audibly. He spoke to men through angels. He spoke to men through dreams. He spoke to man through visions. He spoke through thoughts and impressions. One of the primary ways that He has spoken to us is through the Word of God.

1. The Need For Testing

In Mark and Patti Virkler's book, *Dialogue With God*, Chapter 7 is entitled, "How Can I Know For Sure It Is God's Voice." That is a great question. He opens that chapter with two illustrations that firmly planted in his mind the conviction of the need for testing. The first illustration was about a man in his church who had the gift of prophecy and was highly respected by the members. This man supposedly had a "revelation" from the Lord that his marriage was not of God since he and his wife were not believers when they got married. Therefore, he was "told by the Lord" that he was to divorce his wife and marry this other woman.

Mark went to the man's house to see if what he had heard was true. The man confirmed the "revelation" and his intentions. Mark wrote, "I shared with him from Scripture that God hated divorce and that his 'leading' violated both the letter and the spirit of the Word. Therefore, I felt he was being deceived. He rejected my words, insisting that he knew the Lord's voice and that was that. As directed in the Bible, I returned to him a few days later with the other two elders, who confirmed my position and shared more Scripture contrary to his 'leading.' He responded by showing us Biblical examples and verses (all out of context) that supported his 'revelation.' We met with him many times during the next two or three months, seeking to draw him out of his deception. However, he grew increasingly arrogant and self-righteous. Finally we had no choice but to bring the issue before the entire body. He presented his 'revelation' to them and they unanimously assured him that he was in error. But he responded, 'I don't care. I am going to do it anyway.' He walked out in his pride, bringing destruction into not only his own life, but also the lives of his wife and children and the young woman who believed his 'revelation' that she was to be his wife in the Lord."

The second illustration that Mark gives is of a word of knowledge that he had received about a man in his church. The 'revelation' that he received was that this certain man was having an affair with his secretary. After checking it out with Charles, another elder in the church who he highly respected, they prayed over that word for a couple of days. Then, Charles got a word that it was a lying spirit trying to deceive Mark and cause destruction in the body. Mark heeded the discernment and wise

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counsel from his fellow elder. After several days that impression that Mark had received went away. Mark blessed God for giving him wise spiritual counselors, which had prevented him from making a costly mistake. Mark acknowledged his own need for testing the things we receive from the Lord. **All of us can miss it at times, and we all need to test the words we receive. We also need to test the words that others give us.**

Our church had a worship leader named Curtis, whose father had pastored a congregation in the East Mountains. Several years earlier, there was a woman in their church who got a “word from the Lord” that she was to divorce her husband and marry this other man. In many ways this was very similar to Mark Virkler’s example. Curtis’ father explained God’s heart for marriage. He shared Scripture with her about marriage and divorce. Her response was that God told her to do this. She disregarded the counsel of the pastor, and the other leaders in the church. The woman divorced her husband, and brought tremendous damage to the congregation. As a follow-up, two months ago this same woman divorced this man that she had said the Lord had told her to marry. (This was her third husband.)

Let’s look at some Scriptural examples. In the Old Testament, David tuned into the wrong channel. In 1 Chronicles 21, we find that Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. The Hebrew word for moved is *suth*, which means to incite, allure, or instigate. Satan impressed upon David the need to number God’s people. David did not check the source of that thought. He did not look at the motive behind that thought. When Joab questioned David about why he was doing this, David disregarded his question and warning. Joab had a strong check about doing this. It says that the king’s command was abhorrent to Joab. He utterly hated what the king was doing. Yet, David disregarded his strong objections to the word. David was a man after God’s own heart. David was a man who wrote seventy-four of the Psalms. He heard clearly from the Lord. But, the thoughts and impressions he received to number Israel were not of God. It is important for us to test our thoughts, impressions, and words. It is important for us to question the source, motive, and consequences. It is important to listen to the counsel of others.

(1 Chron 21:1-3, 6) “Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. {2} So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, “Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me word that I may know their number.” {3} Joab said, “May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?... {6b} for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.

The consequences of not testing the words that we receive can be very severe. David’s sin caused God to strike Israel. Seventy thousand men of Israel died because of that sin. Marriages, families, churches, businesses, communities, and even nations suffer great damage when we do not test out the revelations and words that we receive.

(1 Chron 21:7-8, 14) “God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel. {8} David said to God, “I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly... {14} So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell.”

In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter tuned into the wrong channel. In Matthew 16, Jesus had just told His disciples that He was going to go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and raised

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up on the third day. “Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’” Jesus is not calling Peter, Satan. But, he is telling Peter two things. First, Peter’s hearing has been clouded by his own interests. Second, Peter’s thoughts have been influenced by Satan. As we look into words, thoughts, impressions, revelations, dreams, visions, and other ways that we receive from God, we must be careful that we are not being deceived by our own desires, and that we are not hearing from a demonic source.

(Matt 16:21-23) “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. {22} Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." {23} But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.”

In 1 Corinthians 14, we are exhorted to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. Prophecy edifies the church, and things that edify the whole body are to be eagerly sought after. At the same time, Paul gave instructions to the church on how the gifts were to be administered. Things were to be done in order, one at a time. Others were to be silent while someone was prophesying, so that all could hear. Paul also instructed the church to judge the prophetic utterances. The fact that prophecies need to be judged infers that we can miss it at times. All of us can miss it, and we need to submit prophetic words to others to judge them.

(1 Cor 14:1-4, 29) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy....{3} But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. {4} One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church....{29} Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.”

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5 that we are not to quench the Spirit or despise prophetic utterances. We should not despise prophetic utterances; instead we should earnestly desire them. But, after telling us not to despise them, Paul instructs us to examine everything carefully, and to hold fast to that which is good. **Prophetic utterances need to be examined carefully.** We can all miss it at times. When someone misses it, we let it go. When it is good and of the Lord, we are to hold fast to it. We are to examine everything carefully. The dreams, visions, thoughts, impressions, and revelations that we receive should all be examined carefully. When we do not examine things carefully, there can be serious consequences. Individual lives, marriages, families, churches, and communities can all be negatively impacted by words that are not examined carefully.

(1 Thess 5:19-21) “Do not quench the Spirit; {20} do not despise prophetic utterances. {21} But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;”

Paul is not the only one that taught us to examine prophetic words. The apostle John taught us not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Why? Because many false prophets have gone into the world. The context of Paul’s instructions were to us within the church. The context of John’s instructions are broader, testing to see if someone is of the faith. If someone does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, they are not of God. It is the spirit

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of an antichrist. The Spirit of God confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh. Within our churches, we should know who is a true believer. However, when others come in, we should test their spirit and also their prophecy.

(1 John 4:1-6) "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. {2} By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; {3} and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. {4} You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. {5} They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. {6} We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

In the Old Testament we have an example of a prophetic word that was not examined carefully, and it cost the prophet his life. It is found in 1 Kings 13. A prophet was sent to King Jeroboam. After giving the word, the Lord told the prophet not to return home the same way he came and not to eat bread or drink water (vs 17). On his way home, an old prophet from Bethel came out to meet him. He invited the prophet to come home with him, but the prophet told him what the Lord had told him. Then, the old prophet said he too was a prophet and that an angel had brought him a word from the Lord that he was to come with him. So, the prophet went with the old prophet and disobeyed the original word that he had received. Consequently, as the prophet was returning home, a lion met him and killed him for his disobedience. The prophet should not have received the word from the old prophet. He should have examined it carefully. Because he did not examine it carefully, he was deceived, and it cost him his life.

(1 Kings 13:1-29) "Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. {2} He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" {3} Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.'" {4} Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him." But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. {5} The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. {6} The king said to the man of God, "Please entreat the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before. {7} Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." {8} But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. {9} "For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.'" {10} So he went another way and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel. {11} Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he

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had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father. {12} Their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. {13} Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it. {14} So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." {15} Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." {16} He said, "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. {17} "For a command came to me by the word of the LORD, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.'" {18} He said to him, "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" But he lied to him. {19} So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water. {20} Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; {21} and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the LORD, and have not observed the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, {22} but have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water"; your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'" {23} It came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. {24} Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body. {25} And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived. {26} Now when the prophet who brought him back from the way heard it, he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him." {27} Then he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled it. {28} He went and found his body thrown on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside the body; the lion had not eaten the body nor torn the donkey. {29} So the prophet took up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey and brought it back, and he came to the city of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him."

I believe that **prophetic words should be recorded**. The Lord told the prophet Habakkuk to record the vision. If we are going to examine carefully the words that are given, it helps to have the words, dreams, or visions in front of us. I am a visual person so I like to see the words written out. Others are more auditory, and they like to listen to words again. One real benefit of recording our words is we can periodically go back and review the words to see if they have been fulfilled. Reviewing prophetic words reminds us of them, and gives us an opportunity to pray about them. Recording visions and prophetic words also makes it easier to accurately share them with others so that they can also review them.

(Hab 2:2-3) "Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. {3} "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay."

2. Testing What We Hear

We have seen the need to examine carefully and test our thoughts, impressions, dreams, revelations, and prophecies. The question is, how do we do it? There are a number of ways that we should test words. Sometimes, we can use one method to discern if something is of the Lord. At other times, we may need to use a combination of ways to discern a word.

A. Test by the Word of God

We find in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is inspired by God, or “God-breathed.” The word of God is good for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. The word of God has been given to us for reproof and correction. **The Word of God should be our first test.**

(2 Tim 3:16-17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

When we hear a prophetic word (or any other word), we should run it through the filter of God’s word. When a woman or man has this voice telling them to abort their baby and end their unwanted pregnancy, they should look to see what Scripture says about that matter. God is very concerned for the unborn. He forms them in the womb. He knows the number of days allotted to them before there is yet one. We must search the Scriptures and then submit to the Scriptures.

A number of years ago a woman gave a prophetic word at our church. Afterwards, I went to the lady and explained that the word she gave was not from the Lord. I did it gently, privately, and in a way that she could learn from it. I shared that she had prophetic gifting, but that it needed to be developed. What had the woman shared? She shared that we should not be telling other people about Jesus or our church. She said that the church needed to focus on individual relationships within the church. While what the woman shared about developing good relationships within a church is very important, it is not exclusive to other commands in Scripture. We are to preach the gospel, and to make disciples. As we preach and make disciples, we must be in relationship. If we tell someone not to preach the gospel to others, we are violating Jesus’ commands to us to preach.

I also shared with the woman that prophetic words need to be judged. I had spared her any public embarrassment with a public correction. I had sensed that our body was not going to be misled by what she had publicly shared. In later services, I would share and reinforce Jesus’ commands to share the gospel with people and invite them to church. I shared with the woman that a better way for her to proceed would be to run her “prophetic words” through Karen, or one of the other leaders. If they felt it was a word from the Lord, they would affirm her. The lady was offended by the gentle correction, and withdrew from our church.

One problem with testing prophecy by the Word of God is our lack of knowledge of the Scriptures. Our culture, including the church, is ignorant about what the Bible says. Studies by George Barna and others show that the church does not have a Biblical worldview. This can be overcome by developing a good reading program. There are many different daily reading programs that help people to read through the Bible in a year. This problem can also be overcome by learning to study, and by using good Bible tools. One of the best Bible tools is the Strong’s Concordance. Any word in the

Bible can be looked up, and it will give you the Hebrew or Greek word, the definition, and every place that the word is used in the Scriptures.

2. Test by the Wisdom of God

In James 3:13-18, we find two sources of wisdom: the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. James gives us some characteristics of worldly wisdom. He also gives us seven characteristics of the wisdom of God.

James says if there is bitter jealousy or selfish ambition, it is not from God. James describes it as being earthly, natural, and demonic. When we hear a word, what is the motivation behind that word? Where does that word take us? What will be the end result? The wisdom of the world will bring disorder and every evil thing.

(James 3:13-16) “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. {14} But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. {15} This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. {16} For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”

James also tells us that **God’s wisdom results in good behavior**. We are told, “you will know them by their fruit.” This is very true. Good doctrine results in good behavior. God’s wisdom brings forth good fruit. James also says that it is done in the gentleness of wisdom.

(James 3:13) “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.”

Next, **James gives us seven characteristics of God’s wisdom**. First, he says that it is pure. Second, it is peaceable. Third, it is gentle. Fourth, it is reasonable. Fifth, it is full of mercy and good fruits. Sixth, it is unwavering. Seventh, it is without hypocrisy. When we hear something, we must ask ourselves questions based on these characteristics. Is this pure? Is it peaceable? Does it promote peace? Will it yield, produce, or make peace? Does it bring together people or divide people? Is this gentle? Is this reasonable? God’s ways are reasonable. Is it full of mercy, or does it bring condemnation and judgment? These are the kinds of questions we must ask to discern if something is from God.

(James 3:17-18) “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. {18} And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

In Proverbs, Solomon gave us God’s wisdom to keep us away from evil men, and to help us walk with wise and godly people. In Proverbs 1, he tells us not to go with sinners when they entice us. When they want us to go with them and fill our houses with spoil, we are not to walk in the way with them. We are to keep our feet from their path. How do we know who to stay away from? We know by their methods and their outcome. Notice the methods. We will “lie in wait for blood.” We will “ambush the innocent without cause.” We will “swallow them alive like Sheol.” These methodologies do not line up with Scripture. They are not pure. They are not peaceful. They do not

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yield righteousness. Instead, they are evil and hurt others. Solomon said their feet run to evil and they hasten to shed blood. We must be careful not to align ourselves with those running towards evil. It is important to look at the methods that are going to be used.

(Pr 1:10-16) “My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. {11} If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause; {12} Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, Even whole, as those who go down to the pit; {13} We will find all kinds of precious wealth, We will fill our houses with spoil; {14} Throw in your lot with us, We shall all have one purse," {15} My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, {16} For their feet run to evil And they hasten to shed blood.”

In Psalm 1, we are blessed if we do not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers. That is what Solomon warned us against. We should look at the counsel and the paths that people are on. If they are evil paths, we should stay clear of them.

(Ps 1:1) “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!”

A number of years ago, a company had some plans to develop a business in another city. There were a number of Christians involved in the company. I did not have a problem with the product. I had a problem with their methods. They were willing to do some things that were questionable at best. When I spot unethical things, I try to shy away from any involvement with them. Their methods did not reflect the purity that James mentioned.

I also saw the company focusing on developing future plans when they had not accomplished their first plans. They were trying to grow a company quickly. They were developing plans for a second plant, when the first one had not been built. I had lots of red flags warning me against being involved in the company.

3. Test by Those in Authority

A few years ago a young man asked me for one of my daughter's hand in marriage. He told me that the Lord told him that he was to marry her, move to North Dakota, and he would be hired as a pastor up there. I told him no. First, the plan was not reasonable. He had no education. He had no training. He had no experience. He had no job skills. He had no way of providing for himself, much less my daughter. There was nothing reasonable about what he said. His parents agreed with me. They were not in agreement with what their son said he had heard. The young man was not in agreement with what I shared with him. He said he had to obey God, not me or his parents. I was not willing to give my daughter's hand to him. I gave him a reasonable plan. He should go to school. He should begin getting theological training. We would help him learn to preach and pastor. We would give him opportunities to gain knowledge and experience. The young man withdrew from church, having rejected the counsel he had received.

I was the Senior Pastor of the young man's church. I was also the authority over my daughter. This young man rejected the test of authority. God's word teaches us to submit and to obey those in authority. **God places people in authority over us to protect us.** Authorities are ministers of God for our good. There are some bad authority figures, but the principle of authority has been given for

our good. Leaders in a church must give account for those that God places under their authority. It is a serious matter. They are charged by God to do what is in the best interest for the person, and they will have to give account.

(Rom 13:1-6) “Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. {2} Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. {3} For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; {4} for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. {5} Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. {6} For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.”

(Heb 13:17a) “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account....”

4. Test the Spirit of the Prophetic Word

On March 21, 2011, Terry Jones and some supporters held a mock trial of the Koran and set a copy on fire as a "punishment" for “crimes against humanity.” On April 28, 2012, Jones burned a copy of the Koran, protesting the imprisonment of an Iranian-American Pastor, Saeed Abedini in Iran. An arrest defeated Jones' effort to hold a Koran-burning protest on September 11, 2013, but Jones and Sapp held a protest on September 11, 2014, in which the ISIS flag and hundreds of Korans were burned. Terry Jones defended his actions by the Word of God. Mr. Jones is correct that in the Scriptures, the church at Ephesus burned books of magic and witchcraft. However, the context was not the same. In Ephesus, those who had received Christ into their lives, repented of their former lifestyles. They repented of the occult and practicing witchcraft. In repentance, they brought their own books together and burned them. In Mr. Jones' case, this was not an act of repentance, but an act to draw public attention to himself. It was an act to condemn Muslims and the Quran.

(Acts 19:19) “And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

The context of the passage in Acts is repentance. The essence or spirit of the act by Mr. Jones was quite different. He was not repenting of his involvement with Islam and the Quran. It was a public demonstration against Islam and the Quran. His actions did bring him attention, but it also brought strife and unrest. It was not sown in peace and it did not yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness. I believe there was selfish ambition at the root of it. Do I believe that Islam is a false religion? Yes. Do I believe the Quran misleads people? Yes. I believe that Jesus is the Way, the Life, and the Truth. There is no other way. But, I also believe that his actions were not the best way to share the gospel message with the Muslim world.

5. Test by the Prophetic Purpose

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14 that **there are three purposes for prophetic words: edification, exhortation, and consolation**. When we hear a word, we should look to see if the word edifies. Does it edify us? Does it edify others? Does the word exhort us or others in following God? Does the word console or comfort others? If the word does not do one of these three things, it may not be something that we should share with others. This does not mean that it is not from the Lord; it may or may not be from the Lord. I have heard many things from God that were just for me. The Holy Spirit has shared things with me that I needed to be aware of, prepare for, or to pray about. They were not to share with others. But, if a word tears down, rather than builds up someone, there is a chance that this was not from the Lord. He gives us prophetic words to encourage and edify others, not to tear them down.

(1 Cor 14:3) “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

Many years ago a man told me that he was given a prophetic ministry like Jeremiah, to tear down and pluck up. He used this excuse to judge others, and bring correction to them. While God gave Jeremiah a prophetic ministry to the nations, that is not the normal calling for prophets today. The normal ministry of prophets is to edify, exhort, and comfort. Much of what this brother said were judgmental and condemning words. He was not hearing clearly from the Lord. He was immature in the things of the Lord, and needed to be mentored in his prophetic gifting.

(Jer 1:10) “See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

6. Test by our Friends

Solomon said “faithful are the wounds of a friend. I believe it is important to have a few friends that we trust that we can share things with. Our true friends care about us. They don’t want us to come in harms way. **True friends are willing to tell us when they think we have missed it**. It is important to give those kinds of friends the freedom to share the truth in love with us. Our responses and openness to both their affirmation and reproofs are very important.

Our spouse should be one of those friends that help us stay accountable. We should also use other friends who are mature and spiritually discerning. An immature or a less discerning person, even though they are a friend, would not be as reliable to bounce things off of.

(Pr 27:6) “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

I read an article by Dr. James Dobson about praying for the upcoming election. He shared candidly about Donald Trump’s faith and life. He shared the advisors that Trump is surrounding himself with. He also shared that he felt more comfortable with Trump than Clinton. He ended by encouraging us to pray for the upcoming election. I had this thought about including his article in our church bulletin. I sent the article to our Associate Pastor and asked him his counsel. He sent me a lengthy and thoughtful reply, encouraging me not to do that. He said it detracts from what we are trying to do, reach people with the gospel. Pastor Bill Bice gave me wise counsel. He was willing to tell me

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things that could wound me, because he wants what is best for me and for our church. We need people in our lives like that.

A few weeks ago I had this thought in my head that I would sell my new (used, but new to me) truck for \$14,000.00 and give the net profit to our building fund. I shared this with James, who is a friend. He did not say yay or nay to what I shared. But, the point is that I shared what I thought I heard. The thought has left me; it did not linger. It may very well have been a desire of my heart to help raise money for our church building program. In hind sight, I think it was just my mind, not the Lord. We need people in our lives that we can share things with.

7. Test by the Heart

Sometimes we will get a word about something, and we test it by the Word of God, and it checks out just fine. We share it with our authorities, and they are okay with it. Then, we look at the motivations and fruit of it, and it checks out fine. One further test that each of us have is our hearts. John wrote that if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God. We must ask ourselves, how do I feel about this? Do I have peace and confidence in my heart, or do I have a hesitancy and a lack of peace. If our heart condemns us, I would consider that as a warning light, and would hold off acting upon it until I had further confirmation from the Lord.

(1 John 3:19-21) “We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him {20} in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. {21} Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;”

There is a reason that I have put this last. Some people do something if they feel good about it. **Our emotions and feelings can deceive us.** Jeremiah wrote that “the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.” Therefore, we should run things through the Word of God, our authorities, and through others before we just do what we feel is okay.

(Jer 17:9) “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”

Introduction (Isaiah 50:4)**1. The Need For Testing**

- All of us can _____ it at times, and we all need to test the words we receive. We also need to test the words that _____ give us. (1 Chron 21:1-3, 6)
- The consequences of not testing the words that we receive can be very _____ (1 Chron 21:7-8, 14, Matt 16:21-23, 1 Kings 13)
- Prophetic utterances need to be examined _____. (1 Thess 5:19-21, 1 Cor 14:1-4, 29, 1 John 4:1-6)
- Prophetic words should be _____. (Hab 2:2-3)

2. Testing What We Hear**A. Test by the Word of God**

- The Word of God should be our _____ test. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

B. Test by the Wisdom of God (James 3:13-18)

- God's wisdom results in good _____. (James 3:13)
- James gives us seven characteristics of _____ wisdom. (James 3:17-18, Pr 1:10-16, Ps 1:1)

C. Test by Those in Authority

- God places people in authority over us to _____ us. (Rom 13:1-6, Heb 13:17a)

D. Test the Spirit of the Prophetic Word (Acts 19:19)**E. Test by the Prophetic Purpose**

- There are three purposes for prophetic words: _____, exhortation, and consolation. (1 Cor 14:3, Jer 1:10)

F. Test by our Friends

- True friends are willing to tell us when they think we have _____ it. (Pr 27:6)

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