



DOWNLOAD ONLINE NOW

Distributed Online by @Onelgamusic

A GUIDE TO EXAMINIG PROPHEESIES AND MINISTRIES

Copyright 2014 Godwin J. Rufus

Except where otherwise stated, all Scripture quotation are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

All right reserved. No part of this book should be reproduced or transmitted in any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without written perform the publishers.

ISBN: 987 987 524 27 44

Published in the federal Republic of Nigeria, by High Calling Outreach Publication.

High Calling Outreach Publication. 4 Ndashi Street, D/Line,

Port Harcourt, Rivers State,

E-mail: steveeatim@hotmail.com, highcallingoutreach@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.Steveandatimogan.org, www.highcallingoutreach.org

Phone: +234-8023648824

All Trade Orders to Godwin J. Rufus

Facebook: Godwin Rufus

E-mail: livingvine@yahoo.com

Tweeter: @Pastor_gjRufus

Phone:+234-8035145917

+234-8184618347

ENDORSEMENTS

Pastor G J. Rufus is one of those rare individuals that God has raised in these last days, whose gifted spirit and integrity are a welcome breath for fresh air. His experience and revelation combined to provide a phenomenal look into this timely book, consequent upon false doctrines that have been built into ministries, especially in “prayer/ prophetic ministries”.

This book is an eye opener to all those who desire truth concerning the prophetic gift and operation; it captures the essence of all that is inherent in the prophetic gifting. I therefore, recommend this book to every believer who desires to grow in spiritual matters such as operating and examining prophetic gifts.- **Rev. Solomon U. Joseph (Priest)**
Methodist Church, Nigeria.

This piece of work “*A Guide to Examining Prophecies & Ministries*” by Pastor G. J. Rufus is absolutely timely! It will beautifully grace my poor library. Its balanced and scholarly touch is a perfect blend every Christian and yet-to-be Christian needs. - **Pastor. Sylvin .R. Gwet**

This book is not just a guide to prophecy or the prophetic ministry, but a timely aid to your freedom from prophetic abuse. In case you have lost touch with the dignity of the prophetic ministry, Pastor G. J. Rufus in this book will make you appreciate prophecy amidst the gross prophetic confusion in this age. - **Rev. C.M. GODSPOWER**, Senior pastor. *The Embassy of Grace Int'l Church (TEGIC).*

This book is an excellent piece on examining prophecy in its many ways of appearance. The book is rightly enlightening and liberating- creating a repositioning poise in the reader to watch out before taking in just any “spiritual” stuff in the name of “Christianity.”- **HCO Editorial Team.**

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all genuine preachers of the Gospel who are not taking advantage of people's ignorance to merchandise them. But whose ultimate desire in ministry is to see Christ being formed in the people, And to all committed members of Living Vine Gospel Church.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give thanks to God Almighty for loving me so much and for giving me the privilege of serving in His vineyard and being a blessing to others. Without Him, this book wouldn't have been possible. My gratitude also goes to my team of workers for their dedication to the work of God. You are a blessing.

To all members of Living Vine Gospel Church, thank you for loving and believing in my leadership.

To my dear mother who led us in the ways of God from childhood, thanks for your prayerful motherly care. Big thanks go to my friends Rev. Solomon U. Joseph, Pst. Sylvin R Gwet and to Pastor Sanjo Odunayo for contributing immensely to the development of this book. Special thanks to Rev. C. M. God'spower for proof reading this work and for his useful suggestions he made. I will not fail to say a special thank you to Dr. Steve Ogan who took out time from his busy schedules to foreword this book. Sir, you are a mentor indeed.

I have been blessed with so many wonderful people who have made such an impact on my life that trying to name them all will require a lot of space which is not possible here. I thank God for you all- mentors, friends, brothers, sisters and partners. Special thanks to all too numerous to mention here whom God has used to bless my life at various stages. Shalom!

Foreword

A prophecy is a spirit activated time-based proclamation of God's mind for people and based on the word of God. It is time-based but eternity centred.

The centrality of prophecy in the relationship between God and His people is an indication for why this vital communication gift for the edification of the church has been perverted and abused.

In *A Guide To Examining Prophecy And Ministries* Godwin J. Rufus gives us insight into the relevance and indispensability of prophecy. He discusses what prophecy is, its purpose, process and patterns for judging prophecy. He also analyses the misuse of prophecy today, the perversion of prophecy by wolves in sheep's clothing and how we can sharpen our discernment of false prophecy through faith in God's word and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Rufus' *A Guide To Examining Prophecies And Ministries* is a vital resource material in this season of pollution and perversion. It is written as a guide to both ministers and those they lead.

I wholeheartedly recommend it to all and sundry.

Dr. Steve Ogan
Port Harcourt
Nigeria.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Endorsements.....	3
Dedication.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Foreword	6
Table of Contents.....	7
Introduction.....	8
<i>Chapter One</i>	
1. Prophecy	9
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
2. The Purpose of Prophecy	12
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
3. Judging Prophecy	15
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
4. The Misuse of Prophecy Today	21
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
5. Wolves in Sheep's clothing	31
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
6. Sharpen your Discernment	38
<i>Chapter Seven</i>	
7. Faith in God's Word	47
<i>Chapter Eight</i>	
8. The Holy Spirit our Helper	54

INTRODUCTION

Man is created with the instinct to seek and acquire knowledge; there is a natural curiosity in man to want to know things, especially about the future. We all have the innate desire to want to know the future. God has, however, revealed a few facts about the future in plain terms; others are veiled in mystery, while some are detailed in suggested figurative terms. Therefore a diligent student can discover a few more things about the future than a casual student. God left many things unsaid so that man would continue to search and learn, and so we learn from the cradle to death, because learning is one of the most beautiful things to do; *we long to know*.

The Devil knows and takes advantage of this curiosity in man to influence and deceive him by trying to make man satisfy this desire wrongly. He gives what I call *incomplete information* to people which, in turn, distracts and creates fear and confusion in their hearts. This as a matter of fact, is the Devil's end-time move and strategy.

There are people who desire to have a balanced knowledge about spiritual matters such as examining prophecies and ministry and others who have been deceived; and there are those that need to realize the truth about their lives and ministries via prophetic operations. This work will serve as an eye-opener for such individuals. I believe it will also serve as a wake up call to the church of Jesus Christ to reinforce the undiluted soul saving-Word of God.

We are the living prophecies of God, walking toward fulfilment. God our Father who spoke in ancient times through human vessels is still doing the same today to rebuke, instruct, direct, exhort and comfort His own. So ***“man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”*** Note that word(s) is still *proceeding* out of God's mouth. Put your trust in God as you read on and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

CHAPTER 1

PROPHECY

The word *prophecy* in Hebrew language is *neb-oo-aw* which means a *prediction spoken or written*. The Greek word *propheteia* can refer to prophetic activities, prophesying or uttering divinely-inspired words. Prophecy is an inspired utterance or communication which includes: information either about the past, the present or the future.

One of the common misconceptions about prophecy is that it is limited to the prediction about the future. Prophecy involves **Foretelling** and what has been generally termed **Forth-telling**.

Foretelling: To foretell is to predict future events by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This foretelling part of prophecy is what many people think prophecy really is. It is just another way through which the Holy Spirit gives edification, exhortation and comfort to God's children, especially about the future, when necessary. God holds our future and He tells us a little bit of it from time to time through human vessels.

This foretelling prophecy works alongside word of knowledge and the word of wisdom which are revelation gifts and the ability to know about the future or a problem and the solution to it by the inspiration and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Forth-telling: forth-telling is re-echoing the written prophecy, that is, the Bible. It's preaching and teaching the Word and the future events predicted in the Bible. To declare God's Word about a situation, to utter words of edification, comfort, and exhortation from the Bible through the leading of the Holy Spirit. **“But he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort”** (1Cor. 14:3). The inspiration that comes to us while preaching or teaching could be called words of knowledge or of wisdom, which can be uttered while preaching, they are words the preacher didn't plan to say or utter but are given by the Holy Spirit for specific reasons. A sermon can be prepared for the entire congregation while a word of knowledge can come for one or few persons to meet their special needs.

Most of the Biblical prophecies were forth-telling. By this understanding a person must not bear the title Prophet or Prophetess to be able to utter God's Word (mind) to you. A prophetic word can come through a preacher, singer, an intercessor, or any believer led by the Spirit of God. It can even come through your own mouth. Watch it!

Let me make this very clear here. Prophecy does not come by the will of man but by the Holy Ghost, as stated here: ***“Knowing this first, no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”*** (2 Pet.1:20-21.) You can now see that the Bible is a book of prophecy. Therefore every prophecy today must be rooted in the Scripture.

We can now say that prophecy is one of the ways God communicates His will to man to build them up in the knowledge of His will. What is the will of God? That all might come to the knowledge of Christ and be saved from the power of the devil and sin, to love the Lord and others, to serve Him, etc. Prophecy then re-emphasises these scriptural truths and most times makes these truths more understandable. In this sense, we can say that the Bible is a documented prophecy or a prophetic book. It is sufficient to meet the need of modern man. Therefore any prophetic word today must be in agreement with the spirit and principles of the Bible.

In this book I will use vision, revelation and prophecy interchangeably.

Let me make it clear here that this book is not intended to deal extensively with the *ministry of the prophet* as one of the fivefold ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11, but my focus is on the act of *prophesying* which may come upon anybody not only through called prophets or the ministry of the Prophet. That means *everyone who prophesies is not necessarily a called Prophet or has a prophetic ministry. The prophet or prophetic ministry is one of the fivefold ascension gifts of Christ given as an extension of His ministry to the Church. Therefore a prophet is one with a prophetic mandate and the gifted ability to perceive and to speak the specific mind or will of God to churches, individuals, the society and nations.* Today many claim to be prophets just because they're inspired to give the word of knowledge. They call themselves prophets and then go ahead to establish what they often call *“prophetic this, prophetic that”*. Hence we have a lot of negative practices going on in the name of *the prophetic*.

Prophecy is one of those gifts of the Holy Spirit that is being so much abused today; one of the reasons for this is the lack of adequate teaching of God's Word. Today we have become so materialistic. All we seem to care about is how to *get rich and escape sufferings, kill your enemies by fire!*

*Now here is a counsel for those who specialize in killing their enemies. They should bear in mind Psalm 23:5 that says “**thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies**” God prepares a table for those who have enemies, no enemies; no table. So if you are busy killing all your enemies, where would God prepare the table? But if you don't kill them preparing the table has to be in their presence. God knows what to allow into our lives in order to keep us from other things*

that are more destructive. For example, the day king David failed to go to war was the day he fell into the act of adultery and murder that brought a curse upon his house-hold. Perhaps God was using the wars to keep him from such acts. Be wise!

We are busy raising spiritual babies who are not ready to *suffer, die* or *lose* anything for the gospel's sake. Today the success of a believer is predicated by the things he owns and so even preachers seem to be looking at material possessions as a yardstick for determining success in ministry. How did I know that? If you're a rich man of God with a big congregation, younger ministers will troop to you, to submit as sons in the Lord. But if you're *experienced* and do not have the seeming physical or material riches; you may not have many people submitting to you. I don't mean to be critical here. I also believe that God blesses His children with material wealth; it's just that *we must have a balance between making it materially and making it eternally*. And so we must begin to set our priorities right as we anticipate the coming of the Lord with full awareness of the intensity of our warfare. May God help us!

CHAPTER 2

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

When the purpose of anything is not known or understood, the abuse of such thing is inevitable, and one of the reasons why the prophetic ministry is being misused today is because some of the so-called prophets and prophetesses do not know the purpose of prophecy. So in this chapter we'll carefully study the reasons or purposes why the Holy Spirit gives us prophetic words or revelations. ***“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation, and comfort”*** (1 Cor. 14:3).

The Scripture above gives a very straight answer to what the purpose of prophecy is. Now three things are mentioned here: **(1) edification, (2) exhortation, (3) comfort.** The implication of this is that every prophetic activity should achieve these three things irrespective of the situation. God is a God of *purpose*; therefore, one of our major ambitions in life should be to search out the *purpose* for which He made, said and gave the precious things we see. *That is what I think a purpose-driven life is.*

(1)Edification: To edify, here, means to furnish, build up, improve or strengthen one's relationship with God and men. So when a true prophecy comes, it focuses, first of all, on building up lives. It is obvious that *to build something up, you have to first dig down.* Prophecy, then, digs into specific areas of our lives to deal with the things that hinder our growth in the faith. It rebukes sin and improves our reverence toward God, improves our holy living and our faith in God, and then God becomes more real to us than any other thing. Therefore, any prophecy that does not edify should be questioned.

God cannot keep speaking to a murderer, a harlot, a thief, etc. without at least for once rebuking and straightening out the person's lifestyle. We must understand that God is more interested in the salvation of our souls than our comfort here on earth. He is more interested in us becoming men of valour than men of wealth. You know that the Devil is at work when you see some kind of people who are regular in some so called prophetic ministries not receiving a word from the Lord to rebuke their evil lifestyles. Instead all they see is who wants to kill them and so forth, and the *edification* purpose of prophecy is absent just for their stomach's sake. ***“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things”*** (Phillip. 3:18)

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof

cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (1 Tim. 6:3-5). The last part of this text is read this way in the New International Version: **“who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.”**

These Scriptures above reveal the characteristics of false prophets. They do these also because they are not speaking by the Spirit of God but by fallen angels (demons). You must understand that angels are spirit beings that are aware of spiritual things, but they have their limit because they are not *omniscient*. So just because a man calls himself a prophet, sees your underwear, calls your names and even goes further to call your phone number does not make him a true prophet. If this prophet does not edify or build your faith in God, beware!

(2)Exhortation: To exhort means to strongly urge or challenge a person. When God gives a prophecy He urges you to come closer to Him, He challenges your unbelief and lifestyle, He challenges you to serve Him and to live right, He encourages your good works and services and gives courage to your fearful heart, He strongly recommends a solution to your problems. *You can't encounter this Holy Spirit-inspired word called prophecy and remain the same;* it leaves you with a strong desire or impulse for possibilities.

As we go through life, we are faced with lots of enticements or temptations, discouragements and different kinds of challenges. In times like these, God brings us prophetic words of exhortations, telling us what to do and what not to do, strengthening our hearts to face and overcome the plots of the enemy. Here are prophetic words of exhortation from Apostle Paul: **“And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you but of the ship”** (Acts 27:22).

The early church recognised the importance of words of exhortation because it was, and is still, necessary for daily survival in this world of conflicts. **“But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”.** (Heb.3:13)

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22)

Note: Prophecy is not for a show or entertainment; it is for information and solution to problems; it is for direction, it is for exhortation. If you are not encouraged or challenged to believe Christ, to stay faithful and not to fear, watch it!

(3)Comfort: To comfort is to give consolation to the grieved or broken hearted, it's to refresh, it's to make less unhappy. When God gives a word of prophecy, it brings peace to the troubled heart, healing to the wounded heart, and understanding to the confused heart, joy and

comfort to the sorrowful heart. *You cannot encounter the Comforter and not be comforted.* No matter what the situation may be, the comforter (Holy Spirit) will not leave you with fears and confusion. No! No! No! No! He gives you direction, comfort and boldness to overcome whatever it is you are going through. ***“Now the Lord is that spirit: and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”*** (2Cor. 3:17). So when the Spirit speaks, there will be liberty from Satan, sin and the torment of fear.

For the fact that you are a child of God does not mean you won't go through challenges. In fact, the Bible says: ***“yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”*** (2 Tim.3:12). ***“Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all”*** (Psalm 34:19). Even the righteous go through tough times. We can call these tough times *the valleys of life*. But glory be to God! Jesus is the *Lily of the valleys*. I recommend my book on this subject, titled *The Anatomy of Pain*. God gives prophetic words of comfort to his children.

King David said in Psalm 119:50: ***“This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.”*** But today the opposite is the case. People come out of some so-called prophetic ministries with fears, depression, and confusion and most times with bitterness toward their supposed enemy or enemies. And some even take laws into their hands.

I heard the story of a man who cut his mother in pieces with a machete after receiving a prophecy that she was a witch. We hear of children being subjected to tortures after being called witches by some “prophets”. Be wise! God is not an author of confusion. Edification, exhortation and comfort are the three realms of prophecy.

CHAPTER 3

JUDGING PROPHECY

“Let the prophets speak two or three and let the other judge. (1 Cor. 14: 29).

Should I believe and accept every word, vision or prophecy just because it’s given in the name of Jesus? I believe your answer would be No. Therefore it is obvious then that prophecies or visions should be *judged* or examined.

The word “judge” in this context means to *test* or *examine* in order to *prove* or *determine* what is right. You know, whenever you try to point out some errors that have crept in among us in the body of Christ, people tend to remember only one Scripture and that is, ***“Judge not that ye be not judged”***, which actually deals with judging hypocritically as stated in Romans.2:1. They forget scriptures like:

- 1. *“know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?”*** (1 Corinthians 6:3)
- 2. *“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good”.*** (1Thessalonians 5:21)

As a matter of fact, this second verse came immediately after the verse which says. ***“Despise not prophesying”***, which means that as much as we must not despise prophesying, we must *probe* or *prove* it. Now we’ve come to the most sensitive aspect of this teaching; i.e. *“judging prophecy”* Before we get into this chapter properly, know that you have no business examining others when you’ve not examined yourself and being sure you’re in the faith. ***“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”*** (12Cor.13:5) You have to be in the faith; you must be born again and, as a believer in Christ. Possess the right spirit, *void of bitterness*, to examine correctly.

Let me make clear here that we’re dealing with prophetic utterances from human vessels. Let’s start with some questions and answers.

Why should prophecy be judged?

(a) *Because it comes through imperfect channels, through the mind and lips of human vessels.* “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1Cor. 13:9-10). What this means is that humans don’t have perfect understanding of spiritual things as long as they live in this imperfect world. But a time will come when we’ll have perfect understanding of spiritual things and that will be when we transit into eternity with God. This doesn’t mean a human vessel cannot give an accurate prophecy; it just means that sometimes there might be a

mix of the imperfect human idea while delivering the message, mostly due to emotional factors, which do not make the person a false prophet either.

(b) Because one can prophesy by a demon spirit. Here is an account of Luke that is so clear which we can learn from in Acts 16:16-18. **“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with the spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”** You see, the girl was possessed with a demon spirit of *divination (spirit of python)* which gave her the ability to see things in the spirit. And she went after Paul and the others saying the right things but with a wrong motive and spirit. Some-one may say the *right things* with a *wrong motive*. Her intention was to get them to yield to her ministry so she could manipulate them. But Paul was sensitive enough to detect the source of her *inspiration*. What this means is that Paul did not just accept this prophetic ministry just because the right things were said but he judged or tested the spirit and discovered it was the wrong spirit in operation and he rebuked it in the name of Jesus Christ.

The problem with us today is that we yield so quickly especially when the person sees one or two things about us that are true. Be wise!

You must be sure of the source of a prophecy no matter how accurate they may sound. The demon was more accurate in its recognition of who Jesus was than the disciples when he said **“...I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.”** (Mark 1:24d)

In Jeremiah 23:13 God said, **“And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; They prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.”**

(c) Because someone can prophesy out of his own heart or spirit. There are people who have become masters at deceit. They can look at you and know what to say to you, they know the kind of questions to ask you and then intelligently work on your responses. Simply put, **“they prophesy by their instinct or by exaggeration”**. Today they even send emissaries to families, congregations and companies to gather information for them. Here is what God Himself said about such prophets.

“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish

prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!
(Ezekiel. 13:1-3)

God spoke against the prophets that prophesy out of their own spirit (heart); they see nothing! They lie with the name of God. This particular sin has become the sin of most ministers of the gospel. They say things like: *“the Lord said to me, “son...”* or *“The Lord told me”* when in reality the Lord has said nothing to them. They just say these things to sound spiritual and superior. Here is what God said about them in Jer.23:16: ***“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak vision of their own hearts, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.”***

Be warned! I think these are enough reasons why we should judge or confirm prophecies, especially in this end time. ***Because many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many*** (Matt. 24:11). Decide today not to be among the many that will be deceived, for I believe it’s no longer time to keep quiet about the evil activities of this people. It’s time for the genuine Christian leaders and elders to rise up and resist the activities of these false prophets in our society and nation. Let them devise means of reducing falsehood in the land, by *corporately organizing conferences to teach on matters like this from time to time*. Yes; I know that the Scriptures must be fulfilled; *falsehood will intensify in these last days, but we must not keep quiet and allow them to pollute the church. Apostle Paul rebuked the false prophetess in Acts 16:16 and God commanded prophet Ezekiel to prophesy against the false prophets of his days.*

How long can it take a person to verify a prophecy or ministry?
Well, I think it depends on the individual. It took Paul days as recorded in Acts 16:18. Don’t be hasty about it, just remain calm in spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to move you. It may be in a moment of time or days, weeks, even months. It all depends on your level of spiritual sensitivity to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Don’t try to verify spiritual things with your natural mind or sensual perception. Develop a cordial relationship with God through His Word and prayer and He will direct your life. ***“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not on thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”*** (Prov. 3:5-8).

When should a prophecy be rejected?

You must not make hasty conclusions either to receive or reject prophecies. Listen to the Spirit of God within you if you are born again. Carefully examine the prophecy with the Word of God. If it's not rooted in the Word of God, reject it; if you are asked to do something contrary to the Word of God and the Christian faith, reject it. That is why you have to be conversant with God's Word (the Bible), so that when a prophecy is given to you, you can judge it with God's Word. If you don't understand, ask questions for clarification, God rejoices when we are bold enough as children desiring to know. God call us: "***come now and let us reason together said the lord...***" (Isaiah 1:18). When your question is rejected and you are commanded to obey whether or not you understand, reject it! That does not mean you will have to get all the details when God speaks, Sometimes He speaks in figurative terms. But if the prophecy is for you, you'll have direction, or an inner witness, that convinces you even when you tend to resist.

Guidelines for confirming prophecy

(a) Prophecy must not contradict God's written word

The Bible is the root of all prophecy, God will not say or ask you to do something that contradicts His Word Remember every other thing will pass away, but His word will abide for ever. "***Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away***" (Mathew. 24:35). So every prophetic utterance should follow God's Word. If it does not follow then beware! Now here is what God said: "***When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him***" (Deuteronomy 18:22).

For instance, God will not ask you to have sex with the prophet or prophetess. He will not ask you to pray naked and be massaged by the prophet or prophetess. He will not ask you to make sacrifices like breaking of eggs, olive oil bottle, drop a bottle or bottles of Coca Cola etc. at T-junctions and riversides. He will not ask you to use colour candles, incense or blood of any kind for assignments.

Your understanding of the Scriptures should also be considered. Sometimes a prophecy can be against our own understanding of Scriptures. We need to make sure that our own understanding of the Scriptures is not faulty. For example, if we don't believe in praising and

dancing, and a prophecy is given that God wants us to joyfully dance to Him in praises, you might reject it even though the Lord really has spoken it. So it is wise to consult those who have a *balanced* knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures for guidance.

But note some important statements in the Scripture above. I paraphrase: *“If it follow not with my word. Thou shalt not be afraid to reject that prophecy.”* Because, you see, some people out of fear accept every lie the prophet tells on them. But God said we should be afraid to reject that prophet and his lies. A pastor friend of mine went to look for someone and the person happened to be in a prayer-house meeting. So he went there and sat, hoping to meet with the person after the service. Few minutes later, he was called out by the prophetess and was told that was a student and has joined a cult in the school, bla, bla, bla. So he allowed her to finish her lies and then he declared right there that he was a pastor and not a student of any university at that time, not to talk of having joined a cult in the school. He rebuked her. That day her spell was broken off the lives of most of her victims.

(b) Prophecy must exalt Jesus Christ; Jesus must be the centre of true prophecies.

Jesus Himself said the Holy Ghost will glorify Him. ***“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you”*** (John 16:14). For a prophecy to be true, it has to be inspired by the Holy Spirit who will not fail to glorify Christ. ***“Beloved, believe not every spirit, try the spirits whether they are of God: Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world”*** (1John4:1-3). *The prophecy will put emphasis on the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross for humanity, His miraculous resurrection on the third day and His glorious return.*

Today, you see the so-called prophets exuding pride when giving a prophecy. and in trying to prove how spiritual and insightful they are; they begin to do some irrelevant things like *calling your phone number(s) and even telling you what you ate before coming to the meeting*. So instead of the prophecy drawing you to Christ, it draws you to them, Fake! Fake! Fake! If you are looking for a sign to know them, that’s one of the signs. They project themselves more than the God they’re talking about.

(c) Prophecy should exhort, edify and comfort.

“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1Cor.14:3). These are the three usual realms of prophecy already discussed in chapter two.

(d) The vessels should have the fruits of righteousness.

Jesus said, **“Ye shall know them by their fruits...”** (Mathew 7:16). Those who operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit should also bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Don't be carried away by anyone's *giftedness*. Look out for the fruit. They may not be perfect, but they should preach and practise holiness and live a life of integrity and discipline, especially when it comes to **money, sex and power**.

(e) If the prophecy is predictive, it should come to pass or be fulfilled.

This is clearly stated in Deuteronomy. 18:22, **“when a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the things follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken...”**

Remember, a prediction made by a false prophet may come to pass, just as the predictions of Paul the *Octopus in Germany* come to pass. The Octopus is a mysterious animal oracle in Germany, which predicts accurately the results of most international matches which Germany was playing. Paul the Octopus, as he was called came to worldwide attention with his accurate predictions in the 2010 World Cup. So we must not make *fulfilment* a final point in judging a predictive prophecy.

(f) Prophecy should not create confusion.

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all churches of the saints ... Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:33 & 40). Prophecy must not disorganize the service nor disrespect the physical authority of the service, i.e. the pastor, thereby leaving the people in a state of confusion. Though it may change the course of the service, it must not break the spirit of it.

CHAPTER 4

THE MISUSE OF PROPHECY TODAY

In this chapter we will be looking at the relevance of prophecy today, its misconceptions and misuse.

Prophecy and This Age

It is obvious that some group of people have argued that prophecy is no longer relevant in our today's world of scientific and technological breakthroughs. They submit that the Scientific and technological breakthroughs we see today are a blessing from God in many ways. Yet some people still live in the Dark Ages of mediocrity. They still wait for a "prophet" to tell them why they're having headache; the infertile ones would not go for check-up to know what's wrong; the pregnant mothers will not go to the hospital for proper medical care. They all would prefer to go to a prayer-house and adhere to the instructions of a "prophet/prophetess" who in most cases will give them seven bottles of olive oil to drink, subject them to some health-damaging assignments.

In their argument, they portray the fact that we keep hearing of how people are being deceived into doing all kinds of stupid things like drinking unhygienic concussion, women having sex with a prophet in the bid to have a child, pregnant mothers asked not to go to the hospital but leave their homes and come to the prophets place, when it's very obvious that they can be treated scientifically.

I believe there is a sense in their argument. I recommend that Christians should take advantage of the scientific breakthroughs. Know when to go to the hospital for medical care and when to ask for a prophetic helping hand. However, prophecy still remains relevant today, because we know that science and technology are limited in their ability to proffer solutions to man's

enormous and especially spiritual challenges. It is relevant because the Bible says it is relevant and should not be despised as revealed in 1Thessalonians-5:20 **“Despise not prophesying”** I believe there is going to be a very strong prophetic and apostolic voice in the church as we move toward the climax of the age.

“And it shall to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams ” (Acts 2:17). The *last days* in this text speaks of the era of the Holy Spirit on earth. So this Scripture is still fulfilling today. I believe God is giving the Church real prophets in our time to give direction and to expose falsehood in the church.

God is not Restricted to Prophecy

Today, some people are making it look as though the only way God speaks is when someone stands up and says *“thus saith the Lord”* when it is scripturally clear that such is just one of the many ways God speaks to us. God has so many ways through which He speaks to His children. *The primary ways through which God speaks to us today are; (1) His word (the Bible). (2) The inner witness of our regenerated human spirit with the Holy Spirit.* The secondary ways He speaks to us are: (1) **Dreams**, (2) **open visions**, (3) **impulse**, (4) **circumstances**, (5) **an audible voice**, (6) **prophecy**, etc. The content of all of these ways must perfectly tally with the teaching of the Bible.

It's quite unfortunate that many people do not pay attention to the other areas through which God speaks to His children. And I've observed that the reason for this is because we have become so lazy and busy that we find it difficult to give the required attention to these other areas. So since getting prophecy seems cheap, they go for it. Prophecy must never become a substitute for our individual responsibilities and privilege of hearing God for ourselves. *Intimacy with God should be more desired than information from Him.* He wants to talk to us personally. So we must never allow prophecy to take the place of our duty to fast, pray and study the Word in maintaining our intimacy with God where He can reveal things to us directly. Prophecy from others,

therefore, becomes necessary to us most times when we lose touch with God. So he has to get our attention through some one else.

Note: God's Word is the sure way to know His will. "***We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day down, and the daystar arises in your hearts***" (2Pet. 1:19). The written Word of God is His sure Word of prophecy.

Abuse of Prophecy Today

It is a known fact that most ministries today, in as much Prophecy is concerned have taken different dimensions from the scriptural norms. Now come with me and let us consider the various dimensions that prophecy has taken.

Scary Revelations

The Bible tells us 365 times not to fear and there are 365 days in a year. That means we have a daily dose of "***fear not***" from God because we live in a world of uncertainties. And fear is one of Satan's major weapons against the believer. Today most of what the "prophet/prophetesses" tell people are scary things. They exalt the Devil and make him look very powerful and then leave the people without *edification, exhortation and comfort*. And so the Devil gains a foothold to torment them. That is why prophecy should be tested; the vessel (*prophet*) himself and the receiver should test it to be sure it's from God. The Devil can reveal a thing especially to distract and instil fear in the hearts of people. Demons seek expression also and a prophetic vessel is liable to demonic influence when or if he:

- lives in secret sins
- is not grounded in the Word
- keeps grudges and bitterness
- still has ties with unclean spirits
- is not disciplined
- Is greedy, etc.

Acrobatic Prophecy

People often ask: “Can I control myself when I’m prophesying?” the answer is not far-fetched, the Bible says; ***“If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all Churches of the saints”*** (1Corinthians14:30-33). This text gives us a very clear answer about whether or not one can control himself or herself when prophesying. If you received a revelation and somebody else is manifesting his own gift, you can hold your peace. *In fact, it says if you’re prophesying and someone else wants to give a message, you should stop and allow them.* This makes it very clear that you can control yourself. You must not create commotion or confusion just because you want to deliver a revelation. Learn to control yourself. It is a sign of immaturity or the presence of a distracting spirit from Hell, when someone has to scatter the house to deliver a message. I have seen occasions where the “prophet/prophetess” becomes very wild and uncontrollable, fighting people and scattering chairs and equipment just to deliver a prophecy.

Common Commodity Prophecy

By “common commodity” I mean that prophecy has been made so common that some people now shop for it. Prophecy is not common; it’s special and it comes for special purposes. Let me say that if God reveals things the way some so-called prophets and prophetesses claim, then we do not need faith and the Bible any more as it is stated in Hebrew. 11:6; ***“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”***. God wants us to have faith in Him. So he does not need to speak about everything going on in our lives all the time, and He sometimes chooses to be silent about our situations. He therefore allows us go through certain things in *faith, patience and trust as a maturing process for us. Understand that you don’t need deliverance from every problem; there are some things you must go through to become who God wants you to be.*

Also, there are some situations you should use your mind or *common sense to solve*. That’s why you have a mind. God wants us to search some things out by ourselves, which is a glorious thing to do as revealed

in the Bible: ***“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings”*** (Proverbs 25:2). You see, God conceals or hides some things and takes pleasure in us searching them out. *Real prophets know this, so they only speak when God reveals or inspires and not when people request.*

Like in some ministries today, no matter how good the preaching of the Word is, they still have to give time for God (according to them) to speak through the “prophet or prophetess”. So they play the music very hard to stir up the spirit of the so-called “prophet”. What do you expect? The man has to do his job. I happened to Pastor a ministry like that one time and one of those days after a midweek service, a man walked up to me and said, “pastor, you have to give God time to speak to us. You’re not allowing him speak to us after your preaching”. I replied to him: “God has been speaking to us and those who have ears are hearing Him and if He gives the prophetess a message to share, she will minister it to us at the right time”. Most of them believed that God only speaks when the said prophetess begins to dance around. May God have mercy!

Assignment Prophecy

Well, I believe the Bible should be the guideline for any assignment. There are shameful things people do today in the name of *prophetic assignment* such as drinking seven bottles of olive oil, the use of coconut water to wash your head, praying naked at T-junctions, having sex with the prophet or prophetess, the use of special water, broom, horsewhip (koboko), etc.

Now the question is, *if we have to do most of the tedious assignments to be free, why then did Jesus die?* I believe He died so we won’t have to do most of such assignments to obtain freedom. He paid the price in full. You see, there are prophetic actions in the Bible, but the question people don’t care to ask is why were they taken or given to the people involved? A prophetic action can be taken by a prophet or person when delivering a message as stated in Acts 21:10- 11: ***“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a prophet named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said thus saith the Holy Ghost. So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”***

Prophetic actions such as this, directed by the Holy Ghost, may be taken by a person when delivering a prophetic message. And others can also be given to a person as an assignment but must not contradict the Scriptures and the pattern of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me make mention of one reason God gave most of the prophetic assignments. He did that to deal with the inconsistencies in their lives, by making them do the same thing, e.g. seven times: Most of the prophetic assignments were to be repeated seven times; *the children of Israel to go round Jericho seven times, Naaman to wash in river Jordan seven times; the blind man to wash his eyes seven times*—just to mention a few. The number *seven* is a number of *completion* or *perfection*. So what is God saying? *“Learn to obey consistently, be consistent in your relationship with Me. Don’t stop half way; follow me to the end. Complete your task. Run this race to the end; finish your course. Master your duties. Do it over and over again until you are perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

You’ll agree with me that inconsistency is a challenge most of us have. We keep backsliding every now and then. You can’t pray, tithe, love and do some important things consistently. But God knows how to put us in the school of *excellence* and *perfection*. So every prophetic action should agree with the Spirit and the Word of God. God can lead you to take a prophetic action by yourself from those revealed in the Bible, e.g. Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still; Elisha poured salt in the barren stream, and others relevant to your situation.

One of our sisters shared a testimony of how *God delivered her father who could not speak nor walk for over a week. One night she was impressed in her spirit to pray for him, so she went to the church altar at midnight, lay down on the altar, using herself as a point of contact to her father in prayers since she is in Port Harcourt and the father in Akwa Ibom State. The next day she called and they told her the father forcefully woke up shouting: “Peace has loosed me!” This happened at the same time she was praying and losing him from the Altar.* This is just one out of the many testimonies I have to share, but let’s go on. To tell you the truth; most of the assignments these false prophets give, are their ways of entangling people with the demon spirits they serve and to merchandise them i.e. making money out of them. Take that seriously!

Now read this Scripture carefully:

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet...and that prophet or that dreamer of dream, shall be put to death; because he has spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God... (Deut. 13:1-5.)

They may say “Jesus is Lord”, see the right things about you and talk in a godly way; they may even solve your problems temporally, but *the things they will ask you to do are things that disconnect you from God and connect you to the Devil. Be wise!*

Wrong criteria for testing ministries

Sandy Simpson In his article *How to Discern, Test & Judge Rightly* pointed out some criteria most Christians usually look at in judging ministries and how unsuccessful such judgment could be. Hence they could be deceived by their logical perception. He went further to suggest that the *teachings, practices or doctrine of ministries* should be given a paramount attention by comparing them with the *doctrine of the Bible*.

The following criteria are what many people who call themselves Christians are using to test the reality and the truth of certain ministries today:

- (1) Experiences/ manifestations
- (2) Feelings/ emotions
- (3) Number of followers
- (4) Number of people who claim to be saved
- (5) The size of a church or movement
- (6) Signs and wonders/ purported miracles (whether real or false)
- (7) Subjective testimonies
- (8) Hearsays and rumours
- (9) How successful and rich a teacher is
- (10) A person speaking with authority
- (11) The atmosphere of a meeting place

None of the above criteria being used by many churchgoers today are cited in the Bible as ways to test, discern and judge rightly. Let's look at them briefly one after the other.

1. Experiences/ Manifestations

Experiences and manifestations can be from many sources: physical, emotional, mental, paranormal/demonic, or from the Lord. ALL

experiences need to be tested on the basis of the testimony and teachings of the tried and true written Word of God. For example *someone remote-controlling you with their hands and legs is strange to the Christian faith*. It is an occult technique imported into Christianity, and has nothing to do with what we are taught in the Scriptures. The prophets, Apostles and Jesus Christ did not do it or teach it as something that should be done. If you have an experience, you had better check the source. Think twice before you submit to people laying hands on you for whatever reason.

2. Feelings/ Emotions

Mormons made the "burning in the breast" (a warm feeling in their hearts) standard fare for their followers. *Once they receive this warm feeling in their heart, they believe the Book of Mormon is true*. But now a large cross-section of Christians has been taught to judge everything by similar criteria. Modern Christians are, for the most part, not being taught to submit to the Word of God -- but rather to the way they feel emotionally. The phrase "I think" has been replaced by the phrase "I feel". This is partially due to influences from the New Age movies like "Star Wars." But in the last twenty years, teachers in the Church seem to have taught a whole generation to rely on their feelings.

Emotions are a part of the realm of the flesh and the mind (soul). Emotions can be used by God, but often they are ways for the enemy to get Christians away from the truths of the Bible and to gain a foothold in their lives.

3. Number of Followers

Many leaders have large numbers of followers, including cultists and other religious "gurus". In fact, some of the most popular leaders, who have the most followers, are not Christian. Number of followers is not a good test of the authenticity of a leader or his ministry.

4. Number Claiming Salvation

Ultimately, only God knows who is saved. Believers can certainly tell if people are false prophets and heretics and must be rejected. But we are not the ultimate judge of their salvation. One fact is certain: when someone claims to be saved, they will show evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives believe in and teach sound doctrine, and not make false prophecies.

5. Size of a church or movement

Church size means nothing in the realm of discernment. God looks for quality over quantity, regardless of what some people claim: Quantitative judgments are of men. The size of a church could be due to God blessing a ministry and people being truly saved or due to the oratorical skills of a preacher. Big clubs are not necessarily good clubs. Church size is no way to test a ministry.

6. Signs and Wonders

Signs and wonders today have just as many evidences in false churches and the occult as they do in biblical Christianity. Jesus did state that those who saw Him perform miracles should have believed, though, for the most part, they did not. They couldn't even tell the signs of the times (Matt. 16; 1-4). People today love to be able to claim they saw or experienced a wonder or miracle from God. Perhaps this is because they want to feel like they have been touched by God personally, are holy, or simply want to be accepted by their peers. If you are going to claim you have seen or experienced a miracle from God, then that miracle must be held up to biblical criteria to prove it is a biblical divine healing as opposed to many other forms of healing...

True believers are careful not to use deceptive methods, to lie about experiences and signs, in order to gain converts. ***“Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God”*** (2 Corinthians 4:2, NIV).

7. Subjective Testimonies

Testimonies are nice and can even be an inspiration (if they are true), but they are also inherently subjective. In other words, they are hard, if not impossible, to prove objectively, unless an incontrovertible proof exists. Don't allow fabricated testimonies, uplifting as they may be, to get in the way of biblical methods of testing. Don't rely on testimonies alone to shape your belief system. Just as you would test a cake to see if it is made by manually inserting a toothpick, instead of relying only on the good smell of the cake and the feelings you get from its aroma, so do not use subjective methods to test stories. Use the objective Word of God.

8. Hearsays and Rumours.

Most stories are being passed along today as hearsay. They often gain a little here and there until they have been blown all the way out of proportion from the original account. Don't pass on rumours, gossip and stories unless you check them out thoroughly. In this day and age of the Internet that has become a much easier task. So there is no excuse to avoid researching claims from all angles. Don't just take people's word for it. Do the maths yourself.

9. How successful and Rich a Teacher is

Anyone can be successful given the tools, the gifts, the right connections and the right circumstances. Some of the most godly men and women in the church have been dirt poor. True success is not measured by money, power, number of followers, or any of the criteria of the "American Dream". Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart. We can get a pretty clear picture of the heart of a person if we test what they say and what they do against the Scriptures.

10.A person Speaking with Authority

Many men and women are capable of speaking with authority. It can be a natural gift, a demonic gift or a gift from God. But it is no way to test whether a person is a true or false teacher. Authority can be put on, learned, acted. True authority from God is accompanied by true teaching, true prophecy and the fruit of the Spirit.

11. Atmosphere of a Meeting (place)

Beware of testing meetings by the atmosphere created there. Like an Amway meeting, or halftime at a football game, an atmosphere can be manipulated. God does not need a stadium full of screaming fans burning with fleshly passion to move. What He requires is simple obedience to His Word.

Some helpful questions to consider when judging prophecy

- Does the prophecy bring you closer to God and others, or alienate you from Him?
- Does the prophecy, even if it convicts you, build you up? Or, does it manipulate and leave you helpless?
- Does the prophecy leave you feeling empowered by God or feeling defeated?
- Does the prophecy align with the Scriptures?
- Does the prophecy sit well with you? Does your spirit testify with what is brought?
- Does the prophecy have grace and mercy behind it?
- Is the person delivering the prophecy under authority and accountable, or is he of a lawless character?
- When the prophecy is given, are you drawn to the person bringing the prophecy or drawn to God?

CHAPTER 5

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

As a believer; if you are looking for an enemy who seeks to control your mind and beliefs, and you know he has disguised himself in order to get you, where do you think he would position himself-In the beer parlour, the pornographic clubs, a militant camp? I don't think so. He knows you would not want to join them there. He positions himself behind the pulpit or in other sensitive positions (if he is given the chance) in the Church where you love to be. That's where he can influence your mind and get you to follow his ways without knowing.

We must understand that *Satan's desire is to control our minds so that he can control our actions*. And so he has a doctrine referred to in 1 Timothy 4:1 as “**doctrines of devils**” and in Revelation.2:15 as “**the doctrine of Nicolaitans**”, and in verse 24 of Revelation chapter 2 we have “**the depths of Satan**”. He takes his place in the pulpit or in the church which, for him is the best place to introduce his doctrine. The church of Thyatira as revealed in Rev.2:20 gave the Devil the chance to introduce his doctrine in their midst. “**Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.**” Jezebel was a self-proclaimed prophetess at Thyatira, leading the church into the doctrine of Satan; seducing God's people into immorality. She may not have borne the name *Jezebel* physically, maybe she was ‘*mummy so and so*’, but Christ referred to her as *Jezebel* because of the seducing *spirit* behind her activities. She was leading the people into false doctrine just as the Old Testament *Jezebel* had done to Israel as shown in the accounts of the biblical books of 1 and 2 Kings. (See 1kings16, 2kings9). The spirit of Jezebel is still at work today!

How do they get in? Jesus answers that question in Matthew.7:15: “**Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.**” They mask themselves with sheep's skin and meander their way into the sheepfold. They are the *mixed multitude* responsible for the atrocities and the unscrupulous acts

taking place in the body of Christ today. They are there to initiate rebellion among God's people. ***“And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”*** (Num.11:4). They lead others astray through every means they can; they are simply *enemies within*. You can see the reason why we must examine certain practices in the church today irrespective of how good they may look and sound.

Now let's take a look again at Deuteronomy. 18:10-15 which I believe can be helpful when dealing with the spirit and practices of false prophets-those described by Jesus as wolves in sheep's clothing. Read carefully: ***“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. The Lord thy God shall raise thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”***

Divination and Spiritism

The word '*divination*' in Hebrew is *kosem kesamim* which is translated divining divinations, this may be used here as a generic term, of which the seven terms following represent the species or types. *Divination is the art or practice of using omens or magic powers as a means to foretell the future* and unusual insights other than God or *intuitive perception*. This practice was prevalent in the times of Moses among all idolatrous nations, as it is even today. It's obvious that many of these practices are going on in our time. Therefore, if this warning was necessary then, I believe it's more necessary for us today. The following points are involved in divination and spiritism according to Deut.18:10-15 which we read earlier:

- **Observer of times** (sorcery or soothsaying): This is referred to one that distinguishes lucky days from unlucky days, deciding

also on the good or bad luck of certain months and years; recommending certain days, months, and years for the commencement of certain enterprises. Today observers of times make their predictions in the name of Jesus.

- **Enchanter:** This refers to one who divines by interpreting events or by watching or observing the flight of birds. They also practise palm reading by the help of the evil spirits of divination. They've transformed themselves into prophets today, enchanting with strange tongues and bringing people under demonic control.
- **Witch:** One who engages in witchcraft, like the magicians of Pharaoh, she performs magical acts. Much of what we call miracles today is simply witchcraft manipulations, or magical acts. As manipulators they have their ways of making people live at their mercy. They threaten their followers with death or the loss of their miracles if they leave the ministry.
- **Charmer:** This refers to one who casts spell or binds people or things, using rings, staffs, etc. by the help of evil spirits. Today spells are used to gather and keep the crowd. A spell can be very powerful, especially when backed up by subsequent sacrifices. A story was told of a man who woke up one morning and asked his wife who he has lived with for twenty-five years, "Who are you? And what are you doing here?" He turned to his children and asked what they were doing in his house. Neighbours rushed in on hearing the noise as the man kept on nagging at his wife to leave his house. The man would not accept the plea from his neighbours but told them the last time he remembered meeting her was when she was a prostitute.

The truth finally came out. The woman confessed going to a shrine 24 years ago to cast a spell on the man so he could marry her and that over the years the spell was reinforced by yearly sacrifices. The trouble came when for sometime now she had not gone to reinforce it, that particular year.

- **Consulter with familiar spirits (Medium):** This refers to one who uses the spirits of the dead or other falling spirits to acquire information from the spirit world. The witch of *Endor* in 1Samuel 28:7-8 here serves as an example. I have seen an occasion

where a “prophetess” while prophesying, became suddenly possessed by the spirit of a dead relative of the person receiving the prophecy. This spirit then began to reveal his intentions to his relation. This is satanic!

- **Wizard:** A wizard is a spiritist. Such is referred to as a male witch. He is someone who is an expert in various tricks of divination. As a sorcerer, he is sometimes referred to as the “*knowing one*”. Simon of Samaria was a very good example. Of him we read in Acts 8:9-13: “***But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city has bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was the great one; to whom they all gave heed, from least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries...***” He called himself “the great one” (*they like titles*). And he manipulated the people for a long time until Deacon Phillip showed up with the liberating Gospel of Christ. Oh that we may have such Gospel today! Beware of wizards in suits.
- **Necromancer:** This also deals with familiar spirits. Necromancers have various methods of divination. They consult various spirits to get information from the spirit world through incantations and other magical ceremonies. They also claim they communicate with the dead.

It may interest you to know that the above mentioned people are now using the Bible and the Name of Jesus as a camouflage so as to perpetuate their evil acts, they come in sheep’s clothing, but they are wolves. They have updated themselves and their practices. They no longer stay in the bush nor wear red rags. No. They’re in suits, leading great crowds, they are everywhere and even more popular than the genuine prophets, especially in the Nigerian society like ours, where we tend to celebrate *result* more than *character*. So they flourish in a society such as this because as for result, they can produce *fake results* that tickle the ignorant man. That is why you must be spiritually sensitive, looking diligently and being steadfast in your personal relationship with God.

A woman was told to take over a familiar spirit of divination left behind by her father and turn it into a prophetic ministry. She was told that all

she has to do was to get a table, a white basin, a Bible and decorate the room with these items, and ministry begins. There are people who have record of satanic ancestral priesthood. Such people have the tendency to start what they often call a prophetic ministry with the demon spirit since it can reveal things. Many of the so-called prayer-houses today operate with familiar or water spirits. They need deliverance! Yet people go to them for deliverance. Error!

You have to understand that one of the Devil's end-time strategies of deception is revealed in the Bible as "*Flatteries*". **"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploit"** (Daniel 11:32). I define flatteries as a "*false impression*". That's what the Devil does; he gives people false impression about themselves, thereby giving them false hope: **"This is what the Lord Almighty says; Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord"** (Jeremiah 23:16, NIV). You see, the point here is that the Devil will not attack violently most of the time. He comes with *flatteries-instead*, giving people a false revelation of themselves, leaving them with hopes that are not tangible.

We must beware of the *false gospel* that creates the impression that you'll no longer have challenges once you get born again. False prophets will not emphasize the core values of the Christian faith such as *love, holiness, repentance from dead works, the Second Coming of Christ, eternity (i.e. Heaven & Hell)*. Rather, they emphasize more on how to *gather gold as dust*. *Materialism* characterises their message. So they ask people to buy blessings with money; they have subtle ways of making people sow their money, cars, lands, etc. in the bid to get them to believe that they will receive from God. *They sell almost everything: special oil, special handkerchiefs, special water, special sand, etc.* Even prayer: the size of your money will determine the intensity of the prayer made on your behalf. To them, "Nothing goes for nothing." But Jesus said: **"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give"** (Mathew.10:8).

It bothers me that these days, preaching no longer ends with altar call for sinners to give their lives to Christ. Rather it ends with altar call to sow seeds. They don't care if you go to Hell; all they want is your money

so they can enrich themselves. You may ask, “Don’t you believe in giving for the work of God?” Of course I do. I believe in giving out of my love for God and His Kingdom and not out of *compulsion* and *desperation*.

They give you false revelation of God, the Devil and yourself. *But those who know their God will be strong and do exploits and will not be exploited in the midst of the enemy’s tricks.*

I want you to note also in Deuteronomy.18:15 that after the warning; there was a promise, God promised to raise a prophet from among them and that He will put His Word in the mouth of that prophet. This actually refers to Jesus Christ. But I also believe that there are men and women raised by God with the *word* in their mouth, to declare the will of God to this generation. They have eaten the Word like Prophet Ezekiel as stated in Ezekiel. 3:1-4, **“Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.”** They declare nothing but that which they have received from the Lord: ***for I delivered unto you first all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.***” (1Cor. 15:3). Their message is centred on Christ; they minister for the kingdom’s sake and not for stomach’s sake. The salvation and the preservation of souls is their priority. I believe there are still believers with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, working sincerely with their gifts in the body of Christ and using their gifts with wisdom to the glory of God. Hallelujah!

God’s light can not be quenched by the powers of darkness. It will continue to shine no matter what. The Gospel of Christ is still bringing light to those in darkness and to guide them in the way of peace. **“To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”** (Luke 1:79). **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”** (Psalm 119:105).

We have entered the age in the calendar of God-the age in which He is raising men and women for the final harvest and move of the church upon the earth, a people with the **“Zeal of the Lord”**. They will run with the Word of the King and the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The Gospel of the Kingdom has to go round the earth as a witness to all nations before Christ comes (Mathew. 24:14).The kingdom of darkness will bow before them and the false

prophets will surrender to Jesus Christ. It happened before in Samaria: Simon the sorcerer believed (Acts 8:9-13). It will happen again: **“the Zeal of the Lord of host will perform this.”** (Isa. 9:7b). That zeal is at work right now upon the earth. The gospel of the Kingdom has to go round the earth as a witness to all before Christ comes, firstly, to rapture the Church. Just make yourself available.

Receive, believe and confess the Word and you'll have light and not stumble in darkness. Prayerfully seek out the genuine ministers of God where ever you are; they are there, because in every place God will not leave Himself without a witness. Now let us look in the next chapter at one of the most needed but ignored gifts of the Holy Spirit for this hour, the gift of *discernment*.

CHAPTER 6

SHARPEN YOUR DISCERNMENT

“... to another discerning of spirits...” (1Cor.12:10c).

If there is any time or age this gift is really needed in the body of Christ, I believe it is now- it is today, because in the last days which we are in, falsehood will increase and the enemy has disguised himself so much that it may not be easy to detect him except by the help of the Holy Spirit through the gift of *discernment*. God will not leave His children in the dark to be destroyed by the evil one. That's why He has given us His Spirit who lifts up a standard by alerting us whenever the enemy comes like a flood.

This Holy Spirit of God then blesses us with precious gifts for *worship, service and warfare*, and one of those gifts is the gift of “*discernment*” which is the ability to know or prove spirits and their operations. *Discernment is the unveiling (through dreams and visions, etc.) of what is hidden to the physical sight and concealed or camouflaged with a beautiful appearance.*

Discernment is the exposing of the nakedness of things, people and spirits.

Discernment is the knowing of what things, people, and spirits truly are. i.e. Their real nature.

Discernment defiles the appearance and lays hold of the hidden nature of physical operations around us.

A Christian medical practitioner would call discernment the divine microscope that exposes what escapes our natural senses.

God intelligently made our bodies. He made a body defence organ known as the *immune system*. *This organ is meant to defend our bodies against diseases or germs. But then you have to eat right to keep your*

immune system strong because if it's weak, you'll easily contact diseases. So it's your responsibility to keep it strong by exercising and eating right. I'm not a medical doctor. Please go and see a medical practitioner for details. So the gift of discernment serves as an immune system to your spirit; it defends your spirit from pollution; it reacts against strange spirits that seek to infect your spirit, it sends the red light to your mind when a strange spirit is in operation and a green light when the right spirit is at work. It can also be referred to as your *spiritual radar* that enables you to *scan* spiritual operations. *“Discernment is not a feeling; it's a knowing”* (Roberts Liardon). This re-echo's the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of John: ***“...he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”*** (John10:4-27). The import of this is that, as believers and followers of Christ we should know (discern) between the voice of our Great Shepherd and that of the stranger- the Devil. Now you can see how important this subject is for you as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

Jesus operated this gift throughout His ministry here on earth. He knew things in the spirit before they ever manifested physically, He knew when the Devil took over Judas, and He knew when Peter was speaking by divine revelation and from the wrong spirit. So He rebuked the Devil. He knew when to expose or avail Himself to men and when to withdraw from them. His spiritual radar was very sharp. And there are so many examples in the Bible of those who operated this gift wonderfully. We too can operate this wonderful gift of discernment, using it to scan spiritual operations in these last days of falsehood and deception.

But you see, for it to work this way you have to sharpen and pay attention to it; you have to walk in the Spirit as the Bible admonishes in Gal. 5:16: ***“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*** You have to be spiritually minded to be able to navigate through the end-time spirits of deception. ***“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things...”*** (1Cor.2:14-15). The natural mind can not comprehend spiritual operations so it's not reliable when it comes to discerning things in that realm. The spiritual man is sensitive to spiritual things, so he can judge

between that which is of God and that which is not, because he has the mind of Christ. ***“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things yet he himself is judged of no man...but we have the mind of Christ”*** (1Cor.2:15-16). We really need to wake up to our responsibilities, especially now that we have all kinds of negative things going on in the world in the name of *prayer, power and deliverance*. *“No age has been more in need of Apostle John’s advice than ours”* (Kenneth E. Hagin). Here is the advice, ***“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world...”*** (1John 4:1).

Satan will not walk up to you and say, “I’m Satan and I’ve come to deceive you, follow me to Hell.” He knows you’ll reject such offer, because you wouldn’t want to go to hell with him. So how does he come to get you? He comes speaking in tongues with a big Bible in his hand, dressed ecclesiastically and declaring *“Thus saith the Lord”* With the power that “slays” people down except the cameramen in the meeting. Funny; isn’t it?

You then need something beyond your five senses to know what’s going on. Here is a question from Paul ***“Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?”*** (2 Corinthians 10:7a) I believe by now you know the right answer to that question. No!

Appearance and Reality

In a philosophical study that deals with appearance and reality, it is stated that *one observes through experience and common sense that things are not often what they appear to be.*

There is always a remarkable difference between what it is and how it appears to us. The age-old has it that “All that glitters is not gold”. If you deep a stick into the stream the stick often appears bent, but in reality the stick is not bent. You can give series of examples in your daily experiences to show that reality is often different from appearance. Can we then rely on our senses to know things for certain? How could certain knowledge be acquired? Most philosophers, especially rationalists such as Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Hegel, etc., have condemned the notion that knowledge comes from our senses.

Other philosophers such as Democritus, Locke and Berkeley, submit that reality is not in things but in the mind of the beholder. These philosophers would readily subscribe to the adage that “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder” and not inherent in objects that are said to be beautiful. Now in all of these philosophical ideologies that we can learn from, something is missing- something that answers the numerous questions of how to obtain real knowledge or truth, and that thing is the *gift of discernment*. This knowledge is too high for the philosophers, but the Holy Spirit has made it known to us. Hallelujah!

The gift of *discernment* is God’s idea for the church and it becomes very necessary in our walk with God, especially in these last days. You see, discernment is not just limited to demon spirits, but it extends to all spirit beings such as human and angels, and if we really learn to use this gift it will sharpen our natural minds to the point where we’ll have no confusion about our situations, environments, relationships, business etc. yes, you might make some mistakes, but you can’t get lost in any matter when you learn to discern. Now read this carefully: **“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their work”** (2Cor.11:13-15). **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter, 5:8).

You can see from these Scriptures that the Devil is serious about his mission to devour humanity and he has a seemingly well-organised team to facilitate this mission. They are relentless and very serious about their purpose. So to be an effective Christian, you must be spiritually aware of whom you’re dealing with, know their operations and activities. **“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices”** (2Cor.2:1). You must have the scriptural knowledge of how the *dark kingdom* operates. So I advise you develop a spiritual SWOT analysis for yourself in order to be effective in warfare.

What is SWOT? It stands for:

- *Strengths*

- *Weaknesses*
- *Opportunities* and
- *Threats*
- You must know your *Strengths* and authority in Christ and fight from the position of that strength.
- Know the Devil's *Weaknesses* by reason of his defeat by Christ and then fight to reinforce that defeat.
- Know the *Opportunities* you have on earth from God, and take advantage of them. Occupy till Jesus comes and give no place to the Devil.
- Know your *Threats*- those things that can bring you down, such as sin, negative habits, bad company, prayerlessness, etc. Deal with them promptly.

If you take your spiritual SWOT study programme seriously; you are laying a solid foundation for effective *discernment*, ready to take the battle to the enemy's gates.

This is very important since the Devil doesn't come to us with horns or in a carnivorous appearance; he knows that even the weakest believer will rebuke him in the name of Jesus when he shows up in that form. So he counterfeits the Holy Spirit's operations, his demons counterfeit the operation of angels, and they've entered the church through human vessels as preachers, singers, instrumentalists and members. Believe it or not, they are there among true believers and God never said he was going to drive them all out from among us, but rather that it's our responsibility to detect them, cast the devils out and set the men free. See these Scriptures:

"I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left before he died, That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the Lord left those nations without driving them out hastily; neither delivered them into the hand of Joshua" (Judges 2:21-23).

“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the house-holder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew.13:24-30).

You can see that God is fully aware of the enemy's presence in the midst of His people and He's not running around trying to put them out. No; He empowered His people in advance with the gift of discernment to detect and deal with these enemies, having determined their final destruction.

From the book of Judges above, we see that God allows the enemy to attack His children to see if they will respond correctly. God enjoys it when we use the gifts and weapons at our disposal to deal with the enemy, stopping him from crossing his boundaries. But most believers cry to God to destroy the enemies of the church, but God is saying; *“They're already defeated and destined for destruction. You go ahead and reinforce their defeat and occupy till I come.”* So God expects us to be up and doing with our gifts. Use your gift to discern what's going on spiritually around you. It's your responsibility to mark them and avoid being entangled. Rom. ***“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”***(Romans16:17).

“and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

We must not take things for granted. Look at things scripturally in the Spirit of meekness, standing firm in the liberty wherein Christ has made you free.

Let me make a balance here: to use discernment is not going about looking for people's faults or weaknesses, it's not being critical of other

weak believers, who may be preachers or leaders. But don't create more confusion trying to prove your point or ability to discern. I say this because sometimes we can go the extreme in trying to correct what we call errors. Just because a fellow believer or church does not pray, sing, dance, dress, talk and walk like you(rs) does not make them the Devil. The Bible tells us that the Spirit of God operates in diverse ways. **"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations but it is the same God which worketh all in all"** (1Cor. 12:4-6. You know how critical we can be about others, forgetting this Scripture and our own flaws. Discernment is meant to detect and frustrate evil spirits in the church and not to tear down the church. Don't condone falsehood, but speak the truth in love.

Spiritual gifts must be developed; it's our responsibility to grow in the grace or gifts we have received freely from God, and to do that we must keep our spirits in the right condition to enable it co-operate with the Holy Spirit for the effectiveness of your spiritual gifts. Therefore, let me give a few tips on how to condition your spirit for the growth and development of your spiritual gifts.

Keep your spirit from defilement: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Cor.7:1).

Two kinds of filthiness are mentioned in the text: filthiness of the *flesh* and that of the *spirit*.

Filthiness of the flesh: This has to do with *acts* such as; Fornication, drunkenness, stealing etc. while *Filthiness of the spirit* has to do with *thoughts*, such as Bitterness, anger, hatred, spite, malice, wrath, forgiveness, envy, etc. To grow in discernment, you must watch your thoughts; your thought life is the gate way to your spirit. **"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..."** (Prov. 23:7).

Jesus said that it's what comes out of a man's heart that defiles him. **"Not that which goeth into the mouth that defileth a man; but that which cometh out the mouth, this defileth a man... But those things which proceed out of the mouth, come from the heart; and they defile the man. From the heart proceed evil thoughts..."**

(Matthew. 15:11-19). The spirit of a man can be defiled when he harbours sinful thoughts and fails to renew his mind through the Word. Surrender your life to Jesus right now if you've not truly done that and then yield to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to purge your spirit from all kind of filthiness.

Avoid being wounded or oppressed in your spirit: “*The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?*” (Prov. 18:14). “*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me...*” (Psalm 142:3).

This can happen as a result of long-standing grief, betrayal, disappointment, death of a loved one, loss of property, body injury, etc. which can injure your spirit and make it unable to function properly. But you should resolve to maintain a free and joyful spirit.

Keep your spirit from growing wild: “*Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty (wild) spirit before a fall*” (Prov.16:18). “*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them even as Elijah did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the son of man is not come to destroy men’s live, but to save them...*” (Luke 9:54-56).

This kind of harsh response and for revenge can happen as a result of *wrath* (an intensive uncontrolled anger or bitterness). There are people that, whenever you talk about spiritual warfare, what comes into their mind is to release fire on their enemies. That’s a symptom of a *wild or haughty spirit*.

Don’t allow your spirit to come under pressure: “*Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit*” (Ecc.4:6). “*And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death*” (Judges 16:16).

This can happen as a result of uncontrolled desire for something earthly. King Solomon calls it; “*vexation of spirit*”. External pressure can also put your spirit under compulsion, forcing it into inordinate activities as seen in the case of Samson.

Avoid haste in your spirit: “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty in spirit exalted folly” (Prov.14:29). “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools” (Ecc. 7:9).

Your spirit can be hasty as a result of being controlled by the spirit of arrogance and competitiveness. Competition is part of life, but, when taken to great extreme, it can be very destructive. Avoid any competition that attacks the calling and destinies of others, whereby you start comparing yourself with them and ignoring the fact that callings and destinies are not the same. Learn to be calm and stable in your spirit; avoid being hasty.

Build and maintain a strong spirit: “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit....” (Luke 1:80, 21:40)

This is the right kind of shape our spirit should be in. The Scriptures above tell us about the spirits of John the Baptist and that of Jesus Christ. They waxed or grew strong in their spirits, so that circumstances and situations could not break or damp their spirits. This is the secret of true success in spiritual business like ours.

Note: Someone can operate under a strong anointing but with a weak spirit due to carelessness. This is what distinguished Joseph from Samson. Therefore, it's imperative to develop your spirit by staying under the anointing. You must learn to withdraw from certain activities and take a careful look at your spiritual condition, learn to spend quality time in the study of God's Word and in fasting and prayers to develop your spiritual awareness. You can't do without these spiritual exercises, but you must understand that we're in warfare. Therefore these spiritual disciplines are necessary for survival, victory and dominion.

CHAPTER 7

FAITH IN GOD'S WORD

“In the beginning was the word...” (John 1:1a).

The Word brought everything into existence and has the power to preserve them. There is no kind of prophecy or word of knowledge that can replace the written Word of God. God's Word is the root of all Christian activities. So everything we do as Christians must be rooted in the Bible. *The Bible is the word of God readily available at all times*, it's the Book of books and remains the world's best-seller of all time, despite attempts by the enemy to eradicate it. The first time Satan attacked the human race was a direct attack on the Word of God. ***“...And he (Satan) said unto the woman, Yea hath God said....?”*** (Gen3:1).

No other book has been so attacked like the Bible. The Devil has called to question its inspiration, accuracy and its ability to meet the needs of the modern man; and many have written and said blasphemous things against the Bible and the Christian faith. One writer said, *“if all the books that have been written against the Bible were to be stacked on top of each other, you would have a pile higher than the Eiffel Tower in France.*

Then place the Bible beside them, it is the conqueror and outlives all its enemies.” The Bible has outlasted many governments that sought to destroy it. Intellectuals and even theologians have pored over every verse, seeking a way to disapprove its divine inspiration. Yet every day the Bible keeps proving itself to be the true Word of God by its ability to answer man's toughest questions and by the fulfilment of its prophetic predictions. In order to overcome the spirits of falsehood, we must have a good knowledge of the Bible so we can use it to navigate through life's challenges and to enforce its *Rhema power*. As Apostle Paul admonished in ***“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...”*** (Colossians 3:16a

“And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians. 6:17).

Now here are a few out of the numerous testimonies from respected secular and church leaders about the inerrancy and authority of the Bible.

- **St. Augustine** (AD 354 to 430). wrote: *“Freely do I admit to you, my friends, that I have learnt to ascribe to those books which are of canonical rank and only to them such reverence and honour that i firmly believe that no single error due to the author is found in any of them.”*
- **Martin Luther** (founder of Protestantism) said: *“This I have learned to do, to hold only those books which are called the Holy Scriptures in such honour that I finally believe that not one of the holy writers ever erred.”*
- **John Wesley** (founder of Methodism) said, *“If there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the word of truth.”*
- **Andrew Jackson** (the seventh president of the United States) said, *“that book is the rock on which this republic rest”*
- **Thomas Jefferson** (third president of the U.S) said, *“I have always said and will always say that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better homes, better citizens, better fathers, and better **husbands**”.*
- **Isaac Newton** (English mathematician and scientist) said, *“We account the Scriptures of God to be more sublime philosophy. I found more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever.”*
- **Sir Walter Scott** (the British poet) on his death bed requested for the Bible and said, *“Bring me that book; When asked what book? He replied, There is but one book.”*

Here is a the lyrics of the song- Ancient words by Micheal W. Smith

Holy words long preserved

For our walk in this world

*They resound with God's own heart.
Oh let the ancient words impact.*

*Words of life, Words of hope
Give us strength, help us cope
In this world where e'er we room,
Ancient words will guide us home.*

Chorus

*Ancient words ever true,
Changing me and changing you
We have come with open hearts
Oh let the ancient words impact.*

*Holy words of our faith
Handed down to this age
Came to us through sacrifice
Oh heed the faithful words of Christ*

*Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world
They resound with God's own heart.
Oh let the ancient words impact.*

—

Michael W. Smith

Someone once said that the Bible is a

- B-blessed
- I-information
- B-bringing
- L-life
- E-eternal

And I say, ***“Let’s go back to the most wanted and most Holy Book called The Holy Bible, lets study it with humility of heart that we may be transformed into the image of the glorious God by its unquenchable light.”***

But you see, we live in a time when most people are no longer interested in the study and teaching of God’s liberating Word. Rather they go after trivial things and that’s the reason some ministers try to satisfy the people by spending more time on *deliverance* and *miracle* services than on the teaching of God’s Word that is able to save and keep men saved and safe. These days I see some ministers preach in meetings without opening the Bible. Mercy!

We must watch it, because that’s how the spirit of error creeps into the life of a minister.

Faith in God’s Word will Keep you from Deception: A wise man once said *“if you don’t stand for anything, you will fall for everything.”* When you believe the things God has said concerning you in His Word, you’ll be a hard nut to false prophets. You see, it is one thing to read or know what the Bible says and it’s another thing to believe it. The problem with some people is that they read and hear the Word a lot but they don’t really believe and stand on it. And one of the reasons why people go from one place to the other looking for signs and wonders is unbelief, and so the Devil gives them a lot of magic to satisfy their curiosity.

Know this; the Devil’s plot is to steal the Word of God from us; I’m talking about the teaching and knowledge of the undiluted soul-saving Word. So Satan the Devil empowers his servants, the false prophets to do so by taking people’s attention away from the Word. A very good example of this is found in Acts 13:6-11. It reads, ***“And when they had***

gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Barjesus; which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn the deputy from the faith. Then (Saul who was also is called Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold the hand of the Lord is against thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” False prophets have many ways of perverting the way of God, turning men away from the faith. We too must wake up to our responsibilities, like Paul did to frustrate the efforts of the false prophets.

Here is what God said about that: *“Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore behold, I am against the prophets saith the Lord, that steal my words...”* (Jer. 23:29-30). False prophets make people depend on them in knowing the way to God rather than on the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

Unbelief Breeds Falsehood: It’s when a person does not believe in the ability of God to do what He has promised that he goes about looking for *visions* or accepting prophecies just from anybody who calls himself/herself a prophet or prophetess.

Those who don’t walk and live by faith in God’s Word will always want to walk and live by sight, while the Scripture tells us in 2Cor. 5:7: **“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”** But you can’t work or walk by faith if you don’t know or have the Word in you, because faith is not ignorant or blind. ***Faith pictures the Scriptures and acts on the pictures of the Scriptures.*** That’s what the Holy Spirit is saying: **“So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”.** (Romans 10:17).

What is faith? It’s *pistis* in Greek, which is being translated “*trust, fidelity or confidence, and faithfulness*”. ***So to walk by faith is to entrust your life into God’s hands and be confident in His ultimate ability to secure you even in your darkest hour.*** So those who do not walk by

faith; walk by sight; they put their lives in the mouth of seers, and so their lives are being controlled by whatever the seer sees. We must understand that God wants us to walk by faith. That's why He puts us through some tests to prove our faith in Him. He wants us to trust Him at all times. In times of uncertainties, He is still God; He does not lose control or get confused. He knows the end from the beginning; so He wants us to trust him even as we seek Him. He even spoke against seeking spiritual information from other sources in times of uncertainty. Read this Scripture carefully: ***“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow”*** (Isa. 50:10-11).

Walking in darkness here is not referring to moral darkness that comes from sin or Satanic oppression, but walking in uncertainty. We must learn to walk confidently in times of darkness or uncertainty, because God can choose to be silent at certain points in our lives. God's silence is intended to produce growth in our faith or trust in Him, while we walk through the dark places of life, lacking a sense of direction. You can't walk with God if you can't trust Him. He is saying that if you're a true believer and yet you're faced with uncertainties, you should just trust Him, when you have no idea how things will change for the better. Trust Him.

As for those who cannot wait for God's light, who believe that *“heaven helps those who help themselves”* and so create their own light which has to do with the use of other negative means like visiting a witch-doctor to solve their problems, they will pay back at last in sorrow. We are told in ***“by whom also we have access by faith into his grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”*** (Romans 5:2). There is a level of grace you can not obtain until your trust in God is firm. That's why it's so important to believe God's infallible Word at all times.

Benefits and Consequence: The Lord at the end of His teaching in Matthew.7 from the 24th to the 27th verses revealed the benefits of believing and acting on His Word and the consequence of not doing so.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which build his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, the flood came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

The Scripture above makes it very clear that it's in the doing, practising or acting on the Word that makes the difference and that it's foolishness not to build your life on God's Word. The imagery of ***rain, flood*** and ***wind*** in the text refers to the challenges of life and the attacks of the Devil which will certainly confront you in this journey of life. But if your life is not built on the solid rock of God's Word, you will become a victim of these circumstances. *The Devil is not intimidated by the size of your Bible; he is intimidated by your faith in the Bible.* He trembles when you believe what it says and when you declare and demonstrate what it says. The Word of God gives you the foundational information you need to reign in this world, though some-times it needs to be explained by those who have *revelational insight* for better understanding. God is still speaking new things, but He will never contradict Himself. You have to believe the Word of God, believe in the God who gave His beloved Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins so we can be saved. Believe in the ability of this God to save, heal and deliver you from the power of the evil one through His Word. ***“He sent His word, and healed them and delivered them from their destruction”*** (Psalm. 107:20).

Believe and Partake: Know the Bible, obey its *commands*, believe its *promises* and receive its *revelation* in humility of heart. Then you become a partaker of the Divine nature as revealed in the Epistle of Apostle Peter: ***“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”*** (2 Peter 1: 4) To be a partaker of the divine nature is to have the mind and life of God in your spirit.

Now read these scriptures carefully. ***“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”*** (Philip.2:5). ***“But we all with open face***

beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory... (2Cor. 3:18). ***“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in deed”*** (James 1:25).

What mind was in Christ? The mind of God. So He lived His life according to the mind, will, intent or purpose of God. And so as we begin and continue to study the glorious ways of God in His word, we are transformed into His image or nature. There's no literature that is as perfect as the Word of God and that is able to produce liberty like it. People live and perish in bondage when they neglect this *perfect law of liberty*. You can't afford to neglect the Word of God. Become a word *practitioner*, a Word *addict*. Pray the Word. Sing the Word and live it all your life on this pilgrimage. I tell you, you'll frustrate the Devil if you live that kind of life. This is what I call ***the word or Bible life***.

You see, when you live by faith in the Word, you'll be free from deception, as revealed in Revelation. 3:10: ***“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.”*** It is when people don't believe God's Word that they go about seeking information from negative sources, which are an abomination to God. See God's warning to His people about getting spiritual information from other sources. Read carefully: ***“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken”***. (Deuteronomy. 18:10-15).

God's children are warned not to practise or patronise those who practise these abominable satanic things which I will explain in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR HELP

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities...” (Romans.8:26)

This book can not be complete without talking about the most important person on earth, the Holy Spirit our Great Helper. You see, Christianity without the Holy Spirit is a lifeless and powerless religion, which is why even if we choose sometimes to call it a religion academically, we know it's more than a religion. It is *life, power, and a kingdom* manifested to man through Christ; it's *Divinity in humanity*. Hallelujah! The Holy Spirit is the power of Christianity as stated in Acts 1: 8: ***“Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*** You are powerless without Him.

The Holy Spirit our Helper is here to guide us and reveal to us the ways of God. No matter how swift the Devil is in his plot to deceive, the Holy Spirit will lift up a standard against him. ***“When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him”*** (Isaiah 59:19b) You see, it's neither by your power nor by might; you cannot overcome the deception of the enemy by trying to intellectualize spiritual activities; it is by the help of the Holy Spirit that we overcome the Devil and frustrate his tricks. All we need to do is to submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, who determines our sonship. ***“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God...The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God...”*** (Romans. 8:14).

The Holy Spirit, who is He?

The Holy Spirit is a divine person; he is not a wind, dove or fire, (they are used to symbolise Him). He is the Spirit of God.

- He is **Omniscient**: He sees and knows all things; he is the only true revealer of mysteries.
- He is **Omnipotent**: All power belongs to Him; He is the only true source of spiritual power.
- He is **Omnipresent**: He is everywhere at the same time; He's in your past, present and future. He has no limit.

Jesus said, ***"I will pray the Father and he will give you another comforter, that "HE" may abide with you for ever"*** (John 14:16). Note the phrase *"another Comforter"*. Jesus was a comforter to His disciples but was about leaving them physically. So He said, "Another person like me will come and abide with you for ever". Also note what Jesus said in verse 17: ***"But you know him, for He dwelleth with you and, shall be in you."*** The import of this is that the Holy Spirit has been with them in the person of Jesus, but the physical Jesus would have to go away and then the Holy Spirit would now live or dwell *in* them and therefore would not be limited to a particular vessel. This verse gives us a clue about the Godhead.

God came to earth in earth-suit (*flesh*) as Jesus to redeem man back to Himself through death. You see, He became a man to save men as revealed in John1:1: ***"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God."*** Verse14: ***"And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us..."*** So Jesus came with grace to prepare man for *divine habitation* and when He finished that part of the job, He went back to Heaven to be manifested as the Holy Spirit. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, *Divinity inhabited humanity*; the disciples in the Upper Room were all filled with the ability to preach the Gospel to every tribe and tongue with the demonstration of power. *Jesus is the Emmanuel (God with us), the Holy Spirit is God in us.* We serve one God who has chosen to manifest by three distinctive ways to

fulfil His purpose for humanity. The natural mind cannot comprehend this. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God in the believer, and He's there to teach, lead, reveal, strengthen, and comfort, etc. the disciples when necessary. Now read this carefully. ***"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen"*** (2Cor.13:14). We recite this text at the end of each Church service and don't even know how powerful it is. This Scripture reveals God's strategy of redemption. ***God(the Father)*** who is ***love*** manifested in ***Jesus Christ*** to introduce ***grace*** to mankind, thus reconciling man back to ***fellowship*** with Himself and continuing and sustaining that ***fellowship*** through the person of the ***Holy Spirit***.

Prophecy and Discernment are gifts from the Holy Spirit. Use both!

"...To another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits..." (1 Cor. 12:10)

The two gifts of the Holy Spirit discussed in this book, i.e. *Discernment* and *Prophecy* are given to believers for the profitability of others. These gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit to enhance our service to God and man. And when a believer receives any of these gifts, he or she needs to grow in it. He needs to also receive wisdom to use the gifts properly; he needs to study the Scriptures that relate to his gift to enable him to manifest this gift accordingly. He must stay connected to the Holy Spirit to grow in his gifts.

That was why the college of the prophets was instituted in the days of Old Testament prophet. ***"And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go we pray thee, unto Jordan and take thence every man a beam, Let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye."*** (2 King 6:1-2). These sons of the prophets were scholars under Elisha, and they were simply there for the development of their gifts and calling.

One of the problems we have today in the Church is that people receive gifts and don't care to develop or grow in these gifts. So they end up committing blunders. The prophetic gift has been misused by so many

Christians to create confusion and disorder among believers, due to lack of proper training in this area.

The prophetic ministry is a very sensitive ministry that demands a lot of care; it should be manifested with *maturity, discipline, humility and dignity*, for our God is a God of order. So we must submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit and sound teaching of the Scriptures to avoid destructive errors.

I used to pastor a ministry where anybody could stand up at any time in a service, run around the building or call people out and start putting up a show and all sort of useless demonstrations. Then I began to teach extensively on this subject. It then happened that those who used to get very wild and uncontrollable began to conduct themselves in such a way that we began to wonder if they've left the church. The truth sank into them, I saw clearly through that experience that *the Word works*, God's Word produces positive changes. Everyone at one point or the other makes some mistakes. *"It's not a disgrace to be wrong; but it is to stay wrong."* We can, and must, be humble and bold enough to correct or straighten certain things that have gone wrong in our lives and ministries.

How the Holy Spirit helps us against falsehood and error.

- **He speaks to or warns us about falsehood:** *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."* (1 Tim. 4:1-2). You see, the Holy Spirit speaks clearly about the spirits of falsehood. He calls them *seducing spirits* that spread the *doctrines of the Devil* through human vessels who facilitate these evil doctrines, speaking lies because their *conscience* have been withered or rendered insensitive to the truth.
- **He empowers you to discern:** *"Little children, it is the last time: and ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know it is the last*

time...but ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. (1John2:18 &20).

The Holy Spirit knows more than the Devil; He knows how subtle the Devil is. So He gives us the ability (*unction* or anointing) to *know* and withstand the tricks of the Devil. “...**to another discerning of spirits...**” (1Cor.12:10). You must invest in your relationship with the Holy Spirit; he knows how to signal you when something is wrong.

- **He leads us to the truth: “Howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth...”** (John 16:13).

You see, He'll lead you to the truth of the Scriptures and where the truth is being preached and practised. Therefore we must ask him to lead us even in the choice of where to worship or fellowship. You know that the opposite of *truth* is *lie*; so it means that someone can lie to you with the Bible and that there are *lying spirits* deceiving and leading many into destruction. Hence we need the *Spirit of truth* to lead us into ALL TRUTH, because our lives depend on THE TRUTH.

- **He will reveal things to you when necessary: “...and he will show you things to come”** (John 16:13c).

You don't need a fortune teller or a soothsayer to know things about the past, present and future. The Holy Spirit can show you the *things you need* to know with accuracy. There are some other ways the Holy Spirit helps us against falsehood. Therefore when it comes to dealing with falsehood, we cannot do without Him.

All we have to do is to yield or submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and stay in touch with Him as we worship and prayerfully consult Him before we make certain decisions. When you begin to live a life of total submission to Him, you will live a life of victory.

Light must prevail over darkness. Truth must prevail over lies and the kingdom of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God and of His Son Jesus Christ. Then we shall reign with Him. Contend for the faith and don't give the Devil a chance within and around you. Stand up for Jesus. Refuse to be intimidated, deceived, confused, discouraged and distracted. Rather, focus on God and His Kingdom by contributing your part to the establishment and expansion of that Kingdom here. Look beyond your denomination and congregation; see the body of Christ (the

church). Build the body with your gifts and abilities. Don't let falsehoods thrive around you once they are discovered. Prayerfully deal with them with the help of the Holy Spirit. Study the Word of God and live by it. Refuse to be a baby in spiritual matters; learn to be spiritually alert. Examine yourself; examine prophecies and ministries because they may not really be what they appear to be. Never take spiritual things for granted. Prove all things and hold fast that which is good and acceptable to God. Shalom!

Bibliography

Thomas Nelson Publishers; *The New Strong Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,* (1995)

Hendrickson Publishers; *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary,* (2000)

McCain Danny/ Keener Craig; *Understanding and Applying the Scriptures,* Kaduna, Nigeria ACTs, (2003)

Dr. Hamon Bill; *Prophets Pitfalls and Principles: God's Prophetic People today,* Destiny Image, Shippensburg, USA, (1991)

Freeman M. Freeman; *The New Manners & Customs of the Bible,*
Bridge
Logos, Orlando, USA, (1998)

Kenneth E. Hagin; *Seven steps for judging prophecy* Rhema Bible church
USA (1982)

Liardon Roberts; *Sharpen your Discernment.* Evangel Publishers Ltd.
Kaduna, Nigeria 2004

World Map; INDIA 1993 *The Shepherd's Staff*

GODWIN J. RUFUS

No, 1, Liberation Avenue,
Off C.I.T.C, Nkpor, Rumuolumeni,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pastorgrufus

Twitter: @Pastor_gjRufus

E-mail: Pastorgrufus@yahoo.com

Livingvine@yahoo.com

Phone: +234 - 803 514 5917

+234 - 818 461 8347