

# Discerning SPIRITS IN THE CHURCH

As much as we'd like the church to be a safe refuge, that isn't always the case. Often the spirits we face there are just as evil as those outside, which is why we must increase our ability to discern

BY KIMBERLY DANIELS

**O**ne Saturday evening one of our ministry teams was called to the church for an emergency deliverance session. Carol had been released from a mental institution and was driven six hours to meet with us. We were in the parking lot when the car drove up.

What I am about to tell you may be hard to believe, because I struggled with it even though I saw it with my own eyes. When they pulled onto the church grounds, the entire car began to shake. A little woman about 45 years old stepped out of the car, talking to herself.

As I came closer to her I heard these words come out of her mouth: "Yeah, Kim can't cast me out. She never dealt with a demon like this before. Benny Hinn can't cast me out. You do not know who I am."

We had not experienced a demon that talked this way before, and the voice coming from Carol was totally demonic. The woman was comatose, but the spirits used her body fluently. My husband and I were accompanied by two ex-witches and an ex-prostitute. We were so shocked by what we saw that we sat down and watched the demon walk around the room (through the woman's body) and quote Scriptures.

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We were all breathless! Carol's family had been in church for many generations, and she had been in church all of her life. The spirit revealed itself to us as a "religious spirit." We had not heard of such a thing. The demon mocked us and said, "I prophesy and quote Scriptures like the Son of God. Everything you can do, I can do better!"

Many people get offended when I mention the religious spirit. But these spirits killed Christ. They are legitimate enemies of God. They are "demons of the letter," and 2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us that the letter kills. There is only one spirit that kills: Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). There is one thief, one murderer and one destroyer. He does not care if he uses a sawed-off shotgun or a brand-new Bible to do his dirty work.

We took a deep breath, shook ourselves, accepted the truth of what we were confronting and began to work those devils over like a jackhammer. Thank God for the Holy Ghost! We did not know where to start, but the prophetic anointing of God came in and gave us direction. We pleaded the blood of Jesus over that room and took authority over the boldness of the devils we were dealing with.

The demons began to beg for us to leave them alone. We could hear them crying as they came out of the woman's body. God blessed us to discover the entry point of the devils in Carol's life. After many hours of deliverance, Carol got a major breakthrough.

Today she is not running away, and demons are not speaking through her anymore. She has a new glow on her face, and I see her at conferences all the time. She is living a normal life, because the spirit of torment has been broken off of her life.

## The Great Deception

God wants His people to be in a place to hear from Him, and "religion" is the greatest hindrance. If you believe I have a personal problem with religion, this teaching is already helping you discern accurately! I hate religion because God hates it. It is one of the worst subliminal bondages in the body of Christ.

When our discerners are sharpened to hear God's voice, we will not listen

to or follow the voices of the enemy. Too often we think the enemy's voice only comes as it did in Carol's case—as a strange, demonic sound. And that's exactly why we need discernment. For every gift that God has given, the enemy has sent a counterfeit. James said that "every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

In Acts 16, the soothsayer followed the apostles for days without any notice. She wasn't chanting or throwing voodoo dust. She was quoting Scriptures. The Bible says the devil comes as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). I believe that the encounter in Acts was prophetic in many ways. Many people who are operating in "other" spirits have followed the church quoting Scriptures for too long. This is the season when the apostolic mantle of God is going to fall on the church and publicly reveal the counterfeits.

We have had much infiltration from the other side in our local church. Every time we open our doors, the enemy comes in to steal, kill and destroy! If you are doing something for the Lord that gives life, you can bet the enemy will be there to destroy it. I'm not speaking of the devil personified by the world as the little cartoon character. I'm talking about the spirits that jump on people and walk in the door and sit on the first row.

Most often these religious spirits are incredibly subtle. They do not come as vampires and werewolves; they come like Jesus or as another Holy Ghost. They hide behind titles such as "Evangelist," "Mother," "Father" and "Pastor." They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Their gifts seem so similar, but we can always know them by the spirit in which they come.

First Corinthians tells us the gifts of God operate by one Spirit who submits only to Him. This is how we can easily detect the counterfeit: (1) They operate by another spirit; and (2) they submit their gifts to many gods. Paul had to specify and make sure the people knew which Jesus he was preaching about. He said, "And that this Jesus, whom I

preach unto you, is Christ" (Acts 17:3).

Second Corinthians 11:4 gives a similar warning: "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

These verses refer to the simplicity of the gospel. Paul was telling the church at Corinth that he feared the possibility of deception creeping into the church. He used the example of the serpent beguiling Eve through its subtlety. He told them to be watchful so their minds would not be corrupted.

Discerning of spirits is needed more than ever in the body of Christ. I believe that from reading the previous passages, we can safely say there is a counterfeit Jesus and Holy Ghost spirits, and another gospel that can be proclaimed.

## Gifted to Discern

This is a time in God when we must allow Him to sharpen our spiritual discerners. I believe the Bible supports the fact that every believer has a certain level of discernment given to him or her.

Romans 8 says the sons and daughters of God are led by His Spirit. First Corinthians 2:15 tells us that he who is spiritual judges, or discerns, all things. First John 4:1 says that as believers we must "try" (*dokimazo*, which means to test, examine and prove) the spirits to judge whether they are of God. And Hebrews 5:14 says, "strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This Scripture clearly tells us that there are born-again believers who have (1) matured in the area of discerning spirits by reason of use; and (2) exercised to discern both good and evil.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul emphasized that he was teaching by the Holy Ghost, comparing spiritual things to spiritual things (2:4). In doing this, he identified the enemy that would hinder true discernment of the things of God—"the natural man." In the occult world this is a term for a believer who walks by what he sees instead of by faith in God.

Participants in occult activity believe they can easily curse a "natural man."

Paul said the natural man would not receive the things of the spirit because they are foolishness to him. He goes on to say the natural man cannot know the deeper things of God because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). The curse of the natural man is the fruit of religion. It has a form of godliness, but it denies the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

There are many things religious people do not believe in that are scriptural. They deny the power of things such as women in ministry, speaking in tongues, casting out devils and more. They are distracted by and drawn to things that concern the outer appearance. Apparel and programs become the agenda of their everyday worship, and there is no spirit or truth in any of it.

The sad part is that there are demons behind these religious acts, and they run rampant in churches. The religious spirit is the strongest spirit I have warred against as a believer. This is a devil that you will waste your time trying to cast out if you do not deal with its essence. The essence of the religious spirit is a garment of bondage or a cloak of deception that must be removed before true deliverance can take place.

## Defeating the Religious Spirit

There are principalities that rule over every religious network, and Scripture proves this easily. First Corinthians 2:7-8 says: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the *princes of this world* knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (emphasis added).

Note that the word *princes* is related to the word *principality* in the original Greek. We know that physical people killed Jesus. It is also safe to say religious people called for His execution. Despite this, the Bible makes reference to higher powers than the people who killed Jesus. Ephesians 2 talks about the prince of the power of the air that rules over the children of disobedience.

The people carried out the orders, but the orders were written in the second heaven. The devil used the tool of religion to kill the Lord of glory. The

good thing about this Scripture is that even though the devil’s plan was completed, he had no understanding of what he was doing. The Bible says if he had known what he was doing, he would not have done it. Glory to God!

Paul mentioned the mystery of the hidden wisdom. God ordained this wisdom before the world was created for our glory (1 Cor. 2:7). This Scripture is speaking specifically about “our glory” as a believer. Many believers do not know that they have a glory, but Colossians 1:27 says this glory is Christ in us, the hope of glory. That is the one thing the devil and his crew cannot counterfeit: “Christ in us.”

Because the dark side does not have this benefit, their knowledge of the mysteries of God is null and void. As believers we must take advantage of the Christ in us. If you are a believer and you feel like you have not been taking advantage of your spiritual discernment, it’s not too late. Sharpening your discernment requires spiritual discipline first of all. As with working out in the natural, the most difficult part of the regimen is developing the discipline to stick to it.

As you get started, first ask yourself, “Am I a religious person?” If you are not sure, here are some indicators of religion:

- 1) You are a regimented person; any change in your schedule upsets you in an unusual way.
- 2) Your prayers are repetitive, and you often run out of things to pray as soon as you start praying.
- 3) You find yourself being very judgmental of how things appear, and what people think is an obsession to you.
- 4) You are very comfortable with how things have always been and have guarded yourself against any move of God that you are not familiar with.
- 5) You have difficulty obeying God when you know He has spoken because what He has told you to do does not make sense.

These indicators are not written in stone to be a guideline for the religious spirit. Based on the experiences I have had with this spirit, if you exhibit three of these five behaviors I would pray

## MORE INFORMATION

In *From a Mess to a Miracle* (Charisma House), Kimberly Daniels exposes the enemy’s traps that prevent believers from experiencing a truly transformed life in Christ. She pulls no punches as she teaches how to sharpen your spiritual discernment. The book can be found anywhere Christian books are sold or at [Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



this prayer:

*Father God, in the name of Jesus, I renounce every form of godliness that would cause me to deny the essence of Your true power. I renounce any zeal that I have obtained in God that is not according to true knowledge. I renounce the obsession of worrying about what people think. I refuse to be a “people pleaser,” and I break loose from the paradigms of the expectations of others.*

*I pull down every guard I have built around my mind that causes me to reject legitimate moves of God because of a lack of familiarity. I renounce my way and receive the way of Christ. Father, forgive me for being judgmental of things and people I do not understand. I release the people I have held in contempt in the spirit because of my set ways.*

*I renounce religious regimen and declare that I am a child of God and will be led by the Spirit of God. I separate myself from the rudiments of men, man’s religion, vain religion (James 1:26) and antichrist religions that persecute the church of God (Gal. 1:12). I commit to come out of the comfort zone of accepting only things I can easily understand. I renounce the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14). I believe and receive the fact that my spiritual discernment is being sharpened as I speak! I am not dull of hearing from the Lord, and I have an eye in the spirit to see the vision God is revealing to me.*

*Lord Jesus, I thank You that I am walking in the spirit of pure religion, which is undefiled before God. I break all covenants with the spirit that killed Christ—the “religious spirit”! Jesus, You are Lord in this area of my life. Amen. ◀*

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