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16
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12 SERMONS 2 AMAZING SERIES – “LEGACY” & “IWORSHIP”



PASS THE TEST

How to Verify the Leading of the Holy Spirit

A key part of our role as leaders of the church is to hear and know the voice of the Holy Spirit. I cannot imagine doing life and ministry without the Lord's guidance. If you're like me though, there are times you always wonder if the direction I am sensing is the Lord or reaction to the three day old pizza I ate. 1 John 4:1 says, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Over the years I have developed some specific test or filters that have helped me zero in and bring clarity to the leading I am sensing within me. Hopefully these will help you and your team as much as they have me.

ONE: The Truth Test - Does it agree with the Bible? Is there a Scripture of biblical principal that confirms what I hear in my heart? God's Spirit will never contradict His Written Word. Does what I hear in my heart line up with the Word of God? Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." The Holy Spirit will always guide us in perfect harmony with the bible.

TWO: The Test of Time - Do I feel as strongly about it today as I did yesterday? This one has been huge for me personally. I have found if I am patient and give time to process the situation the answer gets more and more clear. I typically find it will grow hotter and brighter or colder and dimmer over time. In Acts 5:38 Gamaliel gave this advice, "...for if this plan or work is of men it will come to nothing. But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it...lest you fight against God." Personally, I would rather miss it by being too slow in making a decision, rather than being too quick.



THREE: The Flavor Test – Does it taste like conviction or condemnation? Does it bring me to a place of change or shame? When the Holy Spirit convicts our hearts of something it is a correction with love and hope. When the enemy is attempting to demoralize us he condemns us with guilt, shame, and a sense of hopelessness.



FOUR: The Peace Test - Do I sense God's peace? 1 Corinthians 14:33 "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace." NIV "Many times when the Holy Spirit is leading me it is not so much "words" but an inward sensation of peace." My head is asking a zillion questions of doubt, yet on the inside I will have this overwhelming peace about moving forward with the decision at hand. On the flipside I also know what it feels like NOT to have the peace of God. It is an uncomfortable, awkward, taking a shower with your socks on kind of feeling. Psalms 85:8 is one of my favorite life navigating scriptures. It says, "I will hear what God the LORD will speak, For He will speak peace To His people and to His saints." Follow peace and it will lead you to victory.

FIVE: The "Me" Test - Is it a "warm fuzzy" or the Holy Spirit? A lot of things sound good to us. When I was around 21 years old and driving a clunker a voice spoke to me that an individual who drove a really nice car was going to give it to me. Well I had peace about that. It felt good but it was feeding my covetousness spirit! That was what I call a warm fuzzy. The way to identify this leading is to take yourself out of the equation. Did I have the same feeling when I thought about that person giving the car to someone else? Nope. James 4:3 warns us, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."



SIX: The Character Test - Is it consistent with my shape and profile? God has designed us with certain gifts, personality, and abilities. You are uniquely made. There is only one of you. That means you have a unique purpose. You are not an accident. You're here for a reason. It is important that we follow the blueprint God has for our lives. When I started in youth ministry 30 years ago it seemed that every "youth guy" sang and played the guitar. I sensed a leading in my heart that this was the path for me as well. I took voice and guitar lessons to no avail. Both teachers as nicely as they could express confirmed what I began to quickly learn. "I didn't get the musical genes on the day I was created." This was outside of my shape and spiritual DNA nature.

SEVEN: The Mentor Test – Do fellow believers I look to for spiritual guidance and coaching confirm it? Proverbs 11:14 says, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall. But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” I believe if the Holy Spirit is truly leading us He will use people who are close to us as a confirmation. This has always been such a reassurance to me when some big decisions need to be made. If those mentors reaffirmed what was in my heart I went for it. If what they sensed in their heart was opposite of what was in mine I would table it and commit it to more prayer and listening. The great part about being married to my wife, Kim, is that she is my number one voice of confirmation. We will each take a few days and pray about a situation then come back and compare notes. It is awesome to see the Holy Spirit at work and to hear and know His voice.

EIGHT: The Head and Heart Test – Where is this voice coming from? Sometimes the picture is so cloudy we can't tell up from down. It's like when you fill a jar with oil and water and then shake it up. It is hard to distinguish what is me and what is God? But just like the jar of liquid, if we will get quiet the two parts will begin to clearly separate. The Bible tells us to be still and know God. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to *dividing soul and spirit*, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Some of the best advice I ever received as a young minister was this, “When you have an important decision to make, double up on your time in God's Word.” The Word of God will help you divide what is your heart and the leading of God from your head and the voice of your body and desires. Romans 12:2 tells us when we renew our minds with the Word of God that we will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.



NINE: The Spiritual Gifts Test - Does the gift confirm what I already had in my heart? Some people want a minister to prophesy and tell them what they should do. They don't want to take the time or make the investment to hear the voice of God themselves. When in reality a spiritual gift should confirm or reaffirm what you already have or know in your heart. My oldest daughter, Alesha, is in England with YWAM for a year. This week they had a guest speaker come in to teach. At the close of the session he began to flow in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. He had never met my daughter or spoken with her. But he began to prophesy to her about her future and the gifts and callings on her life. He hit the nail on the head and with the Holy Spirit's direction, confirmed within Alesha things she had known in her heart but hadn't fully embraced with confidence. Needless to say, when we talked, she was pumped by the confirmation the Lord had given to her.

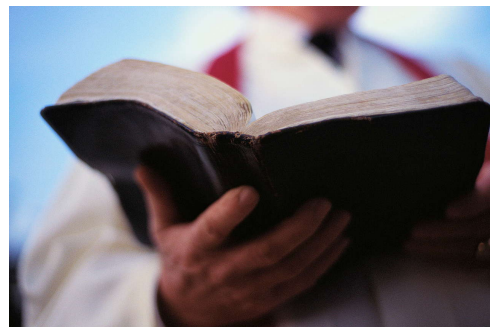
Well there you have it. Nine filters to put that leading in your heart through. No, I don't believe you have to have something pass all nine tests before you step out. Many times when you run it through several, your answer will be clear. I pray that you hear and know the voice of God for your life and ministry!

Quench the Thirst of a Generation!!

Pastor Dean

Just For Fun

A little boy asked his mother why the pastor got a month's vacation while his dad only got two weeks. The mother answered, "Well son, if he's a good pastor, he needs it. If he isn't, the congregation needs it."



HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT IS TIME TO "HANG UP THE CAR KEYS"?
I SAY WHEN YOUR DOG HAS THIS LOOK ON HIS FACE!



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