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Excerpt from the *Dunamis Project Manual 2: In the Spirit's Power: Cooperating with the Holy Spirit to do the work of Jesus Christ*.

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Excerpt from the *Dunamis Project Manual on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (In the Spirit's Power: Cooperating with the Holy Spirit to do the work of Jesus Christ)*.

FOUR GUIDELINES FOR DISCERNMENT OF PROPHECY

1. Does it give glory to Jesus Christ in the present and in the future?

John 14:26

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

The Holy Spirit will point to Jesus and bring you the words of Jesus, and not any one else!

John 16:13-14

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

The Holy Spirit has a single-minded focus on Jesus Christ as the truth, and will bring glory only to Jesus. But which Jesus will the Holy Spirit reveal? John gives us the answer:

1 John 4:1-3

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. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

It is through the Scripture that we may know that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

Today, many in the New Age Movement speak of Christ or the Christ Spirit, but this is detached from the revelation found in the Bible that Jesus is a real person who died on the cross for our sins.

This leads us to the second question.

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2. Is it consistent with the intentions and character of God as revealed in scripture?

God has spoken to us in scripture revealing His character, His will and His intentions. Scripture, as God's self revelation, is the standard by which all other revelation is to be measured.

John 2:22

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God continues to speak directly and personally to His people, to guide, to comfort, and to address needs in their circumstances. While not always verbatim from scripture, this immediate word of God will always be in accord with the teachings of Scripture and consistent with the character of God as revealed in scripture.

Calvin puts this with absolute clarity.

"Therefore the Spirit, promised to us, has not the task of inventing new and unheard-of revelations, or of forging a new kind of doctrine, to lead us away from the received doctrine of the gospel, but of sealing our minds with that very doctrine which is commended by the gospel."

"But lest under his sign the spirit of Satan should creep in, he would have us recognize him in his own image, which he has stamped upon the Scriptures. He is the Author of the Scriptures: he cannot vary and differ from himself."

For instance, I find nowhere in the Bible that says, "I am calling Brad and Laura Long to go to Taiwan as missionaries." But such guidance is consistent with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). There is nowhere that chapter and verse says, "I am calling Cindy Strickler to become the Director of the PRMI Dunamis Fellowship. However, this guidance is consistent with Scripture of calling people to pastoral offices

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(Ephesians 4:11). That God would call into existence something like the Dunamis Fellowship with the purpose of growing disciples who can move in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit is consistent with the nature of the Church and the gift giving work of the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians 12-14)

Discernment Or Guidance Received By A Denomination or Church Must Also Concur With Scripture.

The same principles that apply to personal guidance apply to guidance that is received in a corporate context, for example by a denomination. The means that all guidance or inspiration received, words or prophecy, visions or inspirations given in a prayer or worship service and even the official teaching or decisions made by a church and a denomination must be tested by Scripture.

Scots Confession Confirms This Principle of Discernment

The Scots Confession is especially relevant today as a number of denominations in UK, USA and Canada have departed from their own biblical foundations over the issues of homosexuality and Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

“As we do not rashly condemn what good men, assembled together in general councils lawfully gathered, have set before us; so we do not receive uncritically whatever has been declared to men under the name of the general councils, for it is plain that, being human, some of them have manifestly erred, and that in matter of great weight and importance.

So far then as the council confirms its decrees by the plain Word of God, so far do we reverence and embrace them.

But if men, under the name of a council, pretend to forge for us new articles of faith, or to make decisions contrary to the Word of God, then we must utterly deny them as the doctrine of devils, drawing our souls from the voice of the one God to follow the doctrines and teachings of men.”

We find that in some matters of application there is true ambiguity in scripture, and therefore, good Christians facing the same situation and reading the same Bible may differ in their interpretation and application. One example is the ordination of women to the office of teaching elder. We may face the same ambiguity of discerning the guidance or the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the personal as well as corporate arena.

Basic Assumptions About the Bible As The Word Of God

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Since the Reformation the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches have developed some practical assumptions that aid us in interpreting the Bible. These principles have been well tested and have enabled congregations in the Reformed tradition to remain faithful to God's will as revealed in Scripture.

The following is taken from the Christian Reformed Church's 1978 Synodical Study: "Hermeneutical Principles concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office, based on Louis Berkhof's Principles of Biblical Interpretation.

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience. (The Larger Catechism Q 3)
2. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author who moved human authors to write exactly what God intended to be written.
3. The Holy Spirit seals the truth of Scripture upon our hearts.
4. But I reply: the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets, must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded. (John Calvin – Institutes 1.7.4)
 - a. Because God is the Bible's primary authority and author, there is an organic unity to Scripture.
 - b. An ultimate, God-given coherence unifies the different parts and emphases of scripture.
 - c. There is an enduring constancy of meaning and purpose underlying the progressive, historical revelation in scripture.
 - d. The basic message of the whole of scripture is that God, through Jesus Christ, has redeemed and is renewing His people and His creation from the consequences of the fall. Therefore, we are to live as Christ's disciples.
 - e. Because of the unity of the Bible, the ultimate meaning of any part of scripture – a verse or a book – is determined by its place within the whole. The unity of scripture as a whole is the context for interpreting any of its parts. We cannot take text out of context nor is single-verse "proof-texting" acceptable.

This Yields A Basic Reformed Principle Of Interpretation: Scripture Must Interpret Scripture

The Westminster Confession expresses this principle:

"The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not

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manifold, but one), it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” (Ch I, 9)

- The Holy Spirit has worked through human authors without negating their humanity. They wrote in a variety of literary forms and in a variety of different historical and cultural contexts.
- To rightly interpret Scripture we must seek to understand what the text means in its own immediate literary and historical context – what it meant to the author and to the original readers.

These principles of interpretation are sound and as they have been applied since the Reformation have kept Christians true to God’s intentions.

3. Do other people who are born again and filled with the Holy Spirit have a confirming witness?

I Corinthians 14:29

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

If guidance or a manifestation is from the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit will confirm it in the hearts of others. This is not the process of taking a vote and letting the majority rule. It is rather the discernment of those who are born again and are being filled with the Holy Spirit. Spiritual reality is not accessible to those who are not walking with Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

A common misunderstanding is that following the Holy Spirit will always be confirmed by a sense of peace. Ignatius shows us that it is more complicated than that. Below are his rules for the discernment of spirits. These are extremely helpful for discerning the moving of the Holy Spirit within oneself as well as in a group.

“In souls that are progressing to greater perfection, the action of the good angel [the Holy Spirit] is delicate, gentle, delightful. It may be compared to a drop of water penetrating a sponge.”

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"The action of the evil spirit upon such souls is violent, noisy, and disturbing. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone."

"In souls that are going from bad to worse, the action of the spirits mentioned above is just the reverse. The reason for this is to be sought in the opposition or similarity of these souls to the different kinds of spirits. When the disposition is contrary to that of the spirits, they enter with noise and commotion that are easily perceived. When the disposition is similar to that of the spirits, they enter silently, as one coming into his own house when the doors are open."

These rules are written for the individual, but may be applied to the dynamic of the whole group. One must discern the spirit that is directing the overall group. If the group is being led by the Holy Spirit, then words of the Holy Spirit will be met with sympathy and mutual approving witness. It will be in the flow and feel of the group. On the other hand, if the group as a whole is moving contrary to the Holy Spirit, words in accord with the controlling spirit of the group will appear to be in harmony and the words or revelations of the Holy Spirit will be in discord.

This was experienced vividly, at the 1993 Re-imagining God conference. At this conference the speakers ridiculed fundamental Biblical doctrines such as the atonement and presented doctrines that were heretical. These statements contrary to the Bible were given an enthusiastic welcome by many of the 900 participants. They were in accord with spiritual direction of the meeting. For those women who were of biblical faith, however, these statements were experienced as a visceral reaction of, in some cases, sickness. Unfortunately, these faithful disciples were the ones out of place and contrary to the prevailing ethos.

4. Is there confirmation in objectively verifiable events or facts?

God said, "Let there be light" and there was! This light could be objectively studied and observed. This is true for other words and actions by God. They are objective. This is why Isaiah says God's words will not come back empty. These objective results provide us with the fourth discernment test.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?: If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

Examples of this:

- Sometimes when praying for healing, there will be manifestations. If there is actual healing, the doctor will confirm it.

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- If a vision or prophecy is from God it will start to have objectively verifiable indications that it is actually being fulfilled.
- A word of knowledge will connect with actual facts in the person's life.

This concept of "objective verification" is extremely important. Many words from the Lord may receive an immediate "objective verification" that will be visible to the astute observer. There are times, however, when the word relates to things that will not immediately come to pass. There are, for instance, prophecies in the Bible that took hundreds of years before they were fulfilled. It is then that we enter the suspenseful time of waiting until there is indeed the confirmation.

Despite this time lapse, based on the reality of God, the principle holds: If a word really is from the Lord, there will be some objective confirmation of its reality, and normally this confirmation will come amidst our own circumstances. In being led by the Holy Spirit and discerning what the Holy Spirit is doing and saying, one must have faith but also an unwavering commitment to reality. Trouble comes when in the name of faith we try to falsify reality to suit our aims or preconceptions.

Applying These Four Questions

1. Ask these questions as you hear someone teach, preach, give a word, or you see a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.
2. You need to ask yourself these questions when you receive something from the Lord.
3. Do not trust the reputation of the preacher, teacher or prophet. Always discern each new word from the Lord. (Between breakfast and lunch they may have been deceived.)

When a person becomes recognized, either by themselves or the community, as having such an anointing to speak God's word, they may begin to assume that each time they speak they are led by the Spirit. The result is that they are no longer submitted to the rigors of the discernment process. This is a point of great danger!

Often the preacher or prophet's ego, in collaboration with the passivity and praise of the community, provides an opening for Satan to slip in and work his mischief.

Each new word that is given must be discerned anew.

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The Dunamis Project is the central training of PRMI to help you cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We cannot be very effective in any kind of ministry unless we have received the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

Thousands of Christians around the world have experienced a dynamic change in their ministry as they have learned how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

They have stepped into a deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and found new life and joy in more effective ministry to others.

Learn More About the Dunamis Project:

<https://www.primi.org/program-descriptions/the-dunamis-project>