

DISTINGUISHING THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM THE VOICE OF THE DEVIL

Under this heading there are a number of guidelines that will help us to distinguish between the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the devil. Here are some directions that apply to practical situations:

- When the Holy Spirit is speaking, you will hear a soft, still, (inner) small voice. There is no coercion to be hasty. He never bullies you! The Spirit talks to us through a clear conscience and through the Word of God. Remember, the Spirit of God never unfairly demands our obedience. Obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit bears spiritual fruit. Satan, on the other hand, talks in a loud domineering voice from outside our person. He always tries to force us to act immediately. When Satan speaks, fear sets in because he wishes to enslave us to his supernatural power. Obedience to Satan's voice yields no spiritual fruit, instead, it produces confusion and discouragement.
- When the Holy Spirit is at work, He seeks our 'active' co-operation. He never negates reason or our free will. With our free will we must choose to cooperate fully with Him. The devil however, wants to abuse us: he denies our personal will and intellect, and demands passive consent so that he can "use" and abuse us.
- The Holy Spirit convicts and convinces us of sin. The devil accuses (and condemns) us of sin. The Holy Spirit always shows us the road of salvation and deliverance from sin by directing us to the cross. Satan brings despair and an excessive awareness of sin. He tries to hide the cross and make us feel so guilty about our sins that we lose hope. Remember, an excessive awareness of sin leads to despondency and fear. Thereafter, we begin to believe that God no longer loves us.

- When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, He is very specific and clear. When Satan talks about sin, he is usually very vague - he evokes a hazy feeling of sinfulness. To confess these blurred feelings, never leads to liberation. But in Christ, if we confess particular sins directly and specifically, there is always absolution and liberation.
- The leading of the Holy Spirit always corresponds with the Word and the character of God, and it always brings hope and builds faith. When the devil speaks, he says that you do not need Scripture or a Scriptural principle to justify your actions, you need to 'just do it'! A devil may care attitude!
- The Spirit of God is never in a hurry, whereas the devil always wants to hurry us into action. The Spirit of God gives us time to think, to reflect, to be sure and at peace. The devil wants us to act hastily and impulsively, because then we easily make mistakes and he can trap us. Too many Christians have fallen into the trap that the enemy has laid because they acted hastily.
- The Holy Spirit gently leads, the devil forces us from behind. Whereas the Holy Spirit inspires, the devil intimidates. The Holy Spirit motivates, but Satan dominates. The devil does not allow us to think something through, or to discuss it with those we trust. He wants us to think that if we don't act immediately, we will lose out!
- The Holy Spirit seeks our full co-operation. He invites us to be co-workers with Him. Satan, on the other hand; dominates, compels, forces and manipulates. He doesn't seek our co-operation, because he likes to intimidate and abuses us. He is a control freak! If you feel like you are being pushed into something and you have no uneasiness about it, it's the devil!

- The Holy Spirit wants to show believers how precious they are to God, and that God wants to be in a relationship with them and have fellowship with them. However, when the devil speaks to us, he wants us to believe that we are worthless, that we are so bad that God wants nothing to do with us, and that He does not really care for us. The devil wants to make us believe that we are of no value to God; that we need not even try to change our lives, or live holy lives, or testify. He tries to convince us that if we try it just will not work.
- The Holy Spirit wants to show people that there is absolution for their sins, irrespective of how great these sins may be. Satan convinces people that their sins are too great and that they cannot be saved or liberated from their sins. He keeps them imprisoned!
- The Spirit of God wants us to understand that He can redeem and heal us completely, irrespective of how deep the sorrow, how great the sin, how dreadful the deeds from our past. God is not overwhelmed by our failures; our failures and mistakes provide God with an opportunity to demonstrate His great love and mercy towards us. God provided for our weaknesses and sin by sending His Son Jesus to be crucified. The devil wants to convince us that God cannot do it, or that He might only do it in part, so that we will have to struggle along for the rest of our lives. He wants us to believe that we will never be completely cured, completely forgiven and completely set free. He is the father of lies!

The biggest difference between the voice of the Holy Spirit and the devil's voice is that the Holy Spirit's voice produces **peace** and **joy**. These are divine attributes in the human heart that the devil cannot counterfeit.