

Discernment checklist

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This checklist is not to start a witch hunt. It is simply a list of useful indicators that may help to focus on what might actually be happening underneath a situation, which we feel uncomfortable about. Behaviours displayed in one area alone do not mean that a person or movement of God is to be labelled as heretical or of the devil. (Remember God is always doing something new and his ways are not ours.) If something is seriously wrong, there will, most likely, be multiple areas that indicate this.

1. Am I in the right place with God and other people?

First and foremost! Am I seeing this with a good attitude? Am I filtering it through my own preconceptions or bad experiences? Is it because I am outside my personal comfort zone? Am I making assumptions based on misrepresentation or someone else's prejudices?

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." **Jeremiah 17⁹⁻¹⁰**

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. **Hebrews 12¹⁵**

2. Does it contradict the bible?

Angelic/spirit/special guides. Occult or new age practices. Personal association of the speaker/prophet/leader with bible characters and/or Jesus in an uncomfortable or over familiar way. Lack of reverence for God. Extra biblical revelation. Adding or deleting parts of the bible. Test the message not the phenomena. (Check if our own interpretation of the bible is correct too of course)

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! **Galatians 1⁸⁻⁹**

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. **Colossians 2¹⁸**

3. Who gets the glory?

Is it Jesus? Or is it the speaker/prophet/leader or you or me? Who do those who have been ministered to talk about in their testimonies, Jesus or the speaker/prophet/leader?

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. **Colossians 2¹⁸**

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. **James 3¹³⁻¹⁶**

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4. What are the fruits of the person/movement/work?

Unity or division? Conviction or condemnation? Encouragement or hopelessness? Easily falling away or lasting commitment to Jesus? Dependence on the next big thing or spiritual growth and maturity?

When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' " At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. **Luke 7²⁰⁻²²**

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. **Matthew 12³³**

5. Is it built around one individual or ministry?

Claiming an anointing (Greek: *christos*) above others? Lack of accountability to others? Narcissistic? Personality cult? Claims of better church/teaching/worship etc than anyone else?

For false Christs (*christos*) and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. **Matthew 24²⁴** (My note)

Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. **Mark 13⁵⁻⁶**

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? **1Corinthians 3¹⁻⁴** (The whole chapter is relevant.)

6. Am I being asked to disengage my mind?

God has given us a mind. It is there to guard the heart. We are to be transformed by renewing our minds (ie to think from God's perspective) and not to depend on our *understanding* (not our minds).

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12²**

The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. **1Corinthians 14³²⁻³³**

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. **1Peter 4⁷**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own *understanding*; **Proverbs 3⁵** (My emphasis.)

7. Do I feel manipulated, condemned or violated in some way?

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Bullied? Coerced? Shamed or humiliated? (Not to be confused with conviction of sin.) None of these are part of our life in Jesus and if the overall fruit is in this area, we should beware.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. **Romans 8¹⁻²**

The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him. **Psalm 34²²**

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. **Colossians 2⁸**

8. Is everything done in the open?

The things of God are done in the light. Is there something that is being hidden, kept from general view (eg The speaker has a drink/lust/gambling problem that is being covered up)? Is there some secret “knowledge” or “revelation”? Who is involved behind the scenes? Is there another agenda?

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. **Jude 1⁴**

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 4²**

For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. **Ephesians 5¹²**

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God. **1 Corinthians 4⁵**

9. Is there hypocrisy involved?

Not always possible to tell but look at how the speaker/prophet/leader behaves “off-stage”. Neither gifting nor personality are indicators of where a person is, spiritually speaking.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **Galatians 5¹⁹⁻²¹**

God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. **Romans 11²⁹**

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. **1 Corinthians 2¹⁻⁵**

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Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. **Colossians 2²³**

10. Follow the money

Is there an emphasis on money/giving and/or merchandising? Is money/giving linked with better access to the speaker/prophet/leader or increased spirituality or favour? Is there proper accounting?

They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain. **Isaiah 56¹¹**

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. **1Timothy 6³⁻⁵**

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? **James 2¹⁻⁴**