

DISCERNMENT: A KEY GIFT IN KINGDOM BUSINESS

By John Gagliardi



It seems every other day you read about some new scam or con trick, and when you hear the details, you wonder how on earth anyone could be so gullible as to fall for such an obvious trap. The trouble is, it is always easier to be wise after the event.

Some of the scams around are enormously sophisticated and complex, and have one great, overwhelming hook – they depend on people’s greed and desire for the “quick buck”. And Christians are not immune – indeed, some of the more cunning and deceptive scams around are aimed specifically at Christians, based on the assumption that we are somehow “otherworldly” and naive in the ways of the world.

The Bible tells us to love everyone, and I have heard well-meaning Christians say that we are very vulnerable to get-rich-quick schemes because we are, after all, to “believe all things” and “think no evil” about other people – in other words, we always act in love by giving our Christian brothers and sisters the “benefit of the doubt”.

But the verses referred to, 1 Corinthians 13: 5 and 7, are separated by a verse that says love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. God remains a God of truth and not deception and the “quick buck”.

Another reason Christians are vulnerable to scams and unwise investments is an unbalanced perception of the prosperity doctrine – While God incontrovertibly tells us many times in the Bible that He wants us to be wealthy and prosper, He also tells us we are to be holy, and operate in truth and integrity. The God of mercy is also the God of judgment ... “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God...” (Romans 11: 22).

It is very easy to convince ourselves that God is going to suddenly drop untold wealth into our arms, without necessarily understanding the testing, the self-discipline and the growing and maturing that goes before Godly wealth. So when the conman comes along, we are only too ready to see him as God’s answer to that last prophecy about “untold wealth”.

We must be able to discern – Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 10: 16 that we are to be as “wary (or shrewd) as snakes and harmless as doves.” And the first step in being “wary” is to know the Bible well, so that we know how God has historically operated with and through His people. Hebrews 4: 12 tells us that “...the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Once we are full of the Word as a sure and strong foundation, and a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”, we can then plug in to God’s “spiritual early warning system” – the Holy Spirit, the “still small voice” of God.

One of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12: 10 is the “discerning of spirits”, and we are advised by Paul not to believe every spirit, but to “test the spirits, whether they are of God” (1 John 4: 1). In 1 Timothy 4: 1, Paul goes on to say that in the latter times (which we are living in), “some will depart for the faith, giving heed to deceiving demons and doctrines of demons.”

This is not to say at all that everyone who comes up to you with a scheme that seems just a little too good to be true is demon possessed! But rather, he or she could be in deception by “giving heed” to deceiving spirits. If our discernment is working as it should at full power, and we are plugged in to the Holy Spirit, there will be a clear “inner witness” that all is not well. There will be a sensation of uneasiness and lack of peace and joy – the “still small voice” that Elijah heard on the mountain (1 Kings 19: 12).

A very practical way of discerning where someone is coming from, is simply to look at his or her past exploits – what have they achieved, what are the results of their past endeavors.

Jesus puts it this way: “Beware of false prophets (conmen), who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits...A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Therefore, by their fruits will you know them” (Matthew 7: 15-20). Again in Matthew 12: 33, He says: “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.”

Jesus warns us again and again throughout the Gospels of outwardly spiritual but deceptive people: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My Name...” (Matthew 24: 4 and 5). In the last book of the Old Testament, God promises us that “you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him” (Malachi 3: 18).

Solomon, the wisest of all kings, well understood the need for a sharp and clear ability to discern the motives of other people. In 1 Kings 3, God appears in a dream to the newly crowned Solomon and asks him what he would like. Overwhelmed with the enormity of the task of ruling Israel, he asked only for “an understanding heart” that he could “discern between good and evil.” God gave him what he asked for, plus a bonus of “riches and honour” (1 Kings 3: 5-13).

God was pleased that Solomon asked Him for discernment, so he could rule better – and God is pleased when we seek after discernment, so we can carry out our “kingly” duties better. It is the job of the New Testament “kings” – the business people – to go out into the marketplace and bring in the “spoils” to the house of God. The pastor’s role is to hear God, and provide the “vision” for the people, and it is the business people’s role to bring in the “provision”.

We are in the end times – and according to Proverbs 13: 22, the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The wealth is stored up, ready for God’s people to take hold of it and use it to help fulfill the Great Commission. It will take enormous amounts of money for the Gospel to be “preached in all the world for a witness to all nations” (Matthew 24: 14).

God will use clean and pure vessels, who have been tried and tested, and who will not destroy themselves by the misuse of great wealth, to effect the stupendous end-time wealth transfer. These Kingdom business professionals will be exceptional people - they will walk in total trust and obedience to God’s call on their lives, full of integrity and the fear of the Lord. They will operate powerfully in the gifts of the Spirit, including discernment, to best use the resources God has given them.

They will have the wisdom to know when to move and when not to, and whom to trust and whom not to, because “...A wise man’s heart discerns both time and judgment” (Ecclesiastes 8:5). Wisdom and the gifts of the Spirit are there for the asking – and Kingdom business professionals cannot fulfill their call without a full measure of both.