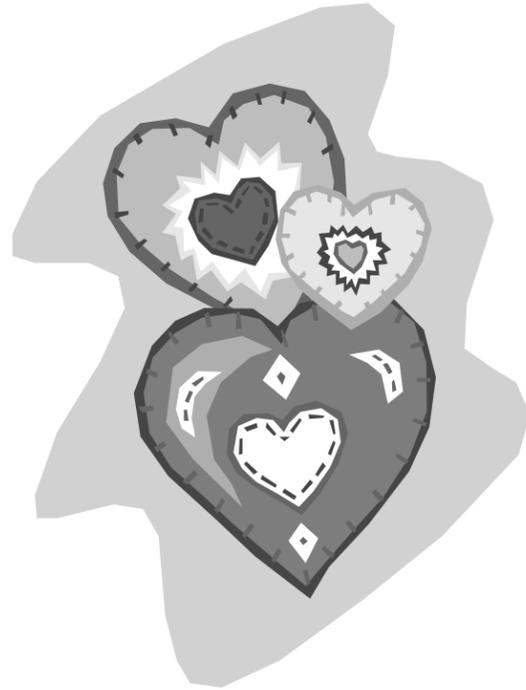




Pacific Waves
Newsletter

Pacific Waves
P.O. Box 1759
Pearl City, HI
96782

Phone: 808-456-1031
Email: ssimpson@rainbows.net



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Discern, Test & Judge Rightly *end*

brother that walketh DISORDERLY, and not after the tradition which ye received of us

2 Tim. 3:5,7 Concerning the last days, he says that some will have "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such turn away" for such people are "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"

*2 John 10:11 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds **

2 Cor. 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no the unclean thing; and I will receive you

Jude 1:12 These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds

without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.

We all were once in darkness. Now that we are in the light we must walk in the light, rejecting darkness.

Eph. 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.



Missionary Sandy Simpson is an evangelist and editor of Pacific Waves Newsletter.

contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them

Eph. 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them

2 Thess. 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every

Editor in Chief
Sandy Simpson

Contributing Editors
Juanita Simpson

Printer
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Newsletter

Fruit Of The Spirit Series — Love by Sandy Simpson

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Love Examples In The Bible

There are many people who give us a great example of love in the Bible. Ruth teaches us love in her relationship to Naomi and Boaz. Naomi's husband died as well as her two sons, one of whom was married to Ruth who was a Moabite. Naomi decided to go back to Israel as it was no longer having a famine. She asked her two daughter-in-laws to go with her, but then gave them the opportunity to stay in Moab. But Ruth clung to Naomi.

Ru 1:16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

Though Ruth was a Moabite and Naomi a Hebrew, Ruth was

willing to give up her homeland to go with Naomi whom she loved.

We learn four things from Ruth. (1) Love follows. (2) Love abides. (3) Love is fellowship. (4) Love is faithfulness till death.

When they went back to Naomi's homeland of Israel, Naomi sent Ruth to glean wheat in the fields of Boaz. Boaz noticed her and later found out Naomi had sent her. Boaz was their kinsman-redeemer. Naomi told Ruth to go lay at Boaz feet and in so doing Ruth showed her love for Naomi and for Boaz as this was a pledge to become the wife of Boaz. Boaz really felt that love because Ruth had not run after younger men.

Read Ruth 3: 9-11

So we can see from the story of Ruth that love means obedience. If you love someone you will do what they ask. You will go



wherever they go, perhaps not always in body, but in spirit and in prayer.

When we talk of love we also think of the story of Jonathan, son of Saul, and David. The Bible says that Jonathan loved David.

Read 1 Samuel 17:57-18:4

From the day that David stood up for the name of God against Goliath, Jonathan loved David and did everything he could to protect

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Discern, Test & Judge Rightly by Sandy Simpson

In running a web site with over 900+ articles, thousands of hits per month from all over the world, and hundreds of e-mails per week, I have come to realize, with time, that there is a terrible problem in Christendom today. The problem stems from an existential subjective view of the world that has filtered into the church from secular society, but also from the teachings of heretical wolves who have taught an entire generation of churchgoers completely unbiblical methods of discernment or to get rid of any discernment altogether.

Let me start out this chapter by telling you what methods are

being used for "discernment" today that don't have biblical support, then I will move on to the ways in which the Bible does tell us to test teaching, prophecy and actions.

The following criteria are what many people who call themselves Christians are using to test reality and truth today:

- (1) Experiences, manifestations
- (2) Feelings, emotions
- (3) Numbers of followers
- (4) Numbers of people who claim to be saved
- (5) The size of a church or movement
- (6) Signs and wonders, purported

miracles (whether real or false)
(7) Subjective testimonies
(8) Hearsay and rumors
(9) How successful and rich a teacher is

(10) If a person speaks with authority
(11) The atmosphere of a meeting

None of the above criteria being used by many churchgoers today are cited in the Bible as ways we are to test, discern and judge rightly.

Experiences

Experiences and manifestations can be from many

Fruit Of The Spirit Series — Love *cont.*

him, and God used him to save David's life. We see that to love someone we care about them more than we care about ourselves. We put their needs above our needs.

But it is impossible to find anyone in the Bible who matches the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Of course Jesus is our model in all the fruits of the Spirit, but when you talk about love Jesus just keeps coming to mind.

John 15:13 Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Paul, Peter and all the disciples laid down their lives for their friends, becoming martyrs. But Jesus Christ laid down his life for every person in the world who would simply place their faith and trust in Him. He did that because of how much He loves us. He loved us so much that He did not want us to perish in our sins, but make a way for us to escape the wrath of God. The only way for Him to do that was to lay down His life for his friends.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus is our pattern. Since Jesus has done so much for us, we should in turn want to show God's love to others.

I John 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

There are so many people in the world who need the love of Jesus Christ. How will they know about it unless we tell them, and how will they see it unless it is demonstrated in our loves?

Love Examples In Life

Bad Beginnings to Happy Endings

A young man lay in the corner of a dirty, roach-infested death row cell in a South Carolina prison. His body curled up in a fetal position, he seemed not to notice all the filth and stench around him. His name was Rusty, and he was sentenced to die for the murder of a Myrtle Beach woman in a crime that left four people dead.

Police arrested twenty-three-year-old Rusty Welborn from Point Pleasant, West Virginia in 1979, following one of the most brutal killings in South Carolina history. Rusty was tried for murder and received the death penalty for his crime. Bob McAlister, deputy chief of staff to South Carolina's governor, became acquainted with Rusty on death row. Bob had become a Christian a year or so earlier and felt a strong call from God to minister to the state's inmates—especially those spending their last days on death row.

Bob's first look at Rusty revealed a pitiful sight. Rusty was lying on the floor when he arrived, a hopeless picture of a man who believed he mattered to no one. The only signs of life in the cell were the cockroaches who were running everywhere, including over Rusty himself. He made no effort to move or even to brush the insects away. He stared blankly at Bob as he began to talk, but did not respond.

During visit after visit, Bob tried to reach Rusty, telling him of the love Jesus had for him and of his opportunity—even on death row—to start a new life in Christ. He talked and prayed continuously, and finally Rusty began to respond to the stranger who kept invading his cell. Little by little, he opened up, until one day he began to weep as Bob was sharing with him. On that day, Rusty Welborn, a pitiful man with murder and darkness behind him and his own death closing in ahead of him, gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

When Bob returned to Rusty's cell a few days later, he found a new man. The cell was clean and so was Rusty. He had renewed energy and a positive outlook on life. McAlister continued to visit him regularly, studying the Bible and praying with him. The two men became close friends over the next five years. In fact, McAlister said that Rusty grew into the son he never had, and as for Rusty, he had taken to calling McAlister "Pap."

Bob learned that Rusty's childhood in West Virginia had been anything heaven. His family was very poor, and Rusty was neglected and abused as a young child. School was hard both for him and for his teachers. Throughout his junior high years he wore the same two pair of pants and two ragged

shirts. Out of shame, frustration, and a lack of adult guidance, Rusty quit school in his ninth grade year, a decision that was to be just the beginning of his troubles. His teenage years were full of problems as he was kicked out of his home many times and ran away countless others. He spent most of his youth living under bridges and in public rest rooms.

Bob taught Rusty the Bible, but Rusty was the teacher when it came to love and forgiveness. This young man who had never known real love was amazed and thrilled about the love of God. He never ceased to be surprised that other people could actually love someone like him through Jesus Christ. Rusty's childlike excitement was a breath of fresh air to Bob, who came to

Our goal as Christians should never be to push people away but to do everything in our power to bring them to the foot of the cross.

realize how much he had taken for granted in the love of his family and friends.

In time Rusty became extremely bothered by the terrible pain he had caused the family and friends of his victim. Knowing that God had forgiven him, he desperately wanted the forgiveness of those he had wronged. Then a most significant thing happened: the brother of the woman Rusty had murdered became a Christian. God had dealt with him for two years about his need to forgive his sister's killer. Finally, he wrote Rusty a letter that offered not only forgiveness but love in Christ.

Not long before his scheduled execution, this brother and his wife came to visit Rusty. Bob was present when the two men met and tearfully embraced like long-lost brothers finally reunited. Rusty's terrible crime ten years earlier had built an enormous wall between himself and the brother. The love of Christ tore that wall down and enabled both men to realize that, because of Christ, they truly were

brothers reunited on that day. It was a lesson Bob would not forget.

Not only did Rusty teach Bob McAlister how to love and forgive, he also taught him a powerful lesson about how to die. As the day of his execution approached, Rusty showed a calm and assurance like Bob had never seen. On his final day, with only hours remaining before his 1:00 A.M. execution, Rusty asked McAlister to read to him from the Bible. After an hour or so of listening, Rusty sat up on the side of his bed and said, "You know, the only thing I ever wanted was a home, Pap. Now I'm going to get one."

Bob continued his reading, and after a few minutes Rusty grew very still. Thinking he had fallen asleep, Bob put a blanket over him and closed the Bible. As he turned to leave he felt a strong compulsion to lean over and kiss Rusty on the forehead. A short time later, Rusty Welborn was executed for murder. A woman assisting Rusty in his last moments shared what Rusty had said to her before he died. Rusty looked at her and said, "What a shame that a man's gotta wait 'til his last night alive to be kissed and tucked in for the very first time."

Sometimes people need our help. They may be having a hard time in life. They may have even been Christians and have backslidden into sin. They may have committed terrible sins against God and men, maybe even you personally. But we should reach out to them because Jesus would reach out to them. Our goal as Christians should never be to push people away but to do everything in our power to bring them to the foot of the cross. Sometimes one kind word from a Christian brother or sister can make all the difference in the world.

Three Letters from Teddy

Teddy's letter came today and now that I've read it, I will place it in my cedar chest with the other things that are important to my life.

"I wanted you to be the first to know."

I smiled as I read the words he had written and my heart welled with a pride that I had no right to feel.

Fruit Of The Spirit Series — Love *end*

possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you're getting a divorce. That will really hurt him." With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised! And she did it with enthusiasm. Acting "as if." For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called. "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?" "Divorce?" she

exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him." Her actions had changed her feelings. Motion resulted in emotion. The ability to love is established not so much by fervent promise as often repeated deeds.

Love is not only words but actions.

I John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

It sometimes calls for sacrifice. But many times that sacrifice yields a deeper love than we would have imagined. Love also takes the effort of more than one person.

Heb 10:24 And let us consider

how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

Sometimes love is a sacrifice; we must give something up. Have you made a sacrifice of love recently?

Let me pose this hypothetical situation: If everyone in the world discovered that they had five minutes left to say all they wanted to say to anyone they know, what would they do? I venture to say every telephone booth in the world would be filled by people calling other people to tell them that they love them.

The question is: Why wait until the last five minutes?

Love Is Eternal

Read 1 Cor. 13:1-13

Love is the only thing that will remain in eternity. Faith and hope will no longer be needed because the object of our faith, Jesus Christ, will be there with us. We will no longer need hope because our hope of eternal life will be a reality. But love never dies. I believe that the love you show to others will continue on into eternity.



Discern, Test & Judge Rightly *cont.*

other gods, **must be put to death.***

We don't put false prophets to death today, but we are to remove ourselves from their presence.

Deuteronomy 18:22 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.

The Lord is against those who give false prophecies.

Jeremiah 23:32 Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the LORD. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 27:15 I have not sent them," declares the LORD. "They are prophesying lies in my name. Therefore, I will banish you and you will perish, both you and the prophets who prophesy to you."

Those who follow false prophets will share in their judgment.

Jeremiah 5:31 The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?

Jeremiah 23:31 Yes," declares

the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.'"

Ezekiel 13:9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of my people or be listed in the records of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.

We are not to even listen to false prophecy.

Jeremiah 23:16 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.

False prophets are often those who claim they had a dream or a vision of the Lord or from the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:25 "I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!'

False prophets are actually using divination and the delusion of their own minds instead of communicating with God.

Jeremiah 14:14 Then the LORD said to me, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are

prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.

Ezekiel 22:28 Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says'— when the LORD has not spoken.

TEST THEIR FRUIT

The final test is to compare the words and actions of any teacher or prophet with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:18-25. It is also helpful to look at the list of things that are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit.

If a person falsely prophesies, even once, they are likely using divination and false visions. Are they trying to build a following and promote themselves, gaining fame? Then they likely have "selfish ambition". Do they promote "drunk in the Spirit"? That's the sin of "drunkenness". If they are stripping the poor of their money with crooked money-raising schemes, that's not the fruit of kindness. If their meetings are marked by wild manifestations, they do not have the fruit of peace or self-control. If they are cocky mockers they do not have the fruit of gentleness.

Gal. 5:18-25 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. 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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The Lord will cut off anyone who does not bear fruit. This means anyone who does not have the fruit of the Spirit and has not been doing the will of the Father.

John 15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

CONCLUSION

Finally, we must understand that those who are false teachers, false prophets, without the fruit of the Spirit are a blight on true Christianity. We must separate ourselves from them.

Rom. 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses

Discern, Test & Judge Rightly *cont.*

You Believe*).

(2) **Test all prophecies** to see if they are biblical and if the predictions of a prophet all come true.

(3) **Test** their lives, words and actions **for the fruit of the Spirit**.

TEST THEIR TEACHINGS

The Church and individual Christians, are commanded by the Lord to reject false teachers – heretics.

Titus 3:10 **A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject.** (KJV)

A heretic is defined by Peter as one who lays error alongside of truth, secretly introducing destructive heresies.

2 Peter 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

Christians are to reject those who preach a false gospel because they are condemned by the Lord..

Galatians 1:8-9 *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!*

Even Paul, a foundational Apostle, encouraged his listeners to test his teaching against the written Word of God, and he stated that those who teach must not “go beyond what is written.”

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

1 Corinthians 4:6 *Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not take pride in one*

man over against another.

Believers are to be discerning.

Phil. 1:9-11 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

Proverbs 3:21 My son, **preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight;**

Why do we test teaching against the Scriptures? Because we are commanded to remain in sound doctrine, to keep the faith, to follow the teachings of the prophets, Apostles and Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:3 *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.*

Titus 1:9 **He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**

Titus 2:1 *You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*

False teachers are liars and do not remain in sound doctrine.

1 Timothy 1:10 *for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine*

TEST THE SPIRITS

We are warned by the Lord to test every spirit because many false prophets have gone out.

1 John 4:1 *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.*

How do we test the spirits? By comparing what they are teaching and prophesying to the Scriptures, and if they are living in the fruit of the Spirit. How do we do that? First we must be a believer in Christ to test anything rightly.

Romans 12:2 *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.

2 Corinthians 13:5 *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith, test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you— unless, of course, you fail the test?*

Then we test our own words and actions to be sure we are in the Faith and in sound doctrine.

Galatians 6:4 *Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else.*

How much are we supposed to test? Everything.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 *Test everything. Hold on to the good.*

JUDGE RIGHTLY

Are we to judge? Certainly. We are not to judge hypercritically (Matt. 7:1) – in other words, judging someone while doing the same thing ourselves. We are not the final judge of anyone’s salvation. But we are to judge what people teach and prophesy. Paul commanded those who listened to him to judge what he was saying.

1 Corinthians 10:15 *I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.*

We must learn to judge rightly, now, because someday we will judge the earth and the angels with Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:3 *Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

We are told by the Lord to judge those inside the Church because God judges those outside. We are to reject heretics and expel wicked men from the assembly of believers because if they are allowed to remain they will leaven the whole lump.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 *What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”*

TEST THEIR PROPHECY

We are to test prophecy to see if it comes true and is biblical. A true prophet is 100% accurate because he worships God in Spirit and in truth and speaks the truth. We must reject false prophets and remove them from the assembly of believers.

Duet. 13:1-5 *If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,” you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.*

False prophets may have a good track record, but they are never 100% accurate. However, they may be able to fool people into thinking they do. That’s where the teaching test comes in, and why it is listed as the first test of discernment. Some prophets can look really good, but if they are teaching heresy you can be sure it is a test from God to see if you will “love Him with all your heart”. John tells us that if we love the Lord we will obey His commands (John 14:21, 15:10; 1 John 5:2-3; 2 John 1:6). The Bible commands us over and over again to test, discern and judge teaching, prophecy and fruit. We must reject heretics who are unrepentant. If we do not obey the Lord in this, we are proving that we do not really love Him.

Deuteronomy 18:20 *But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of*

Fruit Of The Spirit Series — Love *cont.*

I have not seen Teddy Stallard since he was a student in my fifth grade class fifteen years ago. It was early in my career, and I had only been teaching for two years.

From the first day he stepped into my classroom, I disliked Teddy. Teachers (although everyone knows differently) are not supposed to have favorites in a class, but most especially are they not to show dislike for a child, any child. Nevertheless, every year there are one or two children that one cannot help but be attached to, for teachers are human, and it is human nature to like bright, pretty, intelligent people, whether they are ten years old or twenty-five. And sometimes, not too often, fortunately, there will be one or two students to whom the teacher just can’t seem to relate.

I had thought myself quite capable of handling my personal feelings along that line until Teddy walked into my life. There wasn’t a child I particularly liked that year, but Teddy was most assuredly the one I disliked. He was dirty. Not just occasionally, but all the time. His hair hung low over his ears, and he actually had to hold it out of his eyes as he wrote papers in class. (And this was before it was fashionable to do so!) Too, he had a bad smell about him which I could never identify. His physical faults were many, and his intelligence left a lot to be desired, also. By the end of the first week I knew he was hopelessly behind the others. Not only was he behind; he was just plain slow!

Any teacher will tell you that it’s more of a pleasure to teach a bright child. But any good teacher can provide work to the bright child, keeping him challenged and learning, while she puts her major effort on the slower ones. Any teacher can do this. Most teachers do it, but I didn’t, not that year. In fact, I concentrated on my best students and let the others follow along as best they could. Ashamed as I am to admit it, I took pleasure in using my red pen; and each time I came to Teddy’s paper, the cross marks (and there were many) were always a little larger and a little redder than necessary.

“Poor work!” I would write over and over again.

The boy quickly became the class “goat,” the outcast: the

unlovable and the unloved. He knew I didn’t like him, but he didn’t know why. Nor did I know—then or now—why I felt such a dislike for him. All I know is that he was a little boy no one cared about, and I made no effort on his behalf.

The days rolled by. We made it through the Fall Festival and the Thanksgiving holidays, and I continued marking happily with my red pen. As the Christmas holidays approached, I knew that Teddy would never catch up in time to go on to sixth grade. He would be a repeater. To justify myself, I went to his school folder. He had very low grades for the first four years, but no grade failure. How he had made it, I didn’t know. I read the following personal remarks but somehow closed my mind.

First grade: Teddy shows promise by work and attitude, but has poor home situation.

Second grade: Teddy could do better. Mother terminally ill. He receives little help at home.

Third grade: Teddy is a pleasant boy. Helpful, but too serious. Slow learner. Mother passed away end of the year.

Fourth grade: Very slow, but well behaved. Father shows no interest.

Well, they had passed him four times, but he will certainly repeat fifth grade! Do him good! I said to myself.

And then the last day before the holiday arrived. Our little Christmas tree on the reading table was colorful with paper and popcorn chains. Many gifts were piled underneath, waiting for the big moment. Teachers always get several gifts at Christmas, but mine that year seemed bigger than ever. There was not a student who had not brought me one. Each unwrapping brought shouts of delight, and the proud giver would receive many thank-yous.

His gift wasn’t the last one I picked up; in fact it was in the middle of the pile. Its wrapping was a brown paper bag, and he had colored Christmas trees and red bells all over it. It was stuck together with masking tape. “For Miss Thompson, from Teddy” it read. The group was completely silent and for the first time I felt embarrassed because they all stood watching me

unwrap the gift. As I removed the last bit of masking tape, two items fell to my desk: a rhinestone bracelet with several stones missing and a small bottle of cheap cologne-half empty.

I could hear the low laughter and whispers, and I wasn’t sure I could look at Teddy. “Isn’t this lovely?” I asked, placing the bracelet on my wrist. “Teddy, would you help me fasten it?” He smiled shyly as he fixed the clasp, and I held up my wrist for all of them to see. There were a few ooh’s and ahh’s, but as I dabbed the cologne behind my ears, all the little girls lined up for a dab behind their ears.

I continued to open gifts until I reached the bottom of the pile. We ate our refreshments, and the bell rang. The children filed out with shouts of “See you next year!” and “Merry Christmas!” but Teddy waited at his desk. When they had all left, he walked up to me with his gift and books in his hands. “You smell just like my mom,” he said softly. “Her bracelet looks real pretty on you too. I’m glad you liked it.”

He left quickly. I locked the door, sat down at my desk, and cried. It was then and there I decided to make it up to Teddy and give him the teacher he deserved.

I stayed every afternoon with Teddy from the end of Christmas holidays until the last day of school. Sometimes we worked together. Sometimes he worked alone while I drew up lesson plans or graded papers. Slowly but surely he caught up with the rest of the class. In fact, his final grades were among the highest in the class, and although I knew he would be moving out of the state when school was out, I was not worried for him. Teddy had come to the point where he could handle any school work no matter where he went. He had some good success, and as we were taught in our teacher training courses, “Success builds success.”

I did not hear from Teddy until seven years later, when his first letter appeared in my mailbox. “Dear Miss Thompson, I just wanted you to be the first to know, I will be graduating second in my class next month. Very Truly Yours, Teddy Stallard”

I sent him a card of congratulations and a small package, a pen and pencil gift set. I

wondered what he would do after graduation. Four years later, Teddy’s second letter came.

“Dear Miss Thompson, I wanted you to be the first to know. I was just informed that I will be graduating first in my class. The university has not been easy, but I liked it. Very Truly Yours, Teddy Stallard”

I sent him a pair of sterling silver monogrammed cuff links and a card, so proud of him I could burst! And now today—Teddy’s third letter.

“Dear Miss Thompson, I wanted you to be the first to know. As of today I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that!?!? I’m going to be married in July, the 27th. I wanted to ask if you could come and sit where Mom would sit if she were here. I’ll have no family there as Dad died last year. Very Truly Yours, Teddy Stallard”

I’m not sure what kind of gift a person should send to a doctor on completion of medical school and state boards. Maybe I’ll just wait and take a wedding gift, but I should write a note.

“Dear Ted, Congratulations! You made it, and you did it yourself! In spite of those like me and not because of us, this day has come for you. God bless you. I’ll be at the wedding with bells on! - Elizabeth Silance Ballard

We can learn a lesson from Mrs. Ballard. Sometimes the people God is calling us to love are not pretty. They may have many problems. They may even not love us. But if we show them God’s love through our lives, the Lord can and often does use our love to touch the lives of others.

Love Is Action

Newspaper columnist and minister George Crane tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. “I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him I want to hurt him as much as he has me. Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan “Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as

Discern, Test & Judge Rightly *cont.*

sources; physical, emotional, mental, paranormal/demonic, or from the Lord. ALL experiences need to be tested against the testimony and written word of God. "Slain in the spirit" is an occult technique imported into Christianity, and has nothing to do with what we are taught in the Scriptures. The prophets, Apostles and Jesus Christ did not do it or teach it as something that should be done. If you have an experience, you had better check the source. Think twice before you submit to people laying hands on you for whatever reason.

Feelings

Mormons made the "burning in the breast" standard fare for their followers, but now a large cross section of Christendom has been taught to judge everything by similar criteria. Modern Christians are, for the most part, not being taught to submit to the Word of God – but rather to the way they feel emotionally. The phrase "I think" has been replaced by the phrase "I feel". This is partially due to influences from the New Age through movies like Star Wars. But in the last twenty years teachers in the Church have taught a whole generation to rely on their feelings.

Emotions are a part of the realm of the flesh and the mind (soul). Emotions can be used by God, but often they are a way for the enemy to get Christians away from the truths of the Bible and gain a foothold in their lives.

Numbers Of Followers

Many leaders have large numbers of followers, including cultists and other religious "gurus". In fact some of the most popular leaders, who have the most followers, are not Christian. Numbers of followers is not a good test of the authenticity of a leader or his ministry.

Numbers Claiming Salvation

Ultimately, only God knows who is saved. Believers can certainly tell if people are false prophets and heretics and must be rejected, but we are not the ultimate judge of

their salvation. One fact is certain. When someone claims to be saved they will evidence the fruit of the Spirit, believe in and teach sound doctrine, and not make false prophecies.

Church Size

Church size means nothing in the realm of discernment. God looks for quality over quantity, regardless of what "apostles" like C. Peter Wagner claim:

"... we ought to see clearly that the end DOES justify the means. What else possible could justify the means? If the method I am using accomplishes the goal I am aiming at, it is for that reason a good method. If, on the other hand, my method is not accomplishing the goal, how can I be justified in continuing to use it?" (C. Peter Wagner, "Your Church Can Grow - Seven Vital Signs Of A Healthy Church", 1976, pg. 137. - emphasis in original)

Quantitative judgments are of men. The size of a church could be due to God blessing a ministry and people being truly saved or due to the oratorical skills of a preacher. Big clubs are not necessarily good clubs. Church size is no way to test a ministry.

Signs And Wonders

Signs and wonders are a dime a dozen today and have just as many evidences in false churches as the occult as they do in biblical Christianity. Jesus did state that those who saw him perform miracles should have believed, though for the most part they did not. They couldn't even tell the signs of the times (Matt. 16:1-4). People today love to be able to claim they saw or experienced a wonder or miracle from God. Perhaps this is because they want to feel like they have been touched by God personally, are holy, or simply want to be accepted by their peers. If you are going to claim you have seen or experienced a miracle from God, then that miracle must be held up to biblical criteria to prove it is a biblical Divine healing as opposed to many other forms of healing. I cover this subject later on in the chapter called "Test Everything". True believers are

careful not to use deceptive methods, to lie about experiences and signs, in order to gain converts.

2 Corinthians 4:2 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.

Subjective Testimonies

Testimonies are nice and can even be an inspiration (if they are true), but they are also inherently subjective. In other words, they are hard, if not impossible, to prove objectively, unless incontrovertible proof exists. Don't allow testimonies, uplifting as they may be, to get in the way of biblical methods of testing. Don't rely on testimonies to shape your belief system. Just as you would test a cake to see if it is done by manually inserting a toothpick, instead of relying on the good smell of the cake and the feelings you get from its aroma, don't use subjective methods to test stories—use the objective Word of God.

Hearsay

Most stories are being passed along today as hearsay. They often gain a little here and there until they have been blown all the way out of proportion from the original account. Don't pass along rumors, gossip and stories unless you check them out thoroughly. In this day and age of the Internet, that has become a much easier task, so there is no excuse to avoid researching claims from all angles. Don't just take people's word for it. Do the math yourself.

Success Of A Teacher

Anyone can be successful given the tools, the gifts, the right connections and the right circumstances. Some of the most godly men and women in the church have been dirt poor. Don't be swayed by rich televangelists. They have often raised their money off the backs of the less fortunate, the naive, the hopeless, the poor, the fatherless, the widows. True success is not measured by money,

power, number of followers, or any of the criteria of the "American Dream". Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart. We can get a pretty clear picture of the heart of a person if we test what they say and what they do against the Scriptures.

Apparent Authority

Many men and women are capable of speaking with authority. It can be a natural gift, a demonic gift or a gift from God. But it is no way to test whether a person is a true or false teacher. Authority can be put on, learned, acted. True authority from God is accompanied by true teaching, true prophecy and the fruit of the Spirit.

Atmosphere

Benny Hinn claims he needs an "atmosphere" to do his "miracles".

Interviewer: If Benny Hinn is real, he'll go into the hospitals and cure everyone there.

Benny Hinn: "I've been told that many times. What I tell them is quite simple. Healing most times needs an atmosphere of faith. I have gone to hospitals. I've done it actually many times or people's homes and pray for them. Most times, they cannot get healed. ... God's people make it happen; bring this atmosphere of faith. ..." (Benny Hinn, interview by Maria Weech, of WFTV, "Inside Central Florida")

When did the Apostles need an atmosphere to heal?

Beware of testing meetings by the atmosphere created there. Like and Amway meeting or halftime at a football game, an atmosphere can be manipulated. God does not need an stadium full of screaming Benny Hinn fans burning with fleshly passion to move. What He requires is simple obedience to His Word.

BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

There are three important biblical ways in which we are to use discernment.

(1) **Test all teaching** for sound doctrine, and especially against the core doctrines of the Faith as laid down in the sixty six books of the Bible (see the chapter "Know What

Bible Study *by Juanita Simpson*

The Parables of Jesus – Part 3 The Lost that were Found Luke 15:1-32

An important principle of Bible Study is to investigate the circumstances and context of the passage that we study. In this issue we are continuing the study of one of the most well known passages in the New Testament, where Jesus tells 3 parables. Gathered around Jesus listening were 2 groups. One was made up of tax collectors and those the Pharisees called "sinners". The Pharisees and teachers of the law composed the other group. **Luke 15:1,2** They despised the tax collectors. Why? They were working for the hated Romans making money by collecting taxes from their own people. Did any tax collectors follow Jesus? There may have been many but we know of 2 for sure: Zaccheus and Matthew.

Let's look at Matthew's story in **Luke 5:27-30**. Here we find that Jesus said just 2 words to Matthew: "Follow Me." He didn't talk about Matthew's sin. Do you think that Matthew knew he was a sinner for cheating the people and not glorifying God? He must have known because he got up, left everything, and followed Jesus. Then he made a great banquet, inviting his tax collector friends and Jesus. Why did he do this? He wanted his friends to give their lives to Christ as he had. But the watching Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with "sinners". This was the same complaint they had about Jesus in **Luke 15:2**. Matthew wrote about this same circumstance in **Matt. 9:9-13**. He was writing about himself. This tax collector became Jesus' disciple and wrote the first book of the New Testament. In his account, Matthew added **Hosea 6:6**. Matthew wanted the Pharisees and teachers of the law to understand that although they were careful to follow the law and give sacrifices, they had no mercy for the so-called sinners. What do you think Jesus would say today about our religious practices and attitudes toward people we consider "sinners"?

In **Luke 5:31-32** Jesus compared Himself to a doctor. Doctors take care of the sick who need them. If

we are healthy we don't have to go to the doctor. Jesus came to help those who are sick and to call to repentance those who are sinners. Maybe you think this means that you don't need Jesus because you are not a sinner. Are there any really good, holy people? **Rom. 3:10-12** tells us that there are no good people. All are sinners, so all need the Savior. In these 2 groups of people gathered around Jesus, which group considered themselves good and which understood that they were sinners? The religious leaders thought of themselves as holy and the tax collectors and street people knew they were sinners. Jesus told these 3 parables to point out that He is only able to help those who recognize their sinfulness and are willing to repent.

Jesus' teachings are filled with images and characters from every day life. The first parable in this chapter is about a shepherd and his sheep. **Luke 15:3-4** The shepherd had 100 sheep and only 1 was lost. How did he know 1 was lost? He carefully counted his sheep before putting them in the fold at night. God cares for His sheep, too. He knows where they are and what they need. We are lost because of our stubbornness and sin. **Isa. 53:6** Unless someone brings us back we will be eternally lost. The one lost sheep is crying, alone, longing for someone to come and find him. How does the shepherd show his love for his lost sheep? First, he suffers, going out into the rough country to look for it. Next, he doesn't scold or beat his sheep. He lifts the 70 to 90 pound animal up on his shoulders and carries it. Why? Because when a sheep is overcome with fear it will not move, stand up, or run. Third, he calls together his friends and neighbors to rejoice over his lost sheep that has been found. How did Jesus show His love for us? Could we find our way home by ourselves? No, He had to leave glory to come looking for us. He had to suffer to bring us back. The message in this parable is in **Luke 15:7: One sinner who repents brings more joy to God than 99 so-called righteous people who feel that they don't need to repent.**

Jesus' second parable is about a woman who had only a few coins. **Luke 15:8** Her 10 coins were probably a part of her bride price and very precious to her. They show that she was a poor woman. She lit a lamp, swept the house and searched carefully. Why would she light a lamp in the daytime? The house was probably a small, low hut and very dark inside. What do you think Jesus wanted the tax collectors and "sinners" listening to Him to understand? They were more precious to God than a coin. He wanted all 10 of His precious ones to come to Him. When the woman found the coin she was so full of joy she called her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her. **Luke 15:9-10** Why do you think that Jesus said almost the same thing twice and later talked about the father of the prodigal making a feast when his son returned? It was because it is so important. Why would Jesus tell 3 parables instead of 1 about the same subject? Any good teacher knows that if you want people to really understand and remember, you teach the same thing in 2 or 3 different ways. The point of this parable is the same as the last one: **One sinner who repents brings more joy to God than 99 so-called righteous people who feel they don't need to repent.**

In the last issue we studied the first part of the 3rd parable. As the sheep and the coin were lost, so was the son lost. **Luke 15:24** The religious leaders who were listening would look down on the younger son for his foolishness and sin. But when he repented and returned, the father rejoiced and threw a big party like the shepherd and the woman had. This parable illustrates God's character – His goodness, His grace, His mercy, and love. When we read the end of this story it reminds us of another parable Jesus taught in **Matt. 21:28-32**. When a father asked his 2 sons to work in his vineyard, one of them promised to do it but didn't. The other son refused to work at first, but afterward, he changed his mind and went to work. The one who changed his mind is like the younger son in this parable who repented and returned. The one who promised but didn't keep his promise is like the older son. **Luke**

15:25-30 He represents the religious leaders. He thought he had not sinned because he remained at home.

How can we tell that actually this older son was a sinner? We have to read and listen to his attitudes. What was his attitude toward his brother? He didn't call him "brother". He said, "This son of yours." He obviously despised his brother because he said, "He squandered your property with prostitutes." How did he know that? He didn't even think about his brother being safe and alive; he only remembered his sin. Do we remember only people's sins or rejoice in God's work in their lives? How did he show his attitude toward his father? He said he had been "slaving" for him – being treated like a slave. There was no joy in his service or love in his obedience. He was ungrateful for all his father had given him and only complained. We, too, can be respectable, moral and religious like the Pharisees and yet be far from God and full of wrong attitudes about Him and others.

Who made the father rejoice? It wasn't the self-righteous son who didn't love his brother or his father. It was the lost son who chose to repent and return. The heavenly Father delights in forgiveness. **Luke 15:32** Which of the 2 sons was the greater sinner? Jesus was trying to help the religious leaders see both God's great love for His lost children, and their own joyless, loveless, thankless and self-righteous lives. God still loved them, but they needed to admit their sin and repent in order to please Him.



Juanita Simpson is a retired missionary still serving the Lord in Micronesia after 38 years of ministry.