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The Three Battlegrounds by Francis Frangipane

Chapter 11 - Eliminating False Discernment (Part 1)

If what you have to say to someone is very important, you will require their undivided attention. With few exceptions, so also the Holy Spirit does not speak to us until we slow down, tune out the static, and give Him our heart in focused attention. To walk in true discernment, we must be quiet before God. We must learn how to listen.

Cease Striving and Know

The Lord desires we learn how to wait and listen for His voice. He draws our focus to His unlimited power. He admonishes, “Cease striving and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). We cannot engage in spiritual warfare without first becoming conscious of, and submitted to, God. It is through Him that we gain insight into the activity of the enemy. All true discernment comes through a heart that has ceased striving, a heart that knows, even in the fiery trial of its personal struggle, that the Lord is God.

There is a “jamming station,” made up of our own thoughts and reactions, that inhibits our powers of discernment. Until the motor of the carnal mind is turned off, true discernment will not consistently be ours. We must die to personal judgments, ideas of retaliation and self-motivation. Indeed, Jesus said, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge” (John 5:30); He ceased striving. We also must learn to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As we stop our striving, as we hear God, we discern and judge rightly.

Abounding Love Brings Discernment With It

Paul wrote, “I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment” (Philippians 1:19). Discernment comes from abounding love. What is abounding love? It is love that leaps out from us toward others. It is motivated by long-term commitment; it is anointed by sacrificial charity.

There is a false discernment that is based on mistrust, suspicion, and fear. You can recognize false discernment by the coldness around it. False discernment may be packaged in a type of love, but it does not originate in love; it comes out of criticism. True discernment is rooted deeply in love.

Picture, if you will, a long-haired young man. His clothes are unkempt and he has tattoos on his arms. It is night and he is walking toward you on a lonely street. It is easy to judge such a person after the obvious and superficial. Now look at this young man in the same setting, but as his mother. You can still see his outer appearance, but when you look at him, you have insight into his life and hope for his future. You see a little boy growing up without a father, a child rejected often by his friends. You have a commitment toward this man that runs deep, has been sustained by love, and that you have carried since you suffered in giving him birth.

False discernment sees the outside of the person or situation and pretends it knows the inside. Godly discernment comes from having godly motives; godly motives are those rooted in God's committed love. In like manner, our capacity to discern the needs of the church will never rise higher than that which is superficial if we do not know Christ's heart for His people.

Jesus said, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Righteous judgment is the direct result of love. If you cannot pray in love for a person or the church, do not presume you have true discernment. Love precedes peace, and peace precedes perception. Without love and peace in your heart, your judgment will be overly harsh. Regardless of the smile upon your face, your heart will have too much anger. False discernment is always slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to anger.

To be continued...