

(1) Piercing the Clouds

Defeating Deception

(Deception: the act of ensnaring, to catch by craft, to cause to believe what is false, to lead to error, delude)

(2) "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. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed, these teachers will exploit you with the stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping." (2 Peter 2:1-3)

(3) "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth." (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

(4) "The spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron." (1 Timothy 4:1,2)

Can we rely on the miraculous to help us defeat deception?

(5) "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

Can we rely wholly on apostles, prophets and teachers in the church?

(6) "At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

(Matthew 24:9-13)

(7) "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

(2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

Whether we are in the end times or not, we need to be on our guard against deception. And it is everywhere. Some wrong teaching is easy to spot and avoid, but much is not. Some of the teaching on the God channels is suspect, and some that we will hear when we go to conferences, etc. is not helpful and, at times, is just plain wrong. Of course, what we hear in this church or at the Elim conferences will be okay! We need to learn how to discern between right and wrong, good and bad, and between heresy or even minor deceptions and truth.

(8****) How Can We Defeat Deception?

(9*) A. The Importance of the Word of God to Combat Deception

1. What is the Word of God like and just how powerful is it (and how does it help us) ?

(10) "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7) *(Psalm of David)*

Who doesn't need reviving, at times, and who can do without wisdom. Even those who may not think of themselves as intellectuals can be wise because they are steeped in the Word of God. Why did Solomon with all his wisdom in the end get it wrong? - perhaps because he got distracted from the simple truths of God and got caught up in his own brilliance. Perhaps deception took root with little things at first but it progressed.

(11) "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."
(Psalm 119:105)

This helps when we are trying to walk with God in a dark world.

(12) "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out of my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."
(Isaiah 55:10,11)

When God speaks, as He does directly to us and through His Scriptures, that Word will accomplish exactly what God had planned it would. God's Word accomplishes God's will no matter what!

(13) "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

The Scriptures are there to teach us, encourage us and give us hope.

(14) "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word (rhema), and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Christ Jesus loves us and gave Himself up for us. He also cleanses us by washing us through His word in order to make us holy and blameless.

(15) "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2b)

"'Is not my word like fire,' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?'" (Jeremiah 23:19)

His word wants to burn the rubbish/dross or sin from our lives and also break into pieces our stubbornness and pride. Do you tremble at His word? If you want God's esteem, then perhaps we need to be humble and contrite in spirit, and tremble at His word.

(16) "For the word of God (logos) is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

(Hebrews 4:12)

The Word of God is living and active. It is more than just words on a page - it is alive, it has power, and it is at work in our day and age. The Word of God can cut to the real point of things both in ourselves and in others. It can get beyond our pretences and behind our masks and show us the truth as God sees it - the truth about ourselves and others, and about life in general, and about God and the enemy.

(17) "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

The only good works are God's works for us. Everything else is a waste of time or irrelevant at best and a distraction or sin at worst. God gave us the Scriptures so that they could be used for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (i.e. right standing with God). If you want to do anything for God, you need to know your Scriptures. Read it prayerfully, as the Word of God is God breathed/inspired and we need the Holy Spirit to help us understand it and then live in the good of it. He has also promised to bring it to memory when we need it, but our memory requires that we read it first. (Bob Gordon's minor mentors.)

(18*) 2. Jesus used the Word of God and His knowledge of it to combat deception.

How did Jesus combat the devil when He was tempted in the wilderness - Matthew 4:1-11 or Luke 4:1-13)? Jesus knew the Scriptures and knew how they were meant to be used. Even the 12 year old Jesus was already deeply into His learning of the Scriptures and He amazed all at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:41-47). However, Satan also knew the Scriptures, and used them persuasively, but perverted their God-intended meaning. We need to be on our guard so that we are not deceived and we need to know our Scriptures so that we can successfully repel attacks like this.

When the Sadducees tried to trick Jesus with a question about resurrection, Jesus countered them with this statement - "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." (Mark 12:24)

(19*) 3. By knowing Jesus - what He was like and what He taught - by reading the Word of God.

(20) Jesus is the Word (logos) of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.....The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-4,14)

Jesus lived His whole life without contradicting Scriptures. In fact, He came to fulfil them to the letter and make sense of them. Jesus is the Word of God and so are the Scriptures. These two sources of the truth are sourced in God and will always agree. If we know Jesus then we will know the God who inspired the Scriptures. We will also know God (i.e. the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), if we truly know the God inspired Scriptures.

Jesus said, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (John 5:39,40)

(21) Paul taught, "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments." (Colossians 2:2-4)

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ. If we fully grasp who He is and what He has done for us and we build our lives around this by making Him Lord of our lives, then we will not be deceived by fine sounding arguments.

(22) Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

(John 8:31,32)

Holding onto the teaching of Christ Jesus shows that we really are His disciples. Then we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free - free from the world and the powers of evil within it, free from deception, and free from the limitations of ourselves without Christ.

(23) "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3,4)

Our knowledge of Jesus Christ enables us to live in the good of God's divine power. Anything we need for life and godliness is available to us. We can even do what the world would regard as impossible. We can also participate in the divine nature, i.e. know God in an intimate way. God has made amazing promises to us. Where do we find these? - the Word of God. We can know what is on His heart and understand truly how we should live. This is how we can escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

(24*) 4. Paul taught that we need to put on the full armour of God and it has as its main weapon of offense: the Word of God.

(25) "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the

sword of the Spirit, which is the word (rhema) of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for all the saints."

(Ephesians 6:10-18)

One of the devil's greatest schemes is to deceive us. He is a master of this tactic and tried it on Jesus and failed. We need to make sure, with God's help that he also fails with us (especially by our knowledge and understanding of Scriptures). In fact, we can go on the offensive against Satan and his powers using our only offensive weapon - God's Word.

I like to think of 'logos' as the established, abiding, whole Word of God and 'rhema' as the revealed, quickened, immediate Word of God. The sword of the Spirit is the 'rhema' of God (a verse/passage, not the whole Bible), which the Spirit brings to our remembrance if stored in our minds.

(26*) 5. God expects us to use our minds and the Word of God to combat deception.

(27) "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."

(Acts 17:11)

If we do hear a teaching, then we need to examine it in the light of what we know of the Scriptures to see if it is true. If we are unsure, we can discuss the teaching with people we trust and do some research of our own into the Scriptures concerning that teaching. It is also important to be excited about the Word of God and be eager to explore it and learn from it, allowing it to challenge us and change us, so that we become the people God wants us to be.

(28) After the death of Moses, the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." (Joshua 1:8)

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season

and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

(Psalm 1:1-3)

We need to meditate on Scriptures, especially those God has highlighted to us by His Spirit, and let them soak into the depths of our lives and let them do God's work within us, changing us from the inside out and enabling us to be fruitful for God.

(29) "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fail, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-11)

Be disciplined (the dreaded 'D' word) in your reading of God's Word and never, never, never give up on it. It is very easy to be distracted or to put off or even to believe that we have no time to read/study the Word of God. We need to make every effort to add to our knowledge of God and His Word. This is one of the ways we can be more effective and productive in our Christian walk, it will assist us to avoid failure, and it will help path the way for us to receive a rich welcome into the eternal Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

(30) Paul wrote to Timothy concerning this, but it should also apply to us: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word (logos) of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

We need to read the Bible as a devotional tool as part of our quiet time; but we also need to study the Bible and read through it systematically, so that we know what the whole says and can interpret Scripture with Scripture correctly. We should want to know everything God teaches us about Himself and the world He created, and everything that He wants

us to do for Him. Without this depth of knowledge, we can be vulnerable to deception. Remember, our minds tend to be dominated by the things we most input into it. The more we input the things of God, the more godly our minds become and the more useful to God we become - we begin to release the mind of Christ that is ours when the Holy Spirit indwells us. However, the more rubbish we input, the more rubbish our minds churn out.

In Luke 24:45, we read that after Jesus was resurrected, He went to the disciples and: "he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." We need to pray to God that He will do the same for us.

(31) The following are some helps to enable us to study the Bible as we should:

- It is not what we think the Bible says, but what it actually says that counts. Therefore, every Bible reader has to be an interpreter of the Bible. The aim of good Bible interpretation is simple: to get at the 'plain meaning of the text'. The most important attribute we can bring to this task is enlightened **common sense**. The test of good interpretation is that it makes **good sense of the text**.

(32) **Some Difficulties We Will Encounter When Trying to Interpret the Bible?**

- As we read the Bible, we often assume that we are understanding what we read. Unfortunately, we will bring to our reading all that we are, with all of our experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas, and, therefore, read into the text all kinds of foreign ideas that really don't fit. E.g. women in church, and the word 'flesh', which really means 'sinful nature'.
- (33) The Bible is the Word of God given *in human words in history*. Because the Bible is God's Word, it has **eternal relevance** - it speaks to everyone no matter what their culture and when in history they are impacted by it. However, because God chose to speak His Word through human vessels in a particular *historical*

context (i.e. **historical particularity**), every book in the Bible is conditioned by the language, time and culture in which it was originally written (and in some cases also by the oral history it had before it was written down).

- (34) In order to communicate His Word to all human conditions, God chose to use almost every available kind of communication: narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry of all kinds, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalypses. To interpret the Bible properly, you must not only know some general rules that apply to all the words of the Bible, but you also need to learn the special rules that apply to each of these literary forms or genres. For example, how do Old Testament laws speak to us today and how do they differ from moral laws which are always valid in all circumstances?
- (35) In speaking through real persons, in a variety of circumstances, over a 1,500 year period, God's Word was expressed in the vocabulary and thought patterns of those persons and conditioned by the culture of those times and circumstances. That is to say, God's Word to us was first of all His Word to them. If they were going to hear it, it could only have come through events and language they could have understood. Our problem is that we are so far removed from them in time, and sometimes in the way we think that we need to learn how to **interpret** the Bible.

(36) How Do We Interpret the Bible?

- **Hermeneutics** is the art and science of text interpretation. The first step in reading every biblical text should be **exegesis** which is the careful, systematic study of Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning. Exegesis involves us asking questions of the text. What is the **historical context** of the passage, i.e. what is the occasion (cultural, geographical, political, topographical) and purpose of the passage? What is the **literary context**, i.e. words only have meaning in sentences and for the most part those sentences only have meaning in relation to the preceding and succeeding sentences (this is reading something in its context)? We must try to trace the author's train of thought. What is the point

of the text, i.e. what is the author saying and why does he or she say it right here? And having made that point, what did they say before and after and why? What is the **content** of the passage, i.e. what do the words mean; how are the words presented grammatically; and what original text are we going to use (as manuscripts in the original language do differ from one another)? We may need the help of 'experts' to do good exegesis, but choosing a good Bible translation, Bible commentary, and Bible dictionary can help us in this area.

- (37) Once we have carried out our exegesis, we need to finish the task of hermeneutics and seek the **contemporary relevance** of ancient texts, i.e. what is God saying to us in the here and now through this text? Most Christians limit themselves to devotional reading of the Bible which tends to start at this point. However, for our devotional reading to be correctly understood, we must also learn to study the Bible and let that inform our devotional reading. Otherwise, as the apostle Paul put it, we can be **"tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming"** (Ephesians 4:14). Anything goes (or at least far too much goes!), as the reading of Scripture is to some extent subjective, and we give ourselves permission to read into it meanings that were not originally intended. (This is known as **eisegesis**, which is the process of interpreting a text or portion of text in such a way that it introduces one's own presuppositions, agendas, and/or biases into and onto the text.) Common sense may stop us doing this, but just how common is common sense? We can make the Bible mean anything that pleases us and then give the Holy Spirit 'credit' for it. However, the Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself and He inspired the original intent. Therefore, the Spirit's help for us will come in our discovering that original intent, and in His guiding us as we try faithfully to apply that meaning to our own situations. A text cannot mean what it never meant, i.e. the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first communicated.

Christian cults usually bend the truth by the way they select texts from the Bible and they also have an authority in addition to the Bible.

(38) Some Aids to Correct Interpretation of the Bible

- Choose a good Bible translation. Every Bible translation has already been through a process of interpretation. The Bible translation we use might be our beginning point, but it is in fact the end result of much scholarly work. Translators are regularly called upon to make choices regarding meanings, and their choices are going to affect how you understand. NIV - version I use - is a good **functional equivalent translation**, i.e. attempt to keep the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek, but to put their words and idioms (forms of expression or usage peculiar to a language) into what would be the normal way of saying the same thing in English. Today's NIV no longer published but does this well. Both are committee translations by the best scholarship in the evangelical tradition. NKJV - good **formal equivalent translation**, i.e. attempt to keep as close as possible to the form of the Hebrew and Greek, both words and grammar, as can be conveniently put into understandable English. However, the KJV translators did not use the best original texts (NKJV has improved original text sources so better, but sometimes clumsy with the English like KJV). NRSV is possibly better and easier to read. **Free translations** (i.e. paraphrases) like The Message attempt to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern about using the exact words of the original. These should only be used for comparison when studying, or for devotional reading as they often give a new slant on a well read verse.
- (39) Choose a good Bible dictionary, for example, the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, the New International Bible Dictionary, or Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible.
- Use a good Bible commentary to help understand a passage. Some good Bible commentaries would include the Tyndale Old Testament Bible Commentaries and the New International Commentaries on the New Testament.

- Use a concordance like Young's or Strong's to see what the Hebrew or Greek words mean and where else in the Bible those words are used (or to help you find a verse/passage in the Bible).

(40*) 6. We need to move on from spiritual milk

(41) "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so." (Hebrews 5:11-6:3)

(Mention Campbell McAlpine's teaching to Bible students). Too many Christians act like babies for far too long in their Christian lives. They never move from being spoon fed God's Word, to actually studying it for themselves. How many of us here in this room have read right through the Bible and can understand it as a whole? How many of us would know where in the Bible to look to correct something that we hear that isn't right or at least know how to look? We need to move on in our Christian walk and grow in maturity as disciples of Jesus. He wants us to start to take our place in His body and fulfil a role for Him. Too many Christians want the leaders at the front to do everything for them, but this is not God's way. We need to grow up into taking solid food from the Word of God and applying these teachings to our lives and to the lives of others. Then we will mature into who God wants us to be and begin to do what He has really called us to do for Him. Let's be God's grown-ups!

(42*) 7. We need to receive the Word of God with faith

(43) "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did, but the

message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith." (Hebrews 4:1,2)

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word (rhema) of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

We cannot live in real faith until we hear the Word of God for a situation. This word then demands faith from us and we can take our stand on this. The Holy Spirit often uses Scripture in situations of faith, because once He has underlined them for us, we can keep going back to them and notice that they have not changed. This does not mean that we don't test the Words we read or are given. Scripture must interpret Scripture and it all must not contradict what we know is right from the Word of God. However, when we do have something from God, we need to live our lives in the good of that truth. Faith is unwavering trust and absolute confidence in God and His Word. It is the greatest power in the universe, because it is the means by which the power of God is released into human experience. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Make sure though that you are not deceived and that you really are standing in faith on the Word God has given you. Standing in faith on anything else is deception.

(44*) 8. If we want to learn more from God's Word, then we need to put into practise what we have already learned.

(45) "Do not merely listen to the word (logos), and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word (logos) but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does."

(James 1:22-25)

Why should God give us more, if we don't bother to put into practice what He has already taught us through His Word? If we are finding that our Christian walk is stagnating or even going backwards, if sin is getting a grip on us, then we need to go back to God and His Word and start to look at it intently, and start to obey it when He highlights things to us by His Spirit. Then we will be blessed in what we do!

(46*) B. The Importance of the Holy Spirit to combat deception

(47) Jesus said (in the dissertation He gave to the disciples just before He was arrested), "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will only speak what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." (John 16:12-15)

(48) "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught us by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgements about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgement: 'For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:10b-16)

The Holy Spirit only works in line with the truth as revealed in Scriptures. He wrote the Scriptures and will never contradict Himself. He will help to guide us into all truth. He will help us to discern what God has freely given us and give us words to speak that express spiritual truths. He also helps us to grow up to become the spiritual man that we should be, who can make judgements about all things and thereby help us to discern error. The Spirit of God doesn't control our mind, He gives us access to the mind of Christ. The biggest block to accessing this, is us.

(49) "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our

Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter." (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15)

The Holy Spirit and the truth as revealed in God's Word work together to save us and enable us to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we need to stand firm and hold onto what we know of God's Word.

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us for the common good is the ability to **distinguish between spirits** (1 Corinthians 12:10). If we are in any doubt as to the source of something we hear or see, then we can go to God and ask Him to gift us with this ability so that we can see the truth.

(50*) C. The importance of the church and the ministry gifts God gives to the church to combat deception

(51) "It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will *no longer be infants*, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Once we have discerned in God that someone has been given a ministry gift to the church, we need to allow them to minister to us, but always checking they are operating in line with Scripture. They are God's gifts to the church to enable it to function properly; and to us as individuals to prepare us for works of service, enable us to become mature in God, reach unity in the faith, and attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will not be deceived! We will be grown-ups in God!

(52*) D. The Importance of Prayer, Praise and Peace to Combat Deception

(53) "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for all the saints." (Ephesians 6:18)

Part of the armour of God teaching, so should be included when we think of how to take our stand against the devil and his schemes. We should always be alert and we should always be praying for each other.

(54) "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word (logos) of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:15-17)

By thanksgiving, praise, worship, and prayer, we get to know our God and what He is like - what His heart is in any situation, and we can use this knowledge to help us discern between what is of God and what is not. The Word of God and what it teaches us though should never be crossed and contradicted by anything we might feel about a situation. The Word of God should be our ultimate yardstick to decide between truth and error. The peace of Christ can also help us to discern truth from error, as we tend to lose it if we are straying from God's way. Crossing our conscience tends to negate our peace, so we need to be careful that we don't keep doing this and so become hardened to our conscience's warnings. It also helps to do all we do in life in the name of the Lord Jesus. This tends to keep us on the straight and narrow with God and avoiding the pitfalls.

(55) Prayer to finish

(56) "Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever! Amen." (2 Peter 3:17,18)

We also need to take heed of the exhortation the apostle Paul gives to Timothy: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."
(1 Timothy 4:16)

(Possible other scriptures: Psalm 119:33-40)

"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." (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1)