

experienced what they have. Remember, you don't have to copy another Christian's way of thinking or experience to be spiritual.

## **GUARD AGAINST INTOXICATING ATTENTION**

Built into the Christian experience is the attention one receives from other Christians in the body of Christ. Through participation in church, ministry, and fellowship we receive needed love and attention that is so vital in the family of God. We feel special attention when we have others minister to us or we feel fulfilled by ministering to others. However, this can become intoxicating and addictive. There are those Christians who continually seek attention from others through ministry, but who fail to apply what is ministered to them. They just want the attention in order to make themselves feel good. There is also a danger for those who minister to others. They can become intoxicated with the attention their ministry brings and become addicted to ministry only for self-fulfillment. This is often where pride, jealousy, and competition arises in Christian ministry. Pastors and church leadership will always face this temptation, but every Christian is vulnerable. Be careful not to let the attention you receive from other Christians become intoxicating and addictive. Remember, it is God who is love, who made us a part of His family, who does the work of ministry, and who should get the attention (glory).

## **RESIST INFLATED EXPECTATIONS AND SPIRITUAL FORMULAS**

One of the big deceptions of our day often comes through the Christian media from well-meaning writers, ministers and evangelists who suggest that God will bring great success through certain spiritual formulas. Some of this is a natural result of Christians reading and hearing the wonderful testimonies of God's miraculous work in the lives of other people. Obviously, there will be a tendency to want God to do the same for you by believing or doing the same thing they did. Our expectations and perception of what God will do may become inflated because of the spiritual "hype" of others. Resist the temptation to be taken in by the expectations and spiritual formulas imposed upon you by others. Instead, trust the Holy Spirit to do things His way and to stand on the principles of God's word.

## **EVALUATE WHAT YOU BELIEVE**

If what you believe is based on poor teaching and doctrine, then your Christian life will suffer the consequences. Many Christians are content to just believe whatever is taught them without evaluating it in the light of God's word. The Apostle Paul says, "...we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;" (Ephesians 4:14) Here, Paul is warning the church not to be controlled or influenced by the latest doctrines of men, who have crafted them with their trickery and scheming. Just as there were poor teachings and doctrines in Paul's day, so it is true today. You must realize that most of the areas of deception involve some failure to understand and follow the truths of God as taught in the Bible. Evaluate what you believe and make an effort to study God's word to find out what God would have you believe.

## **CONCLUSION: BE CAREFUL YOU DO NOT BECOME A VICTIM OF "FRIENDLY FIRE." GUARD YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE!**

# Guard Your Christian Life

Don't become a Victim  
of "Friendly Fire."

## **KNOW THE TRUTH**



*"...AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!"*

Pastor Lynn Kern

## THE TRAGIC END TO A SUCCESS STORY

In I Kings 13:1-24, there is the story of the prophet of God who successfully accomplishes God's work and is about to return home. He has been strongly warned by God not to stop along the way, but to return to his place of residence. There is another prophet who lives in the area, an older, retired prophet, who hears of the ministry of this younger prophet and desires to meet with him. The older prophet finds this younger prophet on his way home, tells him that God spoke to him and persuades him to stop for a visit. Because the younger prophet disobeyed God's direction, he was killed by a lion shortly after he resumed his journey for home. Tragically, the young prophet had been deceived by another man of God.

## VICTIMS OF "FRIENDLY FIRE"

Spiritual warfare is a common occurrence in your Christian life. Daily, you will face temptations and spiritual attacks from your enemy, Satan. You can expect him to wage war against you through tempting thoughts, through the world around you, and through non-Christian people whom he can influence. But, have you considered the possibility of Satan influencing other Christians to deceive or hinder your Christian life? In wartime, there are instances when soldiers of the same army become victims by being fired upon by their own men. This is called being a victim of "friendly fire." Unfortunately, this can be true in the Christian life. Intentionally or unintentionally, some Christians can be so misdirected by their experiences, ministries, or doctrines that they become tools of the enemy to deceive and wound other Christians.

## THE SUPERNATURAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Because the Christian life is not just a statement of belief, but an ongoing supernatural experience with the living God, it creates opportunities for different kinds of spiritual experiences among Christians. God will supernaturally work through you, as well as your Christian brother or sister, with spiritual gifts, abilities, and callings that fulfill His plan and purpose. God's word encourages you to seek His supernatural power for your Christian life, for ministry in His church, and for boldness in being a witness to those who need Christ.

## HAVING A "BALANCED" PROSPECTIVE

However, because the supernatural Christian life creates opportunities for different kinds of spiritual experiences, it can also create man-made interpretations leading to deception. Not everything we hear from another Christian is from God. Not every experience that another Christian has is something you must have. Not every personal conviction for one Christian is the same for another. Not every spiritual formula works for you as it did for someone else. Though most Christians are sincere in their attempts to influence others with their ministry, doctrine, and experiences, some allow themselves, unknowingly, to be used by Satan to deceive and hurt other Christians. There are a number of spiritual deceptions described in the word of God that provide warning signs for your Christian life. Watch out for them so that you won't be a victim or become one of those who promotes deception in the lives of other Christians.

## EXAMINE PROPHECY AND OTHER SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Bible teaches the validity of prophetic words from God and the use of spiritual gifts. God is using them today to minister to His people and promote spiritual growth in their lives. However, the Bible teaches us to "...test the spirits to see if they are from God." (I John 4:1b) The Apostle Paul says, "*Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully...*" (I Thessalonians 5:19-21a) Within the body of Christ there is plenty of opportunity for well-meaning Christians to believe they have heard from God prophetically for the benefit of other Christians; when, in fact, it is not from God but from their own spiritual presumption. We are to prove what is being said or done by examining it in the light of God's word and according to God's principles. If you believe God has spoken a prophetic word to you, realize that it will be fulfilled in the future. God has spoken this word to you so you will have hope for what He is going to do in and through your life. Other spiritual gifts are expressed in various ways and through the personality of each individual Christian. Sometimes, people can assume they are ministering in a gift when they are not. In such cases, you must prove its validity through scripture, by the attitude in which the gift is expressed, and by your knowledge of God's principles.

## AVOID CHRISTIAN "LEGALISM"

Within the Christian church there are those who become preoccupied with the rules and regulations of the Christian life. Like the Pharisees of old, they believe that righteousness and godly living can be judged on the basis of outward appearance and not on the condition of the spiritual heart. These people impose their personal convictions on others and seek to conform others to their own standards. The Apostle Paul writes, "*Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!*" (Colossians 2:16,17,20,21) The Christian life is not a list of do's and don'ts, but a relationship of obedience with God based upon His grace. Read Romans 14. To prevent legalism in your life, make sure you check your spiritual heart, be teachable and open to God's word, and be reminded of God's grace.

## BE CAUTIOUS OF SUPER-SPIRITUALISM

A super-spiritual Christian is one who has gone to extremes in attempting to appear spiritual in their Christian life. They tend to make spiritual interpretations for everything that happens or for everything they do. Usually they will talk as if God is speaking to them all the time and leading them in every situation. They attempt to be so spiritually minded that they create their own system of belief, oftentimes straying from reality and biblical truth. Spiritual experiences are a top priority for these Christians and they are usually preoccupied with having more and more of them. When you are around super-spiritual Christians you are often made to feel like you must compete with their spirituality or be considered of lesser spiritual value. You will feel pressured to "jump through the spiritual hoops" in order to be spiritually accepted. The Apostle Paul writes, "*Let no one heap defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.*" (Colossians 2:18) What Paul is saying is that you shouldn't let those with a super-spiritual way of thinking or experience make you think you're not spiritual enough because you haven't seen or