

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRIT

SPIRIT OF LEGALISM

Manifestation/Collaboration/Characteristics:

A) This spirit kills Jesus.

- Unlike spirit of deception, it would rather kill the Person of Truth than to distort truth.
- Unlike spirit of immorality, it would rather kill the Person of Love than to distort love.
- E.g. Cain would rather have Abel killed than to repent and change his attitude in the worship of God. (**Gen 4:1-8**)
- E.g. The Pharisees rather have Jesus killed than to repent and examine their hearts. (**Lk 11:53**)
- Its purpose is to stop the flow of the Holy Spirit, and hinder the work of Holy Spirit. E.g. when church has a revival, the next thing this spirit does is to reduce the revival into an organization, a methodology or a program, for the purpose of 'controlling' the revival.
- Also kills the man of God. (**Mt 23:35**)

B) It is also called the spirit of the law, the spirit of religion, and the spirit of Pharisees.

- **Mk 8:15**, '*... yeast of the Pharisees.*'

C) It works in a way that it does not deter us from practice of Christian life. It in fact 'supports' or 'quicken' to make the practice/spirituality becomes god itself.

- E.g. It strives to add works or burdens to our prayer until the prayer becomes a chore.
- E.g. It would make our worship to focus on instruments, forms, rituals, rather than God.
- Its purpose is to make one feel himself very 'Christian', very on fire for the Lord, not knowing that he is in fact, an anti-Christ.
- It will make one to have a '*form of godliness, but denying its power*'. (**2 Tim 3:5**)

D) It is the 'Yeast of the Pharisees'.

- Why the word 'yeast' was used?
- Because yeast is something that is tiny and seemingly harmless. It helps to quicken growth in fact.
- E.g. When yeast when added into the dough, it will bloom up the dough into something large in short time.

- It is something welcomed by people, especially churches who want fast growth. Not knowing what they welcomed in is bacteria that will choke up the growth of the church.

E) It can work on all platforms.

- In both denominational and non-denominational churches, and in charismatic, contemporary and traditional churches.
- That's why they are called the 'yeast'.
- E.g. yeast when added to flour, it will turn it into a bread.
- Yeast when added to fruit juice, it will turn it into wine.
- Yeast when added to water, it will produce carbon dioxide.

F) It is extremely subtle and often hard to detect.

- Reason no.1 is because it is a strong spirit, a spirit that sits on all religions including Christianity, and a spirit that would not tremble at the presence of Jesus in His earthly ministry.
- Reason no.2 is because we are too used to it. Our lingo, vocabulary, terms used, has all been programmed for works of legalism to set in.
- Paul used the word '*bewitched*' in **Gal 3:1**, when he addressed the issue of legalism in the Church of Galatia.

G) It is a spirit that works hand in hand with the spirit of unbelief and deception.

- Refer to diagram in 'Discernment of Spirit: Spirit of deception'.
- **Mt 23:3**, '*...for they do not practice what they preach.*'

H) A person who has the spirit of legalism will:

- **Set a standard too high that they themselves cannot keep.**
- **Mt 23:3**, '*...for they do not practice what they preach.*'
- Results in miserable life, never happy, never satisfied.
- **Have the tendency to feel oppress or to oppress others.**
- **Mt 23:4**, '*They tie up heavy loads and put them on shoulders of others.*'
- The spirit of legalism is a symbol of oppression.
- It is a spirit that opposes grace, which tell us to depend on God's strength and rest upon Him.
- Spirit of legalism will tell you '*You have not done enough.*' -> oppress, depress, exhaustion.
- **Have the tendency to be restless (sometimes without any reason).**

- The spirit somehow trained the person to think that there are lots of works to do and he cannot cope, that even when there is no work at all, the person will still be thinking this way.
- **Have the tendency to be depressed.**
- Esp. when one feels that he could never get things done (by his own strength)
- **What happens when one is not able to get things done?**
- He will try harder, **work harder**, and put in more effort, and it will result in **exhaustion, depression**, or become a **workaholic**.
- He will in turn **pressure others around him**.
- If he is a workaholic, he will not like to see people idling or doing nothing.
- He will condemn himself (**self-condemnation**) and may condemn others for causing his failure.
- **Have the tendency to be proud.**
- Esp. when one feels that he could get things done by his own strength.
- **What happens when one is able to get things done?**
- He will develop a **sense of possessiveness**, or the '**I did these**' **syndrome**. E.g. boasting about how he did those things, and claiming credit for himself.
- He will **look down on others**, or **impose his standard on others**.
- His subordinates will feel oppressed or **pressured to perform**.
- He is likely to fall into **perfectionism**.
- When a person is a perfectionist:-
 - He is likely to impose his idea of perfectionism on others, and demand others to be 'perfect' like him.
 - He is likely to end up doing things by himself, because he always thinks that he is the best person for the job.
 - He is likely to be intolerant of the weakness and the mistakes of others.
 - He will lack grace, resulting in unforgiveness of others.
 - He is likely to find fault on others, and is picky of little things.
 - He is likely to have a judgmental or critical spirit.
 - He will usually have a hard time listening to the advice of others.
 - As a result, people will find it hard to work with him. And he may have the spirit of loneliness.

- **Have the tendency to always see them one step higher than the rest.**
- **Mt 23:4**, '*...but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*'
- Spirit of legalism feeds the very pride of man.
- Pride in itself cannot function. So it needs the 'yeast' to trigger it.
- A person who has the spirit of legalism is also a person who has the spirit of pride in them.
- **Have the tendency to see them holier or more righteous than the others.**

- **Have the tendency to focus on the outward.**
- **Mt 23:5**, '*Everything they do is done for men to see...*'
- Doing things superficially or religiously. E.g. whatever is a symbol or sign of good Christian on the surface/outside, they would strive to do it. E.g. giving huge offerings, join a choir, getting kids to perform in service, etc.
- Use other people's spirituality to boost own spirituality. E.g. saying 'so-and-so is my mentor', 'I know so-and-so', 'my children all attend Christian school', etc.

- **Focus on the form.**
- E.g. His spirituality is determined by number of courses he attended, hours he prayed, days he fasted, years he served, who he worked with, gifts he had, rather than how he has been transformed or what God has done in his life.
- He will have the tendency to glory in their past, e.g. the 'good old days'.

- **Focus on seeking recognition or approval for the things they do.**
- **Mt 23:6-12**, '*they love the place of honor at banquets..*'
- 'Rubber-stamping' e.g. 'I was prayed by Ps Kim'. 'Ps Kim prophesized to me.' 'I went Korea for training' (no, basically, you just go and attend a conference.)

- **Focus on results.**
- Cannot accept failure or mistakes.
- E.g. 'this time round, I am going to do it better than last time.'
- Spirit of Babylon will start to work.
- Of course, we got to do it better in our walk/intimacy with God. But the focus is usually on doing, improving, striving and works, rather than facing God.

- **Focus on works -> the 'I must do this' or 'I must be doing something' syndrome.**
- He always feels obligated to do something.
- Usually doing it to make himself feel important or useful.

- **Have the tendency to be easily distracted.**
- A result of the 'I must be doing something' syndrome.
- Also called the **Martha's syndrome**.
- **Lk 10:41**, '*...you are worried and upset with many things, but only one thing is need.*'
- E.g. When comes to prayer/worship, this person is usually distracted, unsettled, cannot sits still, always going to toilet, having thoughts of what to do after prayer/worship.
- Results in lack of intimacy with God.

- **Have the tendency to see Word or teaching of Word as rules, do's and don'ts.**
- Like the Jews, they are concerned with how not to break the rules rather than how not to break the heart of God or lose intimacy with God.
- From one simple instruction, they could go into excessive details and scenarios on how the instructions can be applied.

- **Focus on 'just-tell-me-what-to-do' than 'why-should-I-be-doing-this'.**
- Meaning receive the Word w/o knowing the intention/heart/will of God.
- E.g. they will quote bible saying, 'Thou shall not steal', and then just apply it, w/o understanding why the Lord gave the commandments.
- Basically, blindly obey rather than willingly obey with a heart.

- **Have the tendency to be hypocritical.**
- Hypocrites – a person who pretends to have virtues, or religious beliefs, or principles that he or she does not actually possess.
- They seemed to know a lot, but in reality, they know nothing.

- Greek word 'hypokrisis'. It means '**disguise**', '**concealing**' or '**play-acting**'.
- As such, a person who has the spirit of legalism or hypocrites may have the **problem with their identity**.
- It is hard for this person to openly share or express their true self, because there is always something he is trying to conceal.
- Result in **difficulty in having intimate relationship with people and God**.

- He is likely to **behave or response differently in same or different circumstances.**
- E.g. In church, he is Person A. At home, he is Person B. In school, he is Person C. It will come to a point of time that he may not know who he really is.
- E.g. Given the same task, this person may be 100% zealous at one moment, and at next moment, 100% withdrawn or becomes passive.
- Or have very high adrenaline at the beginning or planning stage. But when actual thing or event comes, they are completely flat.
- 2 reasons for this. First, the manifestation of the spirit of legalism itself. Secondly, this person is too much into recognition seeking that he is only excited when recognition is given.

- **Have the tendency to be judgmental of others.**
- Greek word 'hypokrinomai'. It means judgment or judging.
- **How does one attract the spirit of legalism into his life, and cultivate the spirit of legalism?**
- **Ans:** Feeding on the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil all the time.
- After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, the spirit of legalism immediately manifested in them, when they sewed for themselves clothes made of fig leaves, instead of turning to God for help.
- People, who ate this fruit all the time, will end up in **excessive reasoning, analyzing, judging, and criticizing of things according to their reasons and rationality.**

- **Have the tendency to be overly zealous.**
- **Mt 23:15**, '*You travel over the land and sea to win a single convert.*'
- Also tend to **exaggerate, hype up things.** (Again, focusing on the outward.)
- **Making a mountain out of a molehill.**
- **Majoring on the minor (non-essentials).** -> results in church-split.

- **May intensify their wickedness as they disciple others.**
- **Mt 23:15**, '*...twice as much a son of hell as you are.*'

- **Is unrepentant**
- **Mt 23:29**, '*...build tombs for the prophets.*'
- Doesn't acknowledge their sins easily.

- **May end up in hell, if unrepentant.**
- **Mt 23:33**, '*How will you escape being condemned to hell?*'

- **Have the tendency to be stubborn and inflexible.**
- **Mk 7:1-8**
- Insisting on own way of doing things, and refused to change even when corrected.
- They prefer to stay in **Status Quo** than to risk changes.
- They are the '**old wineskins**' that Jesus described. (**Mt 9:16-17**)

The other side of legalism

- Legalism would not just cause people to be hardworking, performing or into conforming of rules and regulations.
- The flip side of it is that it may cause a person to be defiant (hating rules/breaking rules) (either because they are oppressed by the spirit of legalism or are in despair.)
- E.g. students in school would devise ways of breaking school rules.
- The more rules given, the more they want to break it.
- E.g. the more they ban chewing gum, the more people eat/buy chewing gum when opportunity comes.
- Person may exhibit rebellion. The more you say don't do it, the more they will do it. Or the more you say do it, the more they don't want to do. (Or go opposite way.)
- They may become passive, disorganized, indecisive, lack ability to plan or manage stuffs, sloppy, underperform when comes to work. E.g. unable to hold jobs.
- And transfer these attitudes to service of God.
- Of course, we don't call people who manifest these traits legalistic. Sure, it is an attacked by spirit of legalism.

Why the Pharisees opposed and eventually killed Jesus?

- **Reason No. 1 - ENVY**
- **Mt 27:18**, '*For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.*'
- **Jn 11:45-48**, '*...If we let go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.*'
- In another words, lack of security. Not rested enough for God to completely take over.

→ **So the way to combat spirit of legalism is to have the security that is in God.**

→ **We should stop building our own kingdoms.**

→ We shouldn't be affected if other ministries are growing and ours is not. It is ultimately God 'who made things grow'. (1 Cor 3:6)

• Reason No. 2 – THEIR WICKEDNESS WAS REVEALED

• Lk 11:53, '... the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely...' after Jesus pronounced the 6 woes to them.

→ So the way to combat spirit of legalism is to be completely humble and be ready to admit our problems

→ And accept the corrections by others.