



**The biblical injunction to discern and test the spirits: The case of charismatic church leaders within the area of the Emfuleni municipality**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The injunction to discern and test spirits is the crucial aspect that seems to be ignored by some church leaders these days. Although this has been the litmus test throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament that false prophets and the false teachings could be rejected. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were cautioned by God to distinguish between true and false prophets by the results of the prophecy, to say that if the prophecy comes to pass they will know that the prophet is the true prophet. But if the prophecy does not come to pass, the nation must know that one is a false prophet and they must not listen to that kind of prophet because he is a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

One must think that it is a grievous error for the church to undermine or ignore the injunction to discern and test the spirits. One will think that this is the reason we see unfamiliar practices and teachings that are contrary to the Bible. Some practices are lethal to the congregants. Giving congregants petrol to drink, and feeding them grass, rodents, snakes and lizards to eat, spraying insecticides on their faces in the promise of miracle healing, including prophecies in the promise of prosperity. All these call for serious concern. All of these are not only harmful towards people, but also degrading the message of the Gospel.

The book of 1 John 4:3-4 states that we must not believe that all spirits are from God but that we must test the spirits.

The intention of this project is to call the charismatic church leaders back to the basics; to caution them not to overlook and ignore the injunction to discern and test the spirits and not to believe that all spirits are from God. But there is also the spirit of the anti-Christ that has come to deceive many (1 John 4:3-4).

**Keywords:** charismatic church leaders, injunction to discern and test the spirits, Emfuleni municipality, mission work.

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 Introduction

Horton (2006:531) maintains that the Evangelical Charismatic reformation movement traces its roots to 1901, after an outbreak of tongues speaking in Topeka, Kansas, under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham a former Methodist preacher. Burger and Nel (2008:1) state that since the beginning of the twentieth century, Christianity has witnessed three great renewal movements of the spirit; the Pentecostal movement beginning in 1901, with its emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the speaking of tongues as the sign. Burger and Nel (2008:1) elaborate that this was followed by the charismatic movement that developed in the 1960s within the fold of the denominational churches like Roman Catholic, Anglican Presbyterian and other churches; and by the Neo-Pentecostal movement that led to independent churches that originated in the 1980s onward.

Chantry (2014:53) correctly points out that the spread of the Charismatics has been so rapid and so wide that it is difficult to characterise the entire movement. Many who participate in the miraculous gifts refuse to be called Pentecostals or Charismatics. Their aim is to keep charismata in a place subordinate to Bible study, holy living, communion with God and evangelism. Chantry (2014:54) further indicates that at the opposite extreme are the flagrantly immoral and heretical, who evidence the same charismata in the name of Christianity. Finally, in the middle lies the masses of Pentecostals who have a well-defined doctrine of the baptism in the spirit (Chantry, 2014:54).

According to Robertson (2011:22) it is imperative to be sensitive to religious experiences of various people, but ultimately all religious experiences must stand the objective test of the Scripture. The favour that many non-Charismatics can show to their Christian friends is to call them to test their experience by scripture (Robertson, 2011:22). The injunction to test and discern the spirits is not only the command, but the prerequisite for every religious leader especially when one looks at the unfamiliar practices and many questionable prophets and miracles of today.

Henry (2003:1740) indicates that in times when many are seduced or when false prophets arise, and in times of persecution when the saints are hated, we can expect these two things; the abundance of iniquity, when all flesh has corrupted their way and the abating of love which is the consequence of the former because wherever iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

MacArthur (2006:1716) is of the view that Christians with the gift of discernment have the God-given ability to recognise lying spirits and identify deceptive and erroneous doctrines (Acts 17:11). Paul illustrated the use of the gift (Acts 16:16-18) as Peter has utilised it (Acts 5:3). When discernment was not exercised in the Corinthian church, grave mistakes occurred (1 Corinthians 14:29). MacArthur (2006:1716) further points out that it is still essential to have people with this gift of discernment and testing of the spirits in the church. They are the guardians and the watchmen who protect the church from demonic lies, false doctrines, perverted cults and fleshy elements.

MacArthur (2006:1924) defines the word “testing” in this context as a metallurgist term used for assessing metals to determine their purity and value. Christians must test teaching with a view to approving it rigorously, comparing any teaching to the scripture. Tenney (1975:129) had earlier also indicated that 1 John 4:1 applies a confessional test. The test in question must make a commitment to the orthodox belief in the deity and humanity of Christ and there must be a submission to the Apostolic authority, as well as evidence of Christian moral character.

Tenney (1975:129) defines “discernment of the spirits” as the charismatic gift of determining the genuineness of allegedly divine messages and works. It was recognised not only in Christianity but also among other religious groups that supernatural acts and utterances might come from evil as well as good sources. There was a consequent need for a means of discerning the motivating spirit. Tenney (1975:129) further elaborates that the early church was plagued by false prophets (1 John 4:1) as Jesus have warned (Matt 7:15; Acts 20:28) and the outcome of predictions in passages such as Deuteronomy 18:22 or the evidence of the fruits (Matt. 7:15) could not be always waited for and God’s message must be quickly recognised and heeded. Douglas (1987:273) mentions that discernment of the spirit is the ability that the Holy Spirit gives to some Christians to discern between those that spoke by the spirit of God and those who were moved by false spirits.

Pigeon (2014:293) elaborates that discerning or distinguishing the spirits, ability to distinguish the spirits 1 Corinthians 12:10 is a gift allowing to judge if what is said is from God or not. Those who are experienced in the word of God have their senses exercised for discerning and for the distinction of both God and evil.

Kistemaker (1993:425) calls the discernment of the spirit the second gift in the communicative category that is linked to the preceding gift of prophecy. Paul says some believers have received this gift to distinguish spirits. The power and influence of the spirits can be discerned by their words, deeds and appearances through the gift of discernment of the spirits. The devil communicates false information appearing as an angel of light according to 2 Corinthians 11:14. Kistemaker (1993:425) elaborates that when the conduct of some people differs from the norms prescribed by the Bible, those who have the gift of discernment ought to take action to separate the truth from the lie.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Chantry (2014:30) points out that the failure to see Jesus Christ as the final revelation of the truth is an error that will open the door of the church to a multitude of heresies, taught in the name of truth. Every movement initiated by the spirit of God leads men back to the words of Christ which were inscripturated by his own inspiration. Chantry (2014:30) also indicates that some men have ridiculed an appeal to Revelation 22:18, 19 when discussing the matter about a closed canon as something indicating the end of a divine message from the Lord in the sense that what the Bible say about Jesus being the final prophet means that Jesus marks the climax of revelation. It is the same Christ who speaks in the last chapter of the Bible where He says that “if anyone add to them God will add to him the plaques described in this book”.

MacArthur (1992:204) helpfully explains that if somebody says “Jesus is accursed” such a person is not of God. Incredibly the Corinthians were not sure of that. Could it be that they were judging the genuineness of the spiritual gifts on the basis of the phenomena rather than content? MacArthur (1992:204) elaborates “Could it be that the more ecstatic and euphoric the worship gathering was, the more it appeared to be the Holy Spirit in their eyes?” Whatever the case, the Corinthians had evidently reached a low point where they were unable to distinguish between what was of the Spirit and what was of Satan (MacArthur, 1992:204).

Robertson (2011:40) also holds that the endorsement of a private gift of tongues may lead to a peculiar situation. Suppose a man affirms his call to the ministry. The church responds by indicating the need to test his desire by testing his gift. He affirms that in his judgement he has the gift of preaching, so the church tests that gift. He says he senses in himself the gift of administration. So, the church test that gift. Every other gift in the church must be tested publicly by the church. Henry (2003:2450) is of the view that the Apostle in 1 John 4:1-3, having said that God is dwelling within us, is then pointing out that the presence of God within believers may be known by the Spirit that He has given us, and that the Spirit and His work may be discerned and distinguished from other spirits that appear in the world. That is why 1 John 4:1-3 explicitly states:

Beloved do not believe all the spirits but test the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

According to Henry (2003:2266), the discernment of spirits is the power to distinguish between true and false prophets or to discern the real internal qualifications of any person for an office or to discover the inward working of the mind by the Holy Spirit. Henry (2003:2266) further elaborates that the existence of truth is the foundation of simulation and counterfeits. There has been real communication from the divine Spirit and therefore the other spirits can pretend to be from God. God will take the way of own wisdom and goodness, though it may be liable to abuse, He has sent inspired teachers to the world and given us supernatural revelation.

Robertson (2011:63) concurs with Henry (2003:2050), that these false prophets may be able to perform false wonders among the people and the words that may appear to come to pass, but if they summon the people to follow other gods, they must not be obeyed for nothing must be added or taken from the covenantal words spoken by Moses. The words eluded by Douglas (1990:227) in mentioning Duet. 13:1-3, where God is warning the Israelites from false prophets cannot be overemphasised. Douglas (1990:227) highlights the fact that a prophet who makes ecstatic pronouncements or a display of power in support of his pretensions or even predicting events which occurred as he foretold, should the aim of such one be to seduce the people from worshiping of the true God, is an imposter and must be put to death. No prodigy, however wonderful, no human authority, however great, should be allowed to shake their belief in the divine and true character and truth of religion so awesomely attested to them according to Douglas (1990:227).

According to Chantry (2014:83), Jesus emphasised two qualities which the Spirit will bring and these will become lasting evidence of the Spirit's operation upon God's people. The two are the Spirit of holiness and truth.

#### *Spirit of Holiness*

Chantry (2014:84) states that one crucial gauge of true revival is holiness in those who received the Spirit. Chantry (2014:84) emphasises "We should expect holiness to work all the work of God's Spirit, for in his work of creation the Spirit laboured to form a holy world". The Father chose us in Christ before the foundations of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him (Ephesians 1:4). Chantry (2014:84) elaborates to say that when the Spirit comes to any group of men, he will turn their attention chiefly to the issue of holiness. It is a mark of sin for men to be more concerned with their happiness than with their holiness and it is a mark of grace to seek personal righteousness above personal comfort" (Chantry, 2014:84).

#### *Spirit of truth*

Chantry (2014:91) suggests that in the name "Spirit of truth" we are given the second rule to measure the Spirit's presence. When the Spirit is with men, attention will be given to true doctrine or teaching. Men's minds will be captivated by the truth. The Spirit of truth moved men to write the Holy Scriptures (2 Peter, 1:21) and will never lead men to devalue the Bible nor snub its doctrines. Chantry (2014:91) further elaborates that after many hearts were broken on the day of Pentecost with a conviction of sin he moved the same men to devote themselves to the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42) and the great first out pouring of the Spirit after Jesus exaltation produced a profound love of the truth according to (Chantry, 2014:84).

John alludes to this same matter about truth as the gauge in 1 John 4:1-3 when he writes:

Beloved do not believe all the spirits but test the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

Pawson (2015:1215) states that John is facing specific problems and writes to counter the false teaching that he knows is affecting them. The false teachers taught Greek philosophy which brought about a number of elements contradicting the biblical worldview. Pawson (2015:1215) further elaborates that those promoting Greek philosophy also believed that the physical was evil and only the spiritual was good. To them the body was evil, and the soul was good. They gave people the impression that everything physical was somehow dirty or sinful.

Henry (2003:2450) correctly states that Jesus Christ must be confessed as the son of God, the eternal life and the Word that was with the Father from the beginning, and as the son of God that came in and came with our human mortal nature and suffered in Jerusalem. Schreiner (2008:258) elaborates that the logos entered history in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's definitive and final word to human beings expressing and

revealing who God truly is. God is invisible and has never been observed by human beings (John 1:18) the human Jesus is the revelation of God. Robertson (2011:84) says that it may be practical to all people to test the spirits whether they are of God or not. What one person calls a vision may be a moving application by the Holy Spirit of the truth of the scripture in his life.

The gauge for testing and discerning spirits mentioned by Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:3) cannot be overlooked in this study.

“Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit”.

MacArthur (1992:204) indicates that we get a hint of how bizarre things had become in the Corinthian assembly in 1 Corinthians 12:3: “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says ‘Jesus is accursed’ and no one says ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit”. Apparently, some professing believers were standing up in the Corinthian assembly manifesting the gifts of the Spirit, and cursing Jesus. MacArthur (1992:205) further alludes that there are many explanations for how such a thing could have happened. Perhaps the most likely one has to do with the creeping heresy that was already at work throughout the New Testament church (1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:1-3). It was the heresy that denied the deity of Jesus and his sufficiency to save.

Bruce (1970:104) indicates that the presence of true prophets in the church of the New Testament days stimulated the activity of others who claimed to be prophets but whose claim were unfounded, or if they did speak by inspiration, showed by the content of their utterance that the spirit who spoke through them was not the spirit of God. In either case they were false prophets. To test the prophets was in effect to test the spirits by whose impulsion they spoke. Bruce (1970:104) elaborates that John envisages but two spirits; the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist. In this he shows a striking affinity with a passage in the Qumran literature which declared that God has appointed for the man two spirits to walk with until the time of his visitation; namely, the spirits of truth and falsehood (Bruce, 1970:104).

The feeding of congregants with rats, grass, lizards and drinking of petrol is not only hazardous but also lethal to the unsuspecting congregants and the society at large. The spraying of insecticides to the faces of people with the promise that they will be healed is not something to be overlooked. The selling of holy water, holy oil and handkerchiefs in the promise of healing and prosperity is the abusing of people’s faith. Even if one is not pre-empting the outcomes of this project, one assumes that neglecting of the injunctions to discern and test the spirits might be the root cause of these unfamiliar practices that are not only degrading human dignity but also discrediting the message of the Gospel, of which is the intention of this study to research.

Even though one appreciates the fact that many have done immense duty about the injunctions to discern and test spirits, one believes that this study will make enormous contribution to the existing body of knowledge especially in the Emfuleni municipality area where this topic has not yet been researched although the prevalence of strange practices that are claimed to be associated with the Spirit is also an issue in the area. There is a need to probe how charismatic churches around the Emfuleni municipality region

understand and work with the biblical injunctions to discern and test the spirits in the context of such strange practices.

In spite of the fact that many elsewhere have studied the passages that have to do with discernment and testing of the spirits the question that this study explores is: How do charismatic church leaders around the Emfuleni municipality area understand the injunction to test the spirits and apply it in their ministries?

### **1.3 Research questions**

The following are the research questions that the study used to explore aspects of the problem as described above.

1. What is the biblical content and meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits?
2. What are some of the insights that can be learned about discernment from church history with specific reference to the charismatic churches?
3. How do church leaders in the charismatic churches around Emfuleni municipality understand and practice the injunction to discern and test the spirits?
4. What are some of the findings and recommendations that the study can make to ensure that churches in Emfuleni can do mission to the glory of God?

### **1.4 Aims and objectives of the research**

The study had the following aims:

1. To explore the Biblical content and meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits.
2. To highlight some of the insights that can be learned about discernment and testing of spirits from church history with specific reference to charismatic churches.
3. To investigate how charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality understand and practice the injunction of discernment and testing of the spirits.
4. To recommend certain guidelines on how discernment and testing of the spirits could be understood and practiced to help churches propagate the gospel to the glory of God in Emfuleni municipality.

### **1.5. Central theological argument**

The study holds the following as the central theological argument:

- The practicing of miracles, prophecies, selling of oil, water by some charismatic churches in the Emfuleni municipality requires that the biblical injunctions regarding the discernment and testing of the spirits be taken into consideration.
- The charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality need boldness to test and challenge all the practices that seem to be harmful to lives and abusive to people's and belief systems. This is also posing a great danger to mission work in the region.

- The preaching of the pure and basic Gospel with the adherence of the injunction to discern and test the spirits will enhance and harness the work of missions in the Emfuleni municipality as contrary to the extremes and selling of material things with empty promises in most cases.

### **1.5 The importance and relevance of the research**

The study is important because of the following matters:

1. It is important and relevant because the injunction comes from the Bible and has to be carried out. The study is important because it is part of an attempt to understand a Bible injunction and this makes the quest for insight into the matter not an option but an obligation from the Lord.
2. It is important and relevant because there is a need for guidelines or criteria to be formulated on how to discern and test the spirits when charismatic churches seem to lack biblical and theological information to deal with the situation.
3. It is important and relevant because of what is happening around the communities and the churches in Emfuleni municipality, where the charismatic churches seem to be uncertain of how to deal with church leaders with weird, lethal and unfamiliar practices that are endangering the mission work in the Emfuleni municipality.

### **1.6 Hypothesis**

What is happening in the church in the black communities today calls for serious concern due to the fact that there are some practices that are taking place in the name of the Spirit but which are not only degrading the church and the message of the gospel but also harmful to innocent and unsuspecting members of the society. It is part of the duties of the church and of the state to protect innocent people from the scrupulous pastors and bishops who are deliberately abusing their powers for financial gains. This study which is primarily focused on what is happening in the churches around the Emfuleni municipality communities operates with the assumption that where church leaders and members take the injunction to discern and test the spirit seriously, it will help curb some of the practices that are taking place.

Robertson (2011:19) correctly points out that great danger lies in another direction if we accept this concept of prophetic utterances as God's word, yet is something less than the perfection of his word associated with biblical prophecy. A person is made subject in one sense to a word that is supposedly immediately inspired of God, and yet at the same time by its own definition participates in human fallibility. Robertson (2011:19) further alludes that it is a very practical thing to lead people to recognise the finality of revelation in scripture, many a young believer could be saved from serious heart breaking if he learns to trust the objective teaching of the word of God, more than his senses of receiving revelation from the Lord (Robertson, 2011:19).

## **1.7 Demarcation and limitation of the research**

The study concerns itself with the theological and biblical analysis of how the charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality area take and practice the injunction to discern and test the spirits. The study uses the Bible intensively but not exhaustively, it also uses books, journals and articles. The investigation focuses primarily on biblical texts and literature and the main focus of the study are churches in the Black communities in Emfuleni municipality.

## **1.8 Research design**

### **1.8.1 Literature review**

Creswell (2009:25) maintains that the literature review accomplishes several purposes. It shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the one being undertaken. It relates a study to the larger, on-going dialogue in the literature, filling in gaps and extending prior studies. Creswell (2009:25) elaborates that it provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings. In qualitative research, inquiries use the literature in a manner consistent with the assumption of learning from the participants, not prescribing the questions that need to be answered (Creswell 2009:25).

Flick (2011:12) states that the qualitative research method selects participants purposefully and integrates small numbers of cases according to their relevance. Data collection is designed much more openly and aims at a comprehensive picture made possible by reconstructing the case under study. The questions and answers are defined in advance and there is greater use of open-ended questions (Flick, 2011:12).

Relevant books, journals, articles, and internet sources provided the secondary data. The information obtained through the literature review influenced the design of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The Bible was also used.

### **1.8.2 Empirical section**

Creswell (2009:15) states that research methods involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that the researcher propose to use in a study. It is useful to consider the full range of possibilities of data collection and to organise these methods, for example by their degree of predetermine nature, their use of closed- ended and open-ended questioning and their focus on numeric non-numeric data analysis.

Creswell (2009:15) elaborates that on the other hand collecting data might involve visiting a research site and observing the behaviour of individuals without predetermined questions or conducting an interview in which the individual is allowed to talk independently. Qualitative methods were utilised to interview the participants. The questionnaire consisted of brief questions which were easy to complete. The questions ensured the validity of the study.

### **1.8.3 Sampling of churches**

De Vos (1998:189) defines sampling as taking any portion of a population or a universe as representative of that population or universe. A population is defined as the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen. A population is a totality of persons, events, organisation units, case record or other sampling units with which a research problem is concerned according to De Vos (1998:189).

According to Flick (2011:71) there are a number of requirements for a sample; the sample should be a minimised representation of the population in terms of the heterogeneity of the elements and the representativeness of the variables. The elements of the sample have to be defined and the population be clearly and empirically defined. Flick (2011:71) further emphasises that the population has to be clearly limited in terms of random and non-random sampling.

The study focuses on the charismatic churches around the Emfuleni municipality and the scope is the Emfuleni municipality geographical area. The sample is a minimised representation of the population in terms of the heterogeneity of the elements and the representativeness of the variables. The elements of the sample are defined, and the population is clearly and empirically defined, and the population is clearly limited in terms of sampling.

Though it is not simple to cover all the churches in Emfuleni municipality due to the nature of the area, at least two churches are covered per township based on their size, age and heterogeneity. The main townships in Emfuleni are: Sebokeng, Evaton, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong, and Tshepiso. The churches participating in the interview are those with a total membership of at least 100. The churches are also at least five years old.

### **1.9 Ethical considerations**

De Vos (1998:24) defines ethics as a set of moral principles which is suggested by individuals or a group and is subsequently widely accepted and offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects, respondents, employers, and students. Creswell (2009:87) states that researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies. Researchers need to protect their research participants, develop trust with them and promote the integrity to guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their company or institution. Denzin and Lincoln (2008:192) further elaborates that research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008:192) proper respect for human freedom includes two necessary conditions, namely: subjects must agree voluntarily to participate without physical or psychological coercion and that their agreement must be based on full and open information, Denzin and Lincoln (2008:192) emphasises that subjects must be told the duration, method, possible risks and purpose and aim of experiment as well as confidentiality that must be assured.

In each of the participating local charismatic churches in the Emfuleni municipality, church leaders were interviewed. This was done after the participating church leaders signed a consent form. The researcher ensured that, where there were gate keeping structures, such as church boards, that they were aware of the participation of their church leaders. The participants were free to change their minds and to withdraw their participation at any time during the process or even before.

None of the participants were promised any payments for their participation. To ensure the reliability of the information provided, participants were provided with assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants who contributed their opinions willingly. The duration, method and the purpose of the study were thoroughly explained to the participants.

### 1.11. CONCLUSION

This chapter lays the foundation of the study. It is accordingly concluded with the following schematic representation of the study that shows its relationship to all the subsequent chapters of the study.

#### Schematic representation of the study

Orientation			Chapter one
Research questions	Objectives	Method	
3.1. What is the biblical content and meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits?	To explore the biblical content and meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits.	Literature	Chapter two
3.2. What are some of the insight that can be learned about discernment from church history with specific reference to the charismatic churches?	To highlight some of the insights that can be learned about discernment and testing of the spirits from church history with specific reference to the charismatic churches.	Literature	Chapter three
3.3. How do church leaders in the charismatic churches around Emfuleni municipality understand and practice the injunction to discern and test the spirits?	To investigate how charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality understand and practice the injunction to discern and test the spirits.	Empirical: Questionnaires	Chapter four

<p>3.4. What are some of the findings and recommendations that the study can make to ensure that churches in Emfuleni municipality propagate the gospel to the glory of God?</p>	<p>To recommend certain guidelines on how discernment and testing of the spirits could be understood and practiced to help churches do mission work to the glory of God in Emfuleni municipality.</p>	<p>Literature</p>	<p>Chapter five</p>
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## **CHAPTER 2 THE BIBLICAL CONTENT AND MEANING OF THE INJUNCTION TO DISCERN AND TEST THE SPIRITS**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the main focus will be on Bible passages and cases that shed light on the issue of discerning and testing of the spirits. The chapter studies passages and cases from both the Old and New testaments.

The approach that will be utilised is to select the cases and passages from various books of the Bible and utilise them as examples of what the injunction to discern and test the spirits involve. The Bible passages and cases will be explored in this chapter.

The methodological issues associated with the selection of these passages as well as the steps involved in their study will be discussed first. The selected Bible passages and cases will then be explored. The chapter will then be concluded by highlighting some of the lessons that the study of the selected Bible passages and cases yielded regarding the issue of discerning and testing of the spirits.

### **2.2. THE IMPORTANT METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS CHAPTER**

#### **2.2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The methodological issues associated with this chapter that are regarded as important are the various contexts in which the scripture portions were written, namely the literary context; the historical context; and the redemptive historical context; which will be followed by highlighting the lessons that can be learned about each of the passages.

#### **2.2.2. LITERARY CONTEXT**

According to Kaiser and Silva (1994:33) literary context emphasises the necessity of allowing the reader and the interpreter to determine what the text means, mostly in new different and partially by paying attention to its context. It is accordingly of great significance to consider the context of any passage within the structure of the chapter in which the passage is found as well as within the contextual flow of the whole book of which the passage is found. Kaiser and Silva (1994:33) elaborates to say that the interpretative process could not be said to have accomplished its goal in any sense until it had involved the text and the original literary setting, along with the questions of its genre and determination of what precedes and follows the passage.

#### **2.2.3. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

According to Doriani and Stuart (1996:31) historical context is the culture, customs, languages, beliefs, and history of the author and his original audience. The study of historical context, according to Doriani and Stuart (1996:31), describes how a portion of the Bible fits into its whole world. One gains access to historical context through background study of the language, history, customs, and philosophy of the author and his audience.

Koestenberger and Patterson (2011:67) state that the interpreters of the scripture are faced with three inescapable realities in their interpretive practice: first, is the reality of historic or more specifically salvation history that is the fact that God's revelation to humans, which is conveyed by Biblical texts, took place in a real-life time and space continuum. Koestenberger and Patterson (2011:67) further elaborate, "The writings of the scripture did not come into being in a vacuum, they were written by people with specific beliefs, conviction and experiences. And the reality of God and his revelation in scripture".

Fee and Douglas (2014:30) highlight that the historical context, which will differ from book to book, has to do with several matters namely; the time and culture of the author and audience, the geographical, topographical, and political features that are relevant to the author's setting, and historical occasions of the book.

Koestenberger and Patterson (2011:67) further elaborate that the method of Biblical theology must be historical, that is, while systematic theology, which turns to be abstract and topical in nature, biblical theology aims to understand a given passage of the scripture in its original, historical setting.

#### **2.2.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Koestenberger and Patterson (2011:188) state that although the presence of a Messianic theme has been the subject of great debate, there was an expanding message concerning a Messiah during the Old Testament times. The hope of the coming king to deliver Israel from its enemies and establish a kingdom over which he would rule in righteousness are central in the Bible. This was expressed and was a vivid hope in Israel (Exodus 29:7; Leviticus, 7:36). Prophets were anointed in Israel (1 Kings, 19:16) but the chief element in the conception of the Messiah in the Old Testament was that of a king.

Walke (2007:53) initially highlighted that the salvation history represented both the primary and secondary history of the Old Testament's moves towards the goal of fulfilment in Jesus Christ everything after him, including the Gospel, which represented the church's reflection on Jesus as well as the developing interpretation of him in the canon of the New Testament.

Walke (2007:53) further emphasises that Jesus is the hinge on which the Old Testament turns and this entails that all scriptures must be interpreted in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ as represented in the historically conditioned sources.

The Bible (1987:606 NIV) says, "So, this is what the sovereign Lord says"; "See I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious corner stone for a sure foundation. The one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line, hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie and water will overflow your hiding places. Your covenant with death will be annulled. Your agreement with the grave will not stand" (Isaiah 28: 16-18).

Dorani (1996:170) state that the true Christian message draws attention to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Lord, no matter how true, how moral, how informative, how steering or how practical a sermon may be, it is sub-Christian if it fails to present Jesus to this fallen world. Fee and Stuart (1993:79) accordingly also stated that, "It will help you as you study Old Testament narratives to realise that the story is being told on three levels. The

top level is that of the whole universal plan of God worked out through creation in itself". In further elaborating about the redemptive history, Doriani and Stuart (1996:170) talks about two aspects, namely: Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) and the Redemptive Historical Focus (RHF).

According to Doriani and Stuart (1996:170) the FCF is the more experiential path, as one prepares a message, it asks, "What aspects of the fallen condition of mankind does the message address, then it shows how Jesus is presented in the text as the remedy for our experience of sin, immaturity, suffering and brokenness".

Doriani and Stuart (1996:170) further elaborates on the aspect of RHF and begins by asserting that God has a gracious, sovereign plan to redeem his people. It shows how Jesus is presented in the text as the one true redeemer. Doriani and Stuart (1996:170) further emphasises that the Redemptive Historical Focus, dwells on the person and work of Jesus Christ by observing many ways in which people need him (Doriani and Stuart, 1996:170).

The principle remains the main focus of the study, namely: the injunction to discern and test the spirits. Throughout this chapter, the intention is to see if the people, or the nation, that the passage was at first directed to, was able to take the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

The number one gift most needed and most frequently absent in the body of Christ is discernment of the spirits (Goll, 2017:15). Hetteema (2015:3) states that in the history of theology, we encounter the idea of discernment of the spirits as an expression of the need to judge forces that make a claim on a person's perception and behaviour.

#### **2.2.5. THE TOOLS**

The tools that will be utilised in this chapter are the Bible, of which several versions will be used. Bible dictionaries, commentaries, encyclopaedias, books, newspaper articles, Bible handbooks, as well as the Bible Atlas will also be made practical.

#### **2.2.6. APPROACH TO THE CHAPTER**

Various scripture passages will be studied in addition to various passages selected for this chapter dealing with injunction to discern and test the spirits. A number of aspects in the narrative will be examined and located in terms of their various positions in order to determine if the narrative of the scripture portion is a report, speech, story or drama. Time and social setting will also comprise the scrutiny.

The aspects of historical context, namely: the world of the Bible, which includes its politics, geography, agriculture, economics, and social customs, methods of warfare as well as family structure and gender roles will be discussed.

Last, but not least, a closer look of the redemptive history of every scripture portion selected will be offered by focussing on its RHF as illustrated by Doriani and Stuart (1996:170). There will be a brief conclusion after every scripture portion as well as a list of references at the end of the whole chapter.

### **2.2.7. ISSUES REGARDING THE SELECTION OF BIBLE PASSAGES AND CASES FOR STUDY IN THIS CHAPTER**

Kaiser and Silva (1994:201) mention an essential factor in exegesis that many interpreters tend to ignore or overlook, namely: the chair passages of the scripture. But before the concept is defined, a definition of the term "exegesis" is necessary. Horton (2006:71) states that exegesis is the process of drawing out of a text in its intended meaning. The word is derived from the Greek word *exegeomai*, used to describe the disclosure or description of a document, statement or incident.

To take the discussion further, Kaiser and Silva (1994:201) offer a deeper discussion on the issue of chair passages of the Scripture that they must take a fore position in the process of Scripture interpretation. Kaiser and Silva (1994:201) emphasise that along with studying related passages in terms of the analogy of faith, it is useful also to focus on key chapters of Scripture that contain major treatment of various issues such as creation (Genesis, 1-2 ); the incomparability of God (Isaiah, 40:10-31); the nature of atonement (Isaiah, 53:1-12); the resurrection (1 Corinthians, 15:1-8); the nature of intermediate state (1 Corinthians, 5:1-10); and the nature of incarnation (Philippians, 2:1-11).

Kaiser and Silva (1994:201) further elaborate that the chapters mentioned above have been referred in the church history as the "seat doctrine" or "a seat of doctrine and these passages can well function in as boundary seats for interpretation as they seek guidance about the correct interpretation of texts that are textual or topically parallel".

Kaiser and Silva (1994:201) maintain that the main burden of the doctrinal teaching must rest on the chair passages, and this principle is to be preferred over any reductionist one such as that which says we must take the New Testament over the Old Testament or the Prophets over the Law, or the Epistles over the Gospels. Every one of these alternatives has been played out in history and many of them with disastrous effects. Throughout both canons, namely, the Old and New testaments, the revelation of God comes to its fullest measures on one doctrine after the other (Kaiser & Silva, 1994:201).

### **2.2.8. ISSUES PERTAINING TO ASPECTS THAT RECEIVE ATTENTION WHEN STUDYING THE SELECTED BIBLE PASSAGES AND CASES**

The issues that will receive attention will be the authorship, place, and possible date as well as the purpose for which the passage was written and the lesson that the passage bring to us today with regard to the injunction to discern and test the spirits. The relevance of the scripture portion to the study will play an essential role and will be the main focus.

### **2.2.9. THE ORDER FOLLOWED IN THE EXPLORATION OF THE BIBLE PASSAGES AND CASES**

When Bible passages are explored, the order that will be followed will be according to the pattern and order of the books of the Old and New Testaments as placed in the Bible. This approach will assist in covering a reasonable number of the Bible books.

### 2.2.10. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Horton (2006:71) mentions a number of fascinating facts about the history and culture pertaining to the scripture interpretation. Horton (2006:71) states "History can reveal the strength and weakness of nations and why they have continued or why they have disappeared, but Biblical history does not focus upon people alone, its history is God centred".

Horton (2006:71) elaborates: "Its writers saw God as revealing himself in history by choosing the Israelites people to work with in the special way". Horton (2006:71) elaborates further to say "God communicated directly with people among them designated as his servants, concerning his blessing and judgement among them. He finally joined them on earth in the person of Jesus Christ".

Kaiser and Silva (1994:206) mention the imperative factors, which need to be seriously noted in this study, about the vital role played by the Holy Spirit in the part of **Scripture** interpretation throughout history. Kaiser and Silva (2007:206) state: "The Holy Spirit did not begin to work just as we reached this stage of history and began to interpret the Bible. For centuries, reaching back into the Old Testament., there has been the faithful accumulation of gains, insight and understanding of the believing body of the people of God".

To avoid the situation of erring in misinterpretation of scriptures and the teaching of unscriptural doctrines as many of the preachers have done, of which is the main reason that has propelled this study, Kaiser and Silva (1994:206) mention very helpful points that need to be seriously considered, namely; the doctrinal teaching of the scripture is to be shared. The work of theologians must be done in the spirit of inviting other believers to inspect their work and measure it by the standard of the **Scripture** itself. They need to work together, and is not due to the inadequate nature of **Scripture** but it has more to do with the inadequate nature of the reader and interpreters of the Bible according to Kaiser and Silva (1994:206).

### 2.2.11. KEY BIBLE PASSAGES AND CASES REGARDING THE DISCERNING AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS

There are a number of Bible passages regarding discernment and testing of the spirits to the extent that one cannot tabulate them all, but the few that are mentioned here are what can be regarded as some of the key passages concerning the subject. 1John (4:1-3) is the kind of Bible passage that hits the nail on the head concerning the subject.

The Bible, in 1John (4:1-3) reads, "Beloved do not believe every spirits but test the spirits, whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God and this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard that that he must come, and is now already in the world".

The other **Scripture** portion is found in the book of Deuteronomy (18:21-22). It tells about how to distinguish true prophets from false prophets, because God does not want his people to be confused between the two. Deuteronomy (18:21-22) reads: "And if you say in your heart, how we shall know the word which the Lord has spoken? When the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the things does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of that prophet".

The third scripture portion similar to the above is Deuteronomy (13:1-2). The passage mentions the fact that some of the prophecies said by the false prophet may happen but the people must still distinguish what is the word of God and His will above what the prophet says or does, because that is the way the Lord will test their love to him. Deuteronomy (13:1-2) reads: "If there arises a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and a sign or a wonder come to pass of which he has spoken to you saying, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them'. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams".

The above-mentioned scripture portions form the basis of the subject with regard to the discernment and testing of the spirits. The scriptures which every person who follow God's will so that he must not be derailed he must obey and follow. They are like a yard stick that shows a line of demarcation not to cross over.

There are many cases that can be stated with regard to the subject of discernment and testing of the spirits, but the two classical cases are the ones in the book of Acts (8:14-24) where Peter confronts and rebukes Simon Magus who wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. And the second case is found in the book of Matthew (4:1-11) when Jesus was led to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He did well to discern that the devil was not there to want Jesus to prove a point, but to derail him from the will of God.

### **2.3. GENESIS 3:1-21**

#### **2.3.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Genesis 3: 1-21 is the story of the fall of man, it tells how the first human beings, Adam and his wife Eve, were deceived and transgressed the commandment of God not to eat the fruits of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden. It tells how man lost his glory and authority to the devil and lost his relationship and fellowship with God that brought a curse to him, his wife and the whole generations to be born after him. Arnold (2009:67) states that in Genesis (3:8-13) Yahweh God exposes the transgression, as man and the woman were ashamed in each other's presence, now they realised their guilt and were ashamed in the presence of God.

Arnold (2009:67) elaborates: "Having now been exposed, the man emerges from hiding and attempts a feeble explanation (Genesis 3:10) and Yahweh God assumes the position of a divine prosecutor asking the two penetrating questions intended to explore the contour of the crime". Arnold (2009:67) says the defence offered by the humans is laced with recrimination, self-preservation and deflection of blame (Arnold, 2009:67).

### 2.3.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT GENESIS 3:1-21

The narrative takes place in the Garden of Eden that was situated among the four rivers; Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates in the land of Havilah, one can also deduce that the soil was very fertile with plenty of water with four rivers. The place was a tropical region with all kinds of fruits and animals. There was plenty of food as they were allowed to eat everything in the garden except from the one tree in the middle of the garden, namely: the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The authorship of the book is ascribed to Moses as the author of the book Genesis.

According to Douglas and Hoffmeier (1990:5) the authorship of Genesis has traditionally been attributed to Moses by Jews and the Christians alike. The education Moses received as the adopted grandson of Pharaoh specially qualifies him for the task of compiling and writing the Pentateuch. Douglas and Hoffmeier (1990:5) elaborate: "Since the events recounted in Genesis took place long before Moses birth, he obviously served as a compiler of earlier tradition that had been passed down".

Douglas and Hoffmeier (1990:5) state: "Moses was writing to the children of Israel in the desert of Sinai while they were on their journey to the promised land of Canaan". Douglas and Hoffmeier (1990:5) state that Moses set out to preserve the history of God's dealings with Israel's patriarchs as a foundation for explaining the covenant that God had recently made with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai.

### 2.3.3. LITERARY CONTEXT OF GENESIS 3:1-21

The **Scripture** portion is a narrative found in the third chapter of the first book of the Bible, Genesis, is one of the first five book of Moses, also called the Pentateuch. It is a story narrative with four characters, namely: God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent. God is the main character in the story. The purpose is to tell how men fell into sin and transgressed the commandment of God that led to man losing his authority and relationship with God. The scripture portion is found in almost the whole part of chapter three in the book of Genesis and is one of the longest scripture portions selected in this study. Pawson (2015:21) states an interesting fact that the book of Genesis is the fundamental book for the whole Bible if not all; Bible truths are included here in embryo and this book is the one that unlocks all the rest of the Bible.

The scripture portion is preceded by the second chapter narrative where God has planted the garden in Eden and it was irrigated by the river that had four tributaries namely Pishon, Gihon, Gush, and Euphrates. Douglas and Hoffmeier (1990:5) state the interesting fact that one might get the impression that the garden was planted after the man, however, it could rightly be translated "planted" which means that the garden was ready for man. God had created it eastwards assuming that the reference the author points to was in Palestine or Sinai since east of this region is ancient Babylonia (Douglas and Hoffmeier, 1990:5).

Douglas and Hoffmeier (1990:5) elaborate: "It tells how the Lord put man in the garden and gave him the responsibility to take care of it as well as the command. It further tells how the woman was made to be the suitable helper for the man. The scripture portion of Genesis 3:1-21 is followed by the fourth chapter that introduces us to the first murder of

human being when Cain kills his brother Abel and the punishment the he receives form God" (Douglas & Hoffmeier, 1990:5).

#### **2.3.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT GENESIS 3:1-21**

Koestenberger and Patterson (2011:189) state that the Messianic idea was part of God's plan in the Old Testament for the working of earth's history. One would expect a gradual unfolding of that plan to be revealed, although the term "Messiah" would not be always present – such a concept might have been formed in the early days of man's history. Genesis 3:15, in the New King James version reads as follows, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed, he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel". This might have been understood as a proto messianic prophecy according to (Koestenberger and Patterson, 2011:189).

The "seed of the woman" referred to in Genesis 3:15 can also be understood as pointing to Jesus who is presented as one who came to overcome the devil (1 John, 3:8b) and this happened in the times of the New Testament. During the time of Jesus' ministry in this world, Jesus went about doing good, healing the sick and all oppressed by the devil until he paid the ultimate penalty of sin on the cross.

Beale and Carson (2007:692) state that Paul's illusion in Genesis continues in his final promise to the Roman Church: "The God of peace shall quickly crush Satan under your feet" (Romans, 16:20); Paul takes up the promise that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis, 3:15). Beale and Carson (2007:692) elaborate: "There is an eschatological overtone as well since various biblical texts describe the Lord as having slain the serpent in his work of creation".

This Jesus did by shedding his blood and dying for the sins of all people of the world. So that all who believe in him must obtain eternal salvation for their souls. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life".

Genesis (3:21) says, "And also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them"; this shows that God cared so much for man that after he sinned, the lamb was killed to cover his nakedness. For the sin of man, a lamb was killed as a substitution to die in his place to replace what was lost to him, his covering and his glory and authority even though that was not enough.

Henry (1991:15) states that the first thing that died was the sacrifice of Christ in a figure who is therefore said to be the Lamb of God slain before the foundations of the world. Jesus Christ was the substitute of God to replace all the sinners of the world on the cross in order to pay for the penalty of sin. "That is God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed us to the word of reconciliation (1 Corinthians, 5:19- 20).

### **2.3.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF GENESIS 3:1-21 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

To obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits will help us see and know the devil even when he comes in the body of a serpent to come to entice and deceive us. The church leaders must take seriously the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

When we read the scripture portion of Genesis 3:1-21 we see how the first man and woman disregarded God's given command not to eat the fruits from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They also failed to use discernment to know that what was speaking through the serpent was the devil. If they used this innate gift given to all human beings called discernment, they would be able to see that is Satan speaking through the mouth of the serpent.

Genesis 3:1-3 says: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' and the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the trees of the garden but the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die' (Genesis 3:1-3, NKJV).

Brueggemann (2003:37) states that the key character is the serpent alongside the man and the woman. Is the serpent who utters the "sly" voice of temptation that triggers disobedience and consequently expulsion of the human creatures from God's garden? Brueggemann (2003:37) further elaborates by saying that the serpent in the narrative, and consequently, in the garden is given a voice to seek to contradict God and counter the compelling, commanding voice of the Creator, God.

Henry (1991:610) asserts: "It is certain it was the devil that beguiled Eve, the devil and Satan is the old serpent (Revelations, 12:9) a malignant spirit by creation and an angel of light and an immediate attendant upon God's throne, but by sin became an apostate from the first state and rebelled against God's crown and dignity". Van Groningen (1996: 99) indicates that Satan, according to the scripture, is the master tempter, he is the adversary and accuser of God's people.

Henry (1991:10) reiterates that Satan was a deceiver in the likeness of a serpent, whether it was only the visible shape and appearance of a serpent, or whether it was a real winged serpent is not certain but by God's permission it might be either, the devil chose to act his part as a serpent. Henry (1991:10) elaborates further that the person who was tempted was a woman, now alone and at a distance from the husband but near the forbidden tree. Henry (1991:10) emphasises "It was the devil's subtlety to assault the weaker vessel with his temptation. Though perfect in her kind, we may suppose her inferior to Adam in knowledge and strength and presence of mind" (Henry, 1991:10).

When we read Genesis 3:4-7 it says: "Then the serpent said to the woman 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate".

Walton (2015:134) alludes that the serpent's insertion of doubt and his nuanced denial of the woman's understanding of the consequences stated by God would not be interpreted any differently than in our traditional understanding: deception, misdirection, and trouble making are all within the purview of chaos creatures. It is important to note the synthetic subtlety that is evident in the reptile's world (Walton, 2015:134).

Walton (2015:134) states that the woman was not as careful in wording and the serpent therefore told the truth when picked up on discrepancy and contradicted her by saying death was a threat. Because the woman will not die, God only knows that the day the woman eats of it, she will be as wise as God. Walton (2015:134) elaborates that the serpent's deception came in exploiting a misrepresentation by a woman and telling her of a benefit to eating the fruit without including the delirious effects. Van Groningen (1996:97) emphasises that when Yahweh God warned the man and woman of the consequences of eating of the tree, saying the word "die" was meant in the sense of separation and the process of deterioration was experienced in the garden.

Brueggemann (2003:37) attests that what we understand in Christian terms is that this was a fall whereby human creation and ultimate creation has fallen helplessly into the power and habit of sin so that human persons are erred alienated from God and helpless to alter their condition according to (Brueggemann, 2003:37).

Brueggemann (2003:37) elaborates that as we consider the Old Testament interpretation, we should be clear that the fall is not just disobedience or eating the forbidden fruit, these actions could be considered crimes but they were crimes that were simply the expression of the fall. Brueggemann (2003:37) emphasises "The fall was the decision to be like God, conveyed by the serpent's words (Genesis 3:5), the woman's response (Genesis 3:6), God's assessment (Genesis 3:22), and the reason for the banishment (Genesis 3:23) the way in which man and woman have become like God".

Walton (2015:143) states a very powerful point about the fact that man wanted to earn wisdom illegitimately beyond what God intended for him. This is what he would use for his selfish ambitions and self-glorification. Walton (2015:143) notes: "Wisdom is good, we can therefore safely answer that God did not withhold wisdom from humanity".

Walton (2015:143) attests, "True wisdom must be gained through process, generally from instruction by those who are wise. The fall is defined by the fact that Adam and Eve acquired wisdom illegitimately (Genesis 3:22) according to (Walton, 2015:143)". Human beings are to work alongside God in extending order "subdue" and "rule" (Genesis 1:28); they need to attain wisdom, but as endowment from God, not by seizing it mainly for autonomous use (Walton, 2015:143).

Genesis 3:9-11 says: "Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him 'Where are you?' So, he said 'I heard your voice and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hide myself. And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you that you should not eat?'" Henry (1991:12) states that the powerful question that with which God pursues Adam and arrested him "Where art thou?" not as if God did not know where he was but rather this would enter the process against him. It is rather an upbraiding question in order to his correction and humiliation, not asking where he was but what his condition is.

Henry (1991:13) elaborates further: "Those who by sin have gone astray from God should seriously consider where they are, they are far off from all good, in the mist of their enemies in bondage of Satan and in the high road to utter ruin. This enquiry upon Adam may be looked at as a gracious pursuit in kindness to him and to his recovery. Henry (1991:13) emphasises "If God did not call him, his condition would have been disparate as that of fallen angels.

Henry (1991:13) says if a sinner will but consider where they are, they will not rest till they return to God". Genesis 3:14-15 says: "So the Lord said to the serpent, because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the cattle. And more than every beast of the field. On your belly you shall go. And you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the Seed of the woman. And between your seed and her seed. And he shall bruise your head. And you shall bruise His heel" (Henry, 1991:13).

Brueggemann (2003:33) states that the summary of these narrative parts constitutes a remarkable theological statement, what may have been various myths of "origin" is now transposed into a theological statement of divine judgement and divine rescue. Rescue and judgement being the defining categories for the God of Israel and for God's implementation upon the whole world in which Israel lives (Brueggemann, 2003:33).

Brueggemann (2003:33) elaborates to say that in transposed form, this material is no longer interested in "origin" and in the sort of generic religious questions that are endless functioning, but now the fact is an attestation to the main themes of Israel's faith in God. Van Groningen (1996:103) highlights that they had become covenant breakers, they lost their sense of being royal rulers with Yahweh God. They took off the cosmos fig leaves over much they were to rule and hide behind them. They abdicated their God given throne and had become dependent on leaves (Van Groningen, 1996:103).

This is what happens when the person fails to use the injunction to discern and test the spirits correctly. He ends up on the wrong side of the road where he never thought he would be, because the devil, like a roaring lion, is waiting for whom he can devour. His first preys are the preachers who want to serve God without taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously.

Genesis (3:21) states that, "also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them". Henry (1991:15) states that we learn here how God cares for our first parents, Adam and Eve, even though they have sinned against him. Even though he corrects his disobedient children, and put them under the marks of his displeasure, yet he does not disinherit them, but like a tender father, provides the herb of the field for their food and coats of the skin for their clothing.

Henry (1991:15) alludes further that the coats of skin had significance in the sense that, the beast's whose skin they wear, must be slain, slain before their eyes, to show them what death is (Ecclesiastes, 3:18) that they must see that they themselves were beasts, mortal and decaying. Henry (1991:15) elaborates: "It is supposed that they were slain not for food but for sacrifice. To typify the great sacrifice in the latter end of the world supposed to be offered once and for all".

### **2.3.6. CONCLUSION**

Van Groningen (1996:98) states that Adam and Eve were Yahweh's covenantal representatives, as vice-regents they represented their sovereign king in his cosmic kingdom, their status, prerogative responsibility and blessing were such that they occupied the highest position and were given royal privileges as no other created entities. Van Groningen (1996: 98) emphasises that they were to rule with Yahweh over all that is created and all aspects of creation, all laws and functions were in place.

In this scripture portion (Genesis 3:1-21) we read about how God created a man and put him in the Garden of Eden with his wife. The way Eve was enticed and deceived by devil inserted in the body of the snake. How they had a momentary encounter with a fatal enemy who wanted their God given authority to subdue and to rule the cosmos, but they failed the test due to the lack of implementation of the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

We learn that man and woman as vice-regents and covenantal representatives were fully resourced and blessed in the Garden of Eden, placed on the highest position of the cosmic creation, but doubted the command of God and chose to obey the deception of the devil. Adam and Eve were expected to discern the evil intentions of the serpent from the fact that what it was saying was a direct contradiction of what their Lord has said to them. They knew the goodness of the Lord; and here was someone who was suggesting that their Lord is not trustworthy and was even doing so by contradicting the word of their Lord.

This is a pointer to many preachers who are blessed by God, fully resourced with all spiritual and material blessings beguile God, mightily used by God with various spiritual gifts like healing, working of miracles, prophesy and others (1 Corinthians, 12:10) chose to obey the lies of the devil because of greed and covetousness for wealth and fame. With covetous hearts they want to gain more than they are supposed to have.

Many pastors who want to gain more tend to err and are ruined by the forces of evil on their road to destruction, due to their disregard for the injunction to discern and test the spirits. The truth is; if people fail to discern, they will be deceived. Hence, one has to believe the fact that discernment is not only for preachers but for all church members. Everyone in the body of Christ must be in the position to discern and test the spirits.

## **2.4. EXODUS 7:8-12**

### **2.4.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Exodus (7:8-12) narrates the first miracle of Moses before Pharaoh, the Lord commanded Moses to tell Aaron to throw down his staff before Pharaoh and that it will turn into a snake; but Pharaoh was not intimidated, he called his magicians who did the same with their staffs but the staff of Aaron swallowed all their staffs.

The book of Exodus is one book that is full of scripture portions where the injunction to discern and test the spirits was evident, and many times Moses did get it right even though there were also many times where he missed the mark. This is the main reason he could not enter the Promised Land with the Israelites. To do justice to this study, we will first look at the basics forming the pattern for this chapter, namely the historical background, literary structure, redemptive history followed by drawing attention to some relevant aspects of the message that have to do with the discernment and testing of the spirits.

#### **2.4.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EXODUS 7:8-13**

The scripture portion of Exodus (7:8-13) is in the second book of the Bible. The departure of Israel from Egypt is the dominant historical fact. Moses is the dominant figure and is the author of the book, including this scripture portion. MacArthur (2006: 90) states that the eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, the setting for Israel's dramatic departure, was a politically and economically strong one.

MacArthur (2006:90) further alludes that Thutmose the Third was the Pharaoh of the oppression who enslaved the Israelites in Egypt – the one who extended the boundaries of Egypt's influence far beyond national boundaries. The original language for the scripture portion was Aramaic and the original audience were the children of Israel.

Pawson (2015:101) states that the book of Exodus comprises of the late days of the Israelites as the slaves in Egypt, the calling of Moses and their miraculous release from the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. The long journey of the Israelites in the wilderness with the mighty hand of God, fighting for them, protecting and feeding them. In this book, one can see how God is able to protect, feed and fight for his people in the adverse conditions of this world.

#### **2.4.3. LITERARY CONTEXT EXODUS 7:8-13**

The scripture portion is found in the middle of the seventh chapter of the book of Exodus. This is the second book of the Old Testament canon. It is among the first five books called the book of Moses or the Pentateuch or the Law of Moses. Hartin (1986:2) makes a vital contribution about the literary context of this scripture portion viewing it from the general perspective of the whole first five books of the Old Testament canon intertwining with the authorship of the first five books called the Pentateuch.

According to Hartin (1986:2) there are indications of different styles and vocabulary throughout the first five books, which show that one man could not have been the author of all the books; the books do not come from the same author or from the same period time. Hartin (1986:21) postulates that the Pentateuch went through an extremely long and rather complicated period of completion to reach the form in which it exists today. Hartin (1986:2) "Its basis comes from the events which took the place of God acting on behalf of his people and manifesting his will to them. They were preserved and handed down orally, until with time, the need was found to put them in writing" (Hartin, 1986:21).

The **Scripture** portion is the paragraph, at the middle part of the chapter it is the part of the narrative that is called the short story with characters, namely: Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh, his officials, and magicians. God is said to be the main character in all Bible

narratives because all Bible narrative had his plan for historical events in order to influence the bigger plan of humanity.

#### **2.4.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EXODUS 7:8-13**

Henry (2006:104) states that the first miracle was not a plague, yet it amounted to the threatening of a plague, is a serpent. In Bible terms, while the snake is the physical serpent, the devil is the spiritual serpent. God's method of dealing with sinners, he comes upon them gradually.

Van Groningen (1996:296) states that the biblical testimony is consistent in setting forth Satan as the great opponent of Yahweh God. Reference was made to Pharaoh's serving as Satan's agent. Van Groningen (1996:296) emphasises "Pharaoh was being used by Satan to crush the covenantal seed of the woman and of the patriarchs". Van Groningen (1996:296) elaborates further to say that Yahweh God demonstrated his sovereign rule over satanic parasite's kingdom. Van Groningen (1996:296) attests "Satan will be defeated, Pharaoh was humbled and Yahweh God's name was to be proclaimed and acknowledged all over the earth".

Henry (2006:104) further alludes that the serpent which Aaron's rod was turned into swallowed up the other serpents, which was sufficient to have convinced Pharaoh on which side the right lay, but the truth will always prevail. The cause of God will ultimately triumph at last over all competition and contradiction and will reign alone (Henry 2006:104).

The Bible, in the book of Daniel (2:44) talks about the kingdom that will never come to an end and that will crush all other kingdoms: "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to other people, it will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end. But it will itself endure for ever". This is the kingdom of Jesus Christ that will last forever and rule over his enemies when God shall put all his enemies under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25).

The old serpent of the book of Revelations (20:10) will receive his final judgement. The Bible says: "And the devil who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night". This attests to the fact that the devil will finally receive his ultimate punishment even if today uses his deceptions to many people acting as if he is in contest with God in so many respects, but the day will come when all will see how wicked and weak he is.

#### **2.4.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF EXODUS 7:8-13 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

Those who are performing counterfeit miracles will not stand the test of time when they try to compete with God by deceiving the people of God.

In this scripture portion we learn about how Pharaoh of Egypt tries to imitate the miracle of Moses with his magicians. When Moses's staff turns into a snake, Pharaoh also tries to do that, but the staff of Moses swallows all the staffs of Pharaoh's magicians. This

points to the power of God who can do all the miracle using the people he has chosen to do them.

Exodus 7:8-10 says: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying "When Pharaoh speaks to you saying 'Show a miracle for yourselves then you shall say to Aaron, take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh and let it become a serpent' Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron casts his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent".

Van Groningen (1996:281) states that Moses was commissioned by God himself, who made a theopatic agent in Egypt to him in the desert. Van Groningen (1996:281) elaborates to say that Moses was called to serve as a messianic agent of the covenant. He was to serve God and to deliver the enslaved as an advocate and priest on behalf of the people, and as a royal person challenging Pharaoh, and preparing Israel for dramatic departure.

Brueggemann (2003:36) states that the central material of the Exodus narrative is found in the sequence of plagues. That is the destructive, transformative power on the part of Yahweh's service to overwhelm the power and authority of Pharaoh and consequently rescue the slaves from the power of Pharaoh. Van Groningen (1996:279) also contributed on this fact earlier: "Yahweh revealed without a shadow of doubt that he was the sovereign Lord, he was indeed "El Shaddai' (Genesis, 17:1) and 'El Elyon' that he did so indicates that the kingdom theme is an important factor in the account of Israel's experience in Egypt" (Van Groningen,1996:279).

In this scripture portion we see how the forces of evil like to imitate the power of God, but they cannot stand the test of time. Van Groningen (1996:284) attest to this statement: "Moses was told to take a piece of wood, a staff and throw it on the ground, he did and it became a snake, when he picked it up it became a staff again (Ex 4:2-5) this divine power control over natural aspects of the cosmic kingdom was to evoke belief in Israel that he was indeed send by God" (Van Groningen, 1996:279).

Henry (1991:104) states that Pharaoh was not right about this one, the magicians having produced serpents he said the case between them was disputable and the very appearance of opposition to the truth. Baele and Carson (2007:906) contribute to this fact by pointing out that in the section of letters designed to place the heretics in the traditional framework of the evil of the last days, Paul taps into the story of Moses and the magicians of Egypt, Jamnes and Yambres (2 Timothy, 3:8; Exodus, 7:9) to draw an analogy of those who resisted Paul and his Gospel.

Van Groningen (2007:287) states that Moses and Aaron were not daunted by the performance of Pharaoh's wise men, sorcerers and magicians by means of their secrets arts. Van Groningen (2007:287) elaborates to say that satanic powers demonstrated by these men had great influence on the creational realm as well as in the spiritual aspect of cosmic living. But Yahweh God demonstrated that he was the sovereign Lord over his cosmic kingdom. Satan given his latitude to exercise his malevolent will, took advantage of this by having Egyptian staffs become snakes (Van Groningen, 2007:287).

#### **2.4.6. CONCLUSION**

In this scripture portion we learned how the devil through his agent Pharaoh, wanted to derail the plan of God to deliver his people from slavery in Egypt. We also see how the devil likes to imitate God and compete as to cause commotion, but God ultimately proves that he is the only Almighty God.

One can also learn how the false prophets try to imitate the true servants of God in performing miracles like healing miracles, multiplication of resources like money, false prophecies, control over the cosmic world and health including the recent one of the counterfeit raising of the dead. All these are the ways in which Satan still wants to try imitating God.

The passage of course reminds us that after the fall, not all miracles come from the Lord; it is possible for people to do so-called “great works” by the power of the evil one as the magicians of Pharaoh did. This also shows that the hardening of the hearts of people, so that they do not believe God, is due to this deception that takes place by means of such “miracles”. The consequences for Pharaoh and his people when they continued to resist against the Lord were disastrous. The Biblical injunction to discern and test the spirits assumes this Biblical context.

People are being paid to fake miracles, like walking, talking and healed of incurable diseases, fake prophecies, swallowing of snakes, grass, petrol, and other hazardous substances so that they prove their faith. Discernment of the spirits is needed to show the people that their faith is being abused and they need to stay away from such prophets.

One needs also to be careful not to generalise on this matter since there are still servants of God who are used by God to pray and heal many incurable diseases that medical science has failed to heal. One need not to focus only on what the false prophets are doing, due to the fact that this will make people not recognise God and discredit what God is still doing today through his true servants in terms of healings, prophecies and miracles.

#### **2.5. NUMBERS 22:1-35 TO 24:1-25**

##### **2.5.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

MacArthur (2006:225) alludes that with their control of the Transjordan secured, Israel moved unimpeded to the plains of Moab in preparation for assaulting Canaan. In Numbers (22:1-35) the scripture portions are a classic example of what happens when a person or nation does not take injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. The narrative changes focus to Balaam, a pagan prophet. His oracle reasserts the faithfulness of the Lord to Abrahamic covenant and his purpose to bless Israel. Not all verses will be read due to the length of these scripture portions, but enough of it will be considered based on their relevance to the study.

### **2.5.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF NUMBERS 22: 1-35 TO 24:1-25**

The scripture portion is the narrative written to the children of Israel. The Israelites were in the desert facing possible war with the Canaanite nations, and others. Pawson (2015:175) states that the form of warfare during that time was that a prophet would be hired to come and curse the enemies, a prophet with a reputation like Balaam, would be hired and the enemies would be cursed and be defeated in the battle (Pawson, 2015:175).

Regarding food, the Israelites were provided with manna, meat, and water to drink by God. Pawson (2015:175) alludes that Israel was heading to the Promised Land of which the features would be immorality, fertility goddesses, occult statues, and all kinds of licentious behaviour. The purpose of this scripture portion was written for the children of Israel so that latter generations might learn to fear God.

### **2.5.3. LITERARY CONTEXT OF NUMBERS 22:1-35 TO 24:1-25**

Pawson (2015:158) states that Numbers is a mixture of legislation and narrative. The author of the law is not Moses, but God, for readers are told eighty times in the book, "and God said to Moses". God gives to Moses general laws and legislations as well as regulations in terms of rituals and ceremonies. Pawson (2015:155) elaborates that the narrative in the book tell of Moses keeping a journal of their travels at the Lord's command. A pattern emerges more easily when we consider the narrative and legislation in context. The structure of the book is chronological rather than topical (Pawson, 2015:155).

According to Brueggemann (2003:75) the book of Numbers is largely cast according to priestly tradition, the primary agenda is sacerdotal, the vision of Israel here is a purified priestly community that is kept ritually clean in order to host the presence of God. Brueggemann (2003:75) elaborates "It is likely that the book reached its final form in the exile, in that context providing pastoral guidance and reassurance among the displaced Jews who sought reformation as a pure Israel".

The scripture portions are mixed with a story, poetry of praise, and legislations or commands. The setting is the Transjordan in the Plain of Moab. The scripture portions are the longest found between chapters 22 and 24 of the book. The characters in the narrative are the king of Moab, Balaam the pagan prophet, and the donkey that speaks. God is the main character as he timeously speaks to Balaam about what to do and what to prophesise.

### **2.5.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF NUMBERS 22:1-35 TO 24:1-25**

One needs to take a closer look at the prophecy of Balaam the pagan prophet: "I see him but not near, I behold him but not now. A star shall come out of Jacob. A sceptre shall rise out of Israel. And batter the brow Moab and destroy all the sons of Seth" (Numbers, 24:17).

There is consistent belief that Balaam was prophesying about the coming of King David and also to the one come later, his descendent Jesus Christ, who would be king on the throne of David forever, and who would destroy the kingdom of the devil. The Bible

(1982:1083) states “He who sins is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning, for this purpose was the son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”.

Jesus Christ is the son of God, the Messiah and the descendent of King David, promised in the book of Numbers (24:17) who will destroy the spiritual kingdom of the devil, while David destroyed the physical kingdoms of the Ammonites, Amorites and Amalekites of his times. Jesus is now King of Kings and Lord of Lords: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and those under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father” (Philippians 2:10-11).

According to Pawson (2015:176) (John 3:16) is well known, but the verse before it less known: “And as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son Man be lifted up” (John 3:14). Jesus refers to the scripture in the book of Numbers. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, dying, killed by the snakes, God commanded Moses to hang up a snake made of bronze on the tree, with the command that everyone who looks at the snake will live (Numbers, 21:8-9).

Beale and Carson (2007:435) allude that the reference to Moses of lifting the serpent in the wilderness in (John 3:14) is plainly to Numbers 21: 8-9 where God is shown to send poisonous snakes to judge the rebellious Israelites. When Moses interacts for his people, God provides a message of salvation in the form of a raised serpent made of bronze (Beale & Carson, 2007:435).

Jesus was also on the cross, killed, and died to provide salvation to the whole world. John (3:16) says: “For God so love the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This means that through Jesus Christ, God has provided salvation for the whole world so that anyone who believes and accepts God’s plan of salvation must have eternal life”.

Beal and Carson (2007:436) further elaborate that Jesus presents himself as a means of new spiritual life, and eternal life for those who become children of God by looking up at the lifted saviour in faith.

#### **2.5.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF NUMBERS 22-24: 25 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

When the Lord has blessed, nothing can change that. No prophet can curse the people God has blessed. No amount of money in this world can buy or change the command of the Lord to bless his people. One has to obey the injunction, to discern and test the spirits, not to be derailed by greed and covetousness for money or honour to take decisions that are against the will of God because God will not hesitate to punish such people.

Balaam the pagan prophet was told by God not to curse the children of Israel when Balak the king of Moab requested him to do so. Balaam, because of greed and covetousness for wealth and pride, continued to disobey the command of God, he tried by all means to curse the Israelites but failed. God continued to rebuke him until Balaam changed his

road and turned back from his evil ways for a while. The scripture portion in this part of the study is long, and due to its length not all the verses will be covered, but only few of them will be selected based on their relevance to the study.

Numbers (22:2-3) says: "Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites and Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many and Moab was sick with the dread because of the children of Israel". Henry (1991: 220) states that the fight which the Moabites were in, upon the approach of Israel (Numbers, 22: 2-4) though they were not to fear any harm from them if they knew the order God had given to Israel not to contend with the Moabites to not use any hostility against them.

Pawson (2015:173) elaborates that there was opposition to the advance of the children of Israel to Canaan; the people of Ammon and Moab owing land bordering the Promised Land, decided to disrupt their plans by hiring a soothsayer from Damascus named Balaam.

Van Groningen (1996:401) states that the name Balaam means "destroyer". Balaam knew of Yahweh, God of the patriarchs. He came from the general area where Abraham, Nahor and Laban had lived and where Jacob had worked for over twenty years. But to know about Yahweh is not equivalent to believing and serving him. Van Groningen (1996:401) elaborates to say that Balaam was not the prophet of Yahweh was motivated by covetousness and greed, for him Yahweh was but another God who he knew to be Israelites' God, to be manipulated and satisfy his greed for power and wealth.

The Bible, in the book of Numbers (22:12-15) says: "And God said to Balaam 'You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people to which I have blessed'. So, Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak 'Go back to your land for the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you'".

Henry (1991:220) states that the return of the messengers without Balaam, indicated Balaam's unfaithfulness in returning God's answer to the messengers; he only tells them "The Lord refused to give me permission to go with you" but did not tell them as he ought to return with them and that Israelites are a blessed people and must by no means be cursed. Henry (1991:220) elaborates: "Those are the fair marks of Satan's temptation that speaks diminishingly of divine prohibitions and as if they amounted more than a denial of permission and as if to go against God's law is only to go without his permission".

Numbers (22:15-17) reads: "Then Balak sent princes, more numerous and more honourable than before. They came to Balaam and said. This said Balak son of Zippor 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me. For I will certainly honour you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore, please come and curse this people for me'".

Henry (1991: 220) attests that, "the temptation Balak set on Balaam he contrived to make this assaults were vigorous, he sent double money, in the hands of his messengers, but besides that he tempted him with honour, set a bit in his covetousness and his pride as well as his ambitions". Henry (1991: 220) elaborates: "How earnestly should we beg God daily to mortify in us two limbs of old man. Those who are able to look with a holy contempt upon worldly wealth and preferment will find it so hard a matter as most men to keep a good conscious".

The Bible in Numbers (22:22-23) reads: "Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the angel of the lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey and his two servants with him. Now the donkey saw the angel of the lord standing in the way with his drawn sword. In his hand and the donkey turned aside out the way and went into the field. Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the road".

Beale and Carson (2007: 1094) allude that Balaam was threatened with being killed by the sword of the angel of the Lord, if he continued to oppose Israel (Numbers, 22: 23-31) when he did not heed the warning. Van Groningen (1996:403) says: "Yahweh placed the words in the mouth of the donkey accusing Balaam of irrational action, beating a faithful animal three times, the donkey that has spared his life for three times from the sword of the angel of the Lord".

Van Groningen (1996: 403) emphasises that Satan was overruled by Yahweh God wisely and abundantly sovereign control over Balaam the pagan diviner. Yahweh used Balak by controlling Balaam's desire and Balak's deepest concern and wishes. Balak overruled the diviner's intent and employed him for his own purpose. Van Groningen (1996:403) notes: "Balaam served a kingdom and covenant servant, he was a spokesman for Yahweh to Balak Moabite and the Midianites (Numbers 22:4) he stood between Yahweh and Balak, he spoke on behalf of Israel's and assured future as the people as the people blessed by Yahweh" (Van Groningen, 1996: 403).

The scripture portion of Balaam's narrative is one of those that will remind us about the essentiality of taking the injunction of discerning and testing the spirits seriously. Balaam could not discern the will of God, pushed by his greed and covetousness for wealth and fame he disregarded the will of God. That let him to his near self-destruction. Balaam could have avoided all these discourses if he had obeyed the injunction to discern the spirits.

God told Balaam not to curse the children of Israel, he told him that he cannot curse the people God has already blessed. Balaam could not listen to that inner voice saying don't go. Propelled by greed and all evil intentions, Balaam chose to do the will of Balak over that of Almighty God.

This tell us that we cannot do the work of God with the hearts full of greed and covetousness for wealth and status of high positions. God will give us all this at the due time. There is a season for everything under the sun when God will give all things to us. It cautions all the preachers of the Gospel who have fallen into temptation of doing unfamiliar and questionable practices due to money and fame. Jesus says: "Seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew, 6:33).

Numbers (24:17) states: "I see him but not near, I behold him but not now. A star shall come out of Jacob. A sceptre shall rise out of Israel. And batter the brow of Moab and destroy all the sons of Seth". This scripture portion is one of the most fascinating from the oracles of Balaam the pagan prophet as he blesses people of Israel instead of cursing them as Balak had requested.

Van Groningen (1996: 405) states that Balaam prophesied on a coming royal mediator. As in the prophesy of Jacob concerning Judah (Genesis, 49:8-12) there was the two-fold reference to David and his house and to David's great son, Jesus the Messiah. Balaam spoke to Balak of Israel's coming victorious kings David and Jesus Christ.

Henry (1991: 225) attests that Balaam's prophesy concerning who should be the crown and the glory of his people Israel, is David. This was fulfilled when David smote Moab and measured it with line, so that the Moabites become David's servants. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, is chiefly pointed at in the archetype.

#### **2.5.6. CONCLUSION**

One must notice that is an indication that the injunction to discern and test the spirits is the key to all human successes and failures. Balaam could have avoided all these calamity and pandemonium if he had the discernment and tested the spirits. God told him not to proceed and curse Israel because God has already blessed her. But he could not listen even to his inner voice telling him he must not go. Propelled by greed and courteousness of wealth status, he overlooked the command of the Lord until he was nearly killed.

So are the false prophets who are told what and how to preach. They preach for money and are told to bless, instructed to preach what the people want, to motivate, and pronounce blessings and prosperity not to rebuke the sin of the nation, not to point the people to the cross of Christ for salvation. They are lovers of money who will say only what the people want to hear not what God wants to say.

The passage encourages believers not to fear threats that they will be harmed through the services of people like Balaam. God is in control. However, the fact that there are persons like Balaam who may be believed to have powers to harm and bless (Numbers, 22:6c) is a reality in this fallen world. This is part of the context to discern and test the spirits. Those that believe in these things will popularise such persons and would want believers to live in "fear" of such persons.

This forms the context for the Bible injunction to discern and test the spirits. Many are misled into idolatry because of listening to stories that there are persons who are the source of blessings and curses. Only God is in control of blessings and curses. Unfortunately, when Israel got to Canaan, they were at times deceived by stories of their neighbouring nations and remnants of Canaanites among whom they dwelt with and ended up, at times, being misled with disastrous consequences.

### **2.6. DEUTERONOMY 13:1-3 AND DEUTRONOMY 18:21-22**

#### **2.6.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

In these two scripture portions, the Israelites are being cautioned about false prophets and idolatry especially when they are approaching the land of Canaan in which these are common practices. MacArthur (2006: 272) alludes that after the general prohibition of involvement in Canaanites' worship (Deuteronomy, 12:29-31) Moses discusses three ways in which the temptation to idolatry was likely to come to Israel, namely; through a

false prophet, through a family member, and through apostates from some Canaanite cities.

#### **2.6.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF DEUTERONOMY 13: 1-3 AND DEUTERONOMY 18:21-22**

The two commandments are found in the fifth book of the Bible. The two paragraphs are commandment type of scriptures. The first one is found at the beginning of the thirteenth chapter while the second one is found in the last portion of the eighteenth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. The two form the various parts of the book of Deuteronomy that is composed of the narratives and the discourse of legislation and prophecies.

#### **2.6.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DEUTERONOMY 13:1-3 AND DEUTERONOMY 18:21-22**

The author of the scripture passages is Moses since the authorship of the book is ascribed to Moses as the original author of the book. Deuteronomy comes from the two words “duetero” meaning second and “noma” meaning law. Pawson (2015: 186) alludes some vital points with regard to a number of social issues, namely: moral life, economy and religion.

According to Pawson (2015: 186) the moral life was very low, there were sexually transmitted diseases in the land, and divorce occurred at an alarming rate, there was fornication, adultery, homosexuality, incest and wide-spread remarriage.

Pawson (2015: 186) attests that the economy was controlled by greed and corruption with the rich getting richer and the poor becoming poorer – greed and selfishness were evident. Pawson (2015: 186) elaborates “In addition, there was occultism, superstition, astrology, spirits, and necromancy and fertility cults” (Pawson, 2015: 186). The language used was Hebrew and the audience were the Israelites.

Mayes (1981:55) states that Deuteronomy lends itself to being described as the expression of an intensely nationalistic faith. It centres on Israel, the community of brothers, living in the land and in covenant with its own God and whose existence in the land is uncorrupted with by contact with non-Israelite people. This is not to say that Deuteronomy has a genuine openness, showing a willingness to accept as brothers all who acknowledge Yahweh as their God (Mayes, 1981: 55).

#### **2.6.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DEUTERONOMY 13:1-3 AND DEUTERONOMY 18:21-22**

In the scripture portions of Deuteronomy (18:15-19) Moses promises the Israelites that God will send for them the prophet like Moses. Deuteronomy (18:15-19) says: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your mist, from your brethren. Him you shall hear”. MacArthur (2006: 272) alludes that the singular pronoun emphasises the ultimate prophet who was to come. Both the Old Testament (Deuteronomy, 34: 10) and the New Testament (Acts, 3:22-23; Acts, 7:37) interpret this scripture portion as a reference to the coming Messiah, who, like Moses, will receive and preach divine revelation and lead God’s people (MacArthur, 2006: 272).

Jesus Christ is seen in the New Testament as the prophet that God promised in Deuteronomy (18:15). There are many prophets who came before him, but God was promising the special one, as is mentioned that there was no prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy, 34: 10). God promised a prophet who would hold the office of the prophet forever as the only one anointed for four offices, namely: priesthood, prophet, king, and teacher. A high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, without ending.

Henry (2003: 259) contributed that whether a succession of prophets be included in this famous promise or not, we are sure that it is primarily intended as a promise for Jesus Christ, and it is the clearest promise of Christ that is in all the Law of Moses. Henry (2003: 259) further elaborates to say that God promised a prophet; a prophet great and above all prophets through whom he will make himself known to the children of men more fully and clearly than he had ever done before.

#### **2.6.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF DEUTERONOMY 13:1-3 AND 18: 21-22 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

The prophets must be tested to determine if their prophecy comes from God or from the evil spirits, based on the fulfilment of their prophecy. The prophets whose prophecy and what they prophesy comes to pass, but if they lead the Israelites to follow other gods, the people must not listen to them. Douma (1996: 18) contributed on the matter of not following other gods and put more emphasis on the fact of loving the Lord, which is a choice for any person.

Douma (1996: 15) states: "Regarding these numerous deities, the Lord says in the first commandment that Israel may not have these gods beside him". Douma (1996: 15) reiterates that from this formulation one may conclude that although these other gods were not to be worshipped beside Yahweh God, they nevertheless existed alongside him, each religion and region had its own deity (Douma, 1996: 18).

Douma (1996: 18) states that choosing for the Lord always means making the choice that excludes every other possibility. Choosing for Yahweh means loving him. The intimate bond between this choosing and loving clearly underlies the so-called Shema, that confession in Deuteronomy (6:4-5) read aloud daily in the temple and synagogues along with the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy (6:4-5) reads: "Hear oh Israel the Lord is one our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might".

The two scripture portions caution Israel about the false prophets and their prophecies. The two signs given by God were crucial and vital signs to the people who lived at that early stage of the Old Testament times. We will closely look at the two scripture portions and approach the two portions separately since the first and second complement each other.

Deuteronomy (13:1-3) reads: "If there rise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and signs or a wonder come to pass, of which he spoke to you saying, let us go after other gods, which you have not known and let us serve them. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams.

For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul”.

Henry (1991: 252) states that this is a very strange decision that a nation that knows God and have served him for so long that someone of this nature can arise among them. Henry (1991: 252) reiterates: “Who shall instigate them to go and serve other gods? Was it possible that any who had so much knowledge of the methods of divine revelation to be able to be a prophet should have so little knowledge of the divine nature and will as to go and entice the neighbours after other gods”?

Henry (1991: 252) elaborates: “We see it in our own day, and therefore many think it the less strange, multitudes that profess both learning and religion yet exciting both themselves and others, not only to worship God but images, but to give divine honour to saints and angels, which is not better than going after other gods to serve them”.

Mayes (1981:233) elaborates to say that dreams were considered a normal and acceptable source of prophetic enlightenment (Numbers, 12:6) but as time goes considered a source of self-deception and false guidance. Mayes (1981:233) elaborates to say that “signs” and “wonders” the two terms are often used synonymously; here they clearly have different senses, the sign here is a sign of what the fortune holds, while the wonder is a miracle (Exodus, 4:21) proving the power of the prophet or dreamer (Mayes, 1981: 232).

Van Groningen (1996: 417) states that Moses made it clear that Israel could neither make peace with the people living in Canaan, nor make a treaty with them (Deuteronomy, 7:2). The people of Canaan were to be totally destroyed; they were to receive no mercy. There was to be no intermarriage or worshipping together (Deuteronomy, 7:3-5). The nation of Israel had to serve and worship Yahweh only (Van Groningen, 1996: 417).

Mayes (1981:156) states that the only possible acceptable reason for the true prophet to entice Israel to follow other gods is when Yahweh is testing them. Testing them to see whether or not they love Yahweh with all their hearts and with all their soul. Mayes (1981:156) elaborates to say that the function of the heart and the soul overlap considerably in Hebrew thoughts, primarily the heart is the seat of man’s intellect and will (Mayes, 1981:156).

In the book of Deuteronomy (18: 21-22) it is written: “And if you say in your heart ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing he speaks does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him”. Henry (1991: 283) states: “If there was any to suspect the serenity of a prophet let them observe that if he gave them any sign or foretold something to come, and the event was not according to his prediction, they might be sure he was not send by God”.

Mayes (1981: 283) states that the criterion for distinguishing the true from false prophecy, which is expressed here reveals an understanding of the nature and function of prophecy similar to that of the Deuteronomist, especially in the Books of Kings.

Mayes (1981: 283) elaborates to say that the task of the prophet is to declare in advance what is to happen. The true prophetic word has within itself the seed of its own fulfilment. Consequently, the legitimacy of the prophets will be demonstrated by the fulfilment of what he has predicted (Mayes, 1981:283). Henry (1991: 260) elaborates further to say that if sign did not pass, this would disapprove their mission and the Israelites were directed to be afraid of them.

#### **2.6.6. CONCLUSION**

The nation of Israel was cautioned to be aware of false prophets and their false prophecies. They were given the sign so as to distinguish between true and false prophets and their prophecies. God did not want his people to be in the dark about his will. Hence, he gave them these vital signs not to fall in the hands of false prophets. This was the essentiality of the injunction to discern and test the spirits. To discern the spirit that is speaking within the prophet or through the prophet.

Multitudes have fallen in the snares of false prophets who falsely prophesied and betrayed them, have derailed them to follow their destructive ways to eternal perishing. False prophecies, counterfeit miracles and healing are the order of the day in the media and social networks to compete who can do those best. We learn of self- confessed people hired to harvest and manufacture false prophecies, and those who are financially rewarded for performing these counterfeit prophecies and miracles including the recent false raising of the dead.

These are the days when we ask the question *where are the true people of God who will have discernment of the spirits to discern the true prophets and the will of God*. In a nutshell, these passages teach the supremacy of the Word or the law of God. What God had already given as his Word through Moses was not supposed to be contradicted by anyone; not even by any that claimed to be prophets of the Lord.

The principle is that the Lord does not contradict himself. What the Lord had already given through Moses was not to be contradicted. Anyone who tried to do that while claiming to be coming from the Lord was to be considered false. We show our love for the Lord by not following such persons. Note also that the prophet in the future including the Messiah as prophet was to be like Moses in the sense that he would not contradict Moses. In the context of progressive revelation, the principle is that earlier revelations are not contradicted. Note that even a prophet that comes with the correct word but then encourages people to go after other gods, is not to be followed. This forms the context and is an aspect of the meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

### **2.7. 1SAMUEL 15:1-35**

#### **2.7.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Henry (2003: 408) states: "In this chapter we have the final rejection of Saul from being king for his disobedience to God's command in not utterly destroying the Amalekites. By

his wars and victories, he hoped to magnify and perpetuate his own name and honour, but by his management of them he ruined himself and laid his honour in the dust”.

The sin of Saul, not to obey the Word of God commanded by his prophet, Samuel, was a grievous mistake that cost him so dearly. Saul disregarded the injunction to discern and disobeyed the command of God and the Spirit of God at a crucial time, when he was with his soldiers with the command to destroy all the Amalekites and everything that belonged to them (1 Samuel, 15:8-9) but he chose to listen to his soldiers who spared some of the things, even their king, Agag. This led to the immediate rejection by God (1 Samuel, 15:22) and finally to the division of the kingdom of Israel (1 Samuel, 13:14).

### **2.7.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF 1 SAMUEL 15:1-35**

Van Groningen (1996: 480) states that the biblical account of Saul is presented in the genre known as historical narrative, but, when it is studied as presented in the Scripture, it becomes obvious that the narrative is to be judged as prophetic history, and that is to say, the theological dimension of the narrative is the fundamental and the pervasive aspect. Van Groningen (1996: 480) elaborates further that it is an account of Yahweh God unfolding and furthering his kingdom plans as he carries these out by administering his covenant and preparing the stage for a further revelation.

The Scripture portion is a narrative found from the beginning of the chapter until at the end of the same chapter, and it is one of the longest scripture portions in this chapter hence not all the verses will be written but some verses of importance and more relevant will be selected. The characters in the narrative are three: namely, Saul, Samuel, and God. There are few instances where God speaks to Samuel in poetic form.

### **2.7.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 SAMUEL 15:1-35**

We take the **Scripture** portion from the book of 1 Samuel. According to Pawson (2015: 271) the book of 1 Samuel ushers us into the new dispensation in the history of Israel, it begins with the narrative of the last two priests Eli and Samuel from the last to the ushering the monarchy period with the two first kings; namely Saul and David. We read how Saul was rejected and David's lineage proceeded with kingship until the kingdom is divided into two during the times of King Solomon in the book of Kings (Pawson, 2015:271).

Under Samuel, people honoured and were obedient to God; they were blessed and prosperous (Van Groningen, 1996: 480). Leadership was effective, productive, and God honouring. Israelites, as a theocratic people, lived and functioned as a God-honouring nation. People removed their neighbouring gods and they confessed their sins (Van Groningen, 1996: 480).

The Philistines thought Israel to be unready for war and easy to overcome but Yahweh demonstrated his power, he filled the Philistines with fear, and they were defeated. Yahweh's presence and help were acknowledged and memorialised by means of a stone that was named Ebenezer “thus far the Lord helped us” (1 Sam, 7:12).

#### **2.7.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 SAMUEL 15:1-35**

Beale and Carson (2007: 976) allude to the fact that the appropriate performance of God's worship must be grounded in his faithful service in his role as king. The offering of sacrifices was not the most basic of God's requirement, rather, commitment to the will of God held the place of primacy (Beale and Carson, 2007: 976). In 1 Samuel (15: 22) it reads: "And Samuel said "Has the Lord as great delighted in burn offerings, and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifices, and to heed than the fat of rams". Samuel was telling Saul that to obey is more important to God than to bring sacrifices, but Saul was still full of the spirit of disobedience.

This was a pointer to the fact that one day, God will accept the last sacrifice, perfect and complete of his son, Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, as John the Baptist saw him coming to the river Jordan to be baptised and he said, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John, 1: 29). Paul, in the book of the Philippians, says: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God. Did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, taking the form of bondservant, and coming into the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as man. He humbled himself and become obedient, to the point of death, even death on the cross" (Philippians, 2:5-8).

The Bible teaches us that God was pleased with the sacrifice Jesus made. That is the reason this was the last and the perfect sacrifice because it qualified in all respects. God accepted it as the one that fulfilled all the scriptures that were according to the Law of Moses. Henry (1991: 409) states that here we are plainly told that humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all burned offerings and sacrifices. A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances (Henry, 1991: 409).

Meaning that all the sacrifices made in the Old Testament, whether good or bad, perfect or imperfect, were all the pointers to the greatest and most perfect sacrifice that God gave to the world through his son, Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world that he gave this only begotten son. That whosoever believes in his should not perish but must have everlasting life" (John, 3:16).

#### **2.7.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF 1 SAMUEL 15:1-35 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DICERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

Obedience to the word of God is better than sacrifices. Obeying the injunction to discern and test the spirits will help us to do the right thing at the right time and to obey the commands of God unlike what Saul has done. Many of us fall into the trap of rushing things and will not give enough time to think about the consequences that they will have to live with for the rest of our lives. Taking hasty decisions is not always helpful, but one needs to take time and have enough time to pray over the matter to hear the guidance of the Spirit of God.

In this **Scripture** portion, we learn how God uses Saul to destroy the Amalekites, but he fails to do the command of the Lord. Samuel correctly uses the gift of discernment to

discern that Saul did not accomplish the mission God gave to him. Even though God told Samuel that Saul has not accomplished the mission, but as a seer he could hear the sound of the cows, sheep and goats that were not killed, he also had audacity to confront Saul about them. Samuel is finally pronouncing the judgement to this action that had catastrophic results and permanent consequences, which is the rejection of God and the division of the kingdom: namely, the northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

In Samuel (15: 3-8) it is written, "This says the Lord of the host, "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way to when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek and destroy all that they have and do not spare them, but kill both man and women, infant and nursing mothers, ox and sheep, camels and donkeys".

Henry (1991: 408) states that in this **Scripture** portion, Samuel appoints Saul a piece of service, in which he must show his obedience to God more than in anything else, to get Samuel promises God's authority to the command "this says the Lord of the hosts". He also gives him a reason for the command that the sovereignty of the command might not seem hard.

Henry (1991: 408) elaborates: "God had an ancient quarrel with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel when he brought them out of Egypt (Exodus, 17: 8) and the crime is aggravated (Deuteronomy, 25:18) God swore that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation and that in the process of time he would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek" (Henry, 1991: 408).

1 Samuel (15:9) says, "But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed". Pawson (2015: 269) states that Saul's second major error concerns disobedience to God's word, he commanded to wipe out the Amalekites and their livestock, but he spared King Agag and the best of the livestock.

Pawson (2015: 2609) elaborates that Saul's relationship with Samuel deteriorated, as Samuel's job is to pass onto Saul the words God gave him. On one occasion, he is instructed to await Samuel's arrival before offering the sacrifice, but he conducts the sacrifice when Samuel is late.

Van Groningen (1996: 484) elaborates even further: "The change in Saul's character, attitude and readiness to obey was particularly demonstrated in his sparing Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs, everything that was good (1Samuel 15: 9) when he had been specifically commanded to destroy everything that belonged to them and not to spare anyone or any animal".

1 Samuel (15:14-15) reads: "But Samuel said, 'What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen and which I hear?' And Saul said: 'They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed".

Pawson (2015: 269) states that: "Once again Samuel arrives on the scene and finds that Saul failed to obey all that God had said. Samuel become very angry, executes Agag

before the altar of the Lord and tells Saul that to obey is better than sacrifice". Henry (1991: 409) states that Saul did his work by halves, he spared Agag because he was a king like himself, perhaps in the hope to get a great ransom for him. He spared the best of the cattle and destroyed anything refuse that was good for little. Henry (1991: 408) notes that: "Many of the people we may suppose made their escape and took their effects with them into other countries. We read of the Amalekites after this, but that could not have happened, it was Saul's failure that he did not destroyed them when they were in his power".

1 Samuel (15:26-28) says, "But Samuel said to Saul 'I will not return with you for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord have also rejected you from being king over Israel. As Samuel turned around to go away. Saul seized the edge of his robe and it tore. So, Samuel said to him. The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today. And has given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you".

Van Groningen (1996: 484) attests: "For his foolishness and disobedience, Saul was informed that his kingdom would not endure, it would not be over Israel for all the time, Saul would not expect to establish a dynasty rule. He still had the opportunity to prove himself as an autocratic king, but he was hesitant again to exercise leadership to deliver Israel from the Philistines dominance".

Henry (1991: 409) emphasises that we are plainly told that humble service and continuous obedience to the will of the Lord, is more pleasing and acceptable than all ceremonial observances, nothing is as provoking to God as disobedience. When we are setting up our wills in competition with his. This is here called rebellion. And stubbornness is said to be as bad as witchcraft and idolatry (Henry,1991: 409).

#### **2.7.6. CONCLUSION**

The passage is important and relevant to this study on what the Bible is saying when it says we must discern and test the spirits. In the case of Saul, he erred when he followed his own desire; he seems to have not understood that even in our service and worship of the Lord; we have to be guided by the Word of the Lord and not by our own instincts or the suggestions of people when such advice contradicts what the Lord has commanded. The passage serves to indicate that due to our sinful nature, we must not even follow our own instincts but rather seek to obey God even in the sphere of our service and worship of God.

Over-confidence and complacency are the great enemies of the church today when people think that they know it all. They are no longer working out their salvation with fear and trembling. This is time when many are serving God with the emotions and selfish ambitions for self-gain and fame. Distorting and contradicting the **Word** of God to gain many supports. They do everything to gratify their followers even if that is contrary to the Bible.

## 2.8. 2 CHRONICLES 18:1-34

### 2.8.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

MacArthur (2006: 603) states that evil kings had false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear. The true prophets spoke the **Word** of God and was arrested (2 Kings, 18:1-26). This scripture portion shows that for the kings who did not obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits, they have put the nation of Israel in an undesired and catastrophic situation. The decision to fight Rammoth Gilead led to King Jehoshaphat nearly being killed and finally cost king Ahab his life. In this sub-section, we will closely look at this scripture portion even though not all verses will be covered due to its length but those are regarded of more importance and relevant will be selected at random.

### 2.8.2. THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF 2 CHRONICLES 18:1- 34

The scripture portion is found in the book of 2 Chronicles that is found under the group of the Old Testament books called the Writings. Pawson (2015: 700) states that in the Hebrew Bible there are three groups of books, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. These are miscellaneous books. The scripture portion is a narrative even though there are some discourses of prophecies.

Brueggemann (2003: 131) states that first and second Samuel constitute the third element of the former prophets taken as one canonical entry, is between Judges and Kings, the scroll provides an account of transition that Israel remembers making from tribal society, beleaguered by anarchy and barbarism in Judges (17-21) to a monarchy society (Brueggemann, 2003: 131).

### 2.8.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 2 CHRONICLES 18:1-34

MacArthur (2006:603) states that Ahab was the king in Israel, and Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah in the southern Kingdom. Jehoshaphat arranged his son to marry Athaliah, the daughter of the wicked Ahab. MacArthur (2006:603) elaborates to say that Athaliah was the one who later tried to kill all the descendants of David, putting God's redemptive plan in danger; Jehoshaphat then made military alliance with Ahab and these decisions drew the wrath of God as well as the tragic results. MacArthur (2006: 603) emphasises "This is due to the fact that Ahab had rejected God to follow the gods of his wife Jezebel and was serving idols while Jehoshaphat was serving the living God of Israel. Ahab finally had a bad influence on Jehoshaphat that nearly caused his life".

Van Groningen (1996: 549) alludes that during the reign of Jehoshaphat there were four prophets in Judah. **Miciah** warned the king concerning Yahweh God's judgement to come on Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat was not to ally with him (1 Kings, 22:7; 2 Chronicles, 18:6). Van Groningen (1996:549) elaborates that when coming to the economy and prosperity as well as peace and security, one must also note that during the time of Jehoshaphat in the southern kingdom of Judah, was blessing, peace, and prosperity (Van Groningen, 1996:549).

Commented [A1]: Should this be Micaiah?

MacArthur (2006: 602) states that Jehoshaphat's spiritual strategies made his accomplishment of peace, security and prosperity – namely; he obeyed the Lord (2 Chronicles, 17:3-6); he removed false worship in the land (2 Chronicles, 17:6); and he sent teachers who taught the people the law of the Lord (2 Chronicles, 17:7-9). Jehoshaphat's spiritual strategy accomplished its intended purpose involving God's blessing, protection, enough animals for sacrifices, food, and clothing (MacArthur 2006: 602).

The purpose of this scripture portion was to caution Israel and their kings to obey God and his prophet. That it is not about the majority of prophets, but the one God will truly speak to. The people were made aware that God will only speak through his prophets, not false prophets, and that what God says through his prophets shall always come to pass. The scripture cautions church leaders to be critical when they are choosing partners and make alliances with others in the ministry since one may form an alliance with the wrong people destined for the wrath of God. And when God punishes their partners in the alliance, they shall not easily escape.

#### **2.8.4. REDEPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 2 CHRONICLES 18:1-34**

Pawson (2015: 713) alludes that the themes of Chronicles were taken from Christ, namely, roots, royalty, and religion. According to Pawson (2015: 713) it was important that the reader must be convinced about Christ's roots, Jesus was and he is a Jew, not a rootless person dropped from above but sent to fulfil the expectations of a particular nation and the whole world.

With regard to royalty, Pawson (2015: 713) highlights the fact that Christ was born in the royal line, he could claim to be the son of David. He inherited the throne twice, forever, through his father he had legal rights and through his mother physical right. For they could both trace their family tree back to David (Revelations, 5:4-5) according to Pawson (2015: 713).

Beale and Carson (2007: 1101) state that the description of Christ as the lion that is from the tribe of Judah and the root of David in Revelations (5:5b) derives respectively from Genesis (14:9); Isaiah, 11:1-10); Jeremiah, (11:19, 23:5); and Zechariah (3:8). Beale and Carson (2007: 1101) elaborate that the word "nikao" meaning "overcome" serves as an introduction to those Old Testament titles and brings out their conquering significance since both concern the prophecy of a messianic figure who will overcome his enemies through judgement.

Isaiah (11:1-2) reads: "There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord".

### **2.8.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF 2 CHRONICLES 18: 1-34 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

The injunction to discern and test the spirits will assist us to make correct choices in terms of choosing friends and making good decisions. Ungodly friends will have a bad influence on those who want to serve God with pure hearts.

When one reads this **Scripture** portion, one will find that the decisions king Jehoshaphat took, by making an alliance with the ungodly Ahab, nearly landed him in catastrophe. MacArthur (2006: 603) attests: "Ahab was king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Jehoshaphat arranged for his son to marry Athaliah daughter of wicked Ahab. He also made a military alliance with him and this fully alliance had tragic results".

2 Chronicles (18:3) says: "So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, 'Will you go with me against Ramoth Gelead?' And he answered him 'I am as you are, and my people as your people, we will be with you in the war'". Henry (1991: 594) alludes that this was the worst mistake that was ever made by any of the kings in the house of David. Not growing wiser, or else he would have joined with Ahab. This match drew Jehoshaphat into an intimate family history with Ahab. He paid a visit at Samaria, and Ahab, proud of the honour which Jehoshaphat did him, gave him splendid entertainment.

In this case one will think that Jehoshaphat did not obey the word of God in that he knew that this alliance was ungodly and not pleasing to God. The alliance and visit to Samaria were a disaster to his religion since Ahab was an idolater who had no regard for God.

Henry (1991: 594) reiterates that in this, Jehoshaphat did not walk closely as he should have done in the ways of his father, David who hated the congregation of evil doers and would not seat with the wicked (Psalms, 26:5). Van Groningen (1996: 549) notes that there were prophets like Micaiah who warned the king concerning Yahweh's judgement to come to Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat was therefore not to ally himself with Ahab (1 Kings, 22: 7; 2 Chronicles, 18:6).

Van Groningen (1996: 549) elaborates that later, the prophet Eliezer denounced Jehoshaphat's venture with Ahab's son, Ahaziah (2 Chronicles, 20:37). An earlier rebuke came through a prophet by the name of Jehu, which is referred to in 2 Chronicles (19:1-3). This indicates the fact that if one does not take seriously the injunction to discern and test the spirits will fall into the hands of wrong people making them friends. And wrong people will always have a bad influence sooner or later. Like when the Bible says: "Evil communication corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians, 15:33-34).

In the book of 2 Chronicles 18:12-13 it says, "Now the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him saying "Now listen, the words of the prophets are with one accord to encourage the king, therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them and speak encouragement". And Micaiah said, "As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak".

Henry (1991: 595) states that Jehoshaphat was not going to the war without the enquiring from the Lord. He is complacent towards Ahab, sits in his robes, patiently hearing the

false prophets speaking lies in the name of the Lord. Those who venture among the seats of the scornful cannot come off without a great deal of the guilt.

2 Chronicles (18:33-34) states: "Now a certain man drew a bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armour. So, he said to the driver of the chariots, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle for I am wounded'. The battle increased that day and the king of Israel dropped himself down in his chariot facing the Assyrian until evening, and about the time of sunset he died".

Henry (1991: 595) attests: "Wicked Ahab disguised himself, arming himself thereby he thought as securing and yet slain. No art, no arms can save those who God will protect and what can shelter those whom God wants to destroy". Henry (1991: 595) emphasises Jehoshaphat is safe in his robe, but Ahab is destroyed in his armour for the race is not for the swift and war is not for the strong (Ecclesiastics 9:11)".

Van Groningen (1976: 549) explains: "Yahweh demanding obedience to his will as expressed in the Sinai and Davidic covenant, would bring severe judgement upon unfaithfulness, he would execute the curse of the covenant upon both kingdoms. He would however be the faithful covenant God, blessing those who served him obediently according to its covenant stipulations (Van Groningen, 1976: 549)".

#### **2.8.6. CONCLUSION**

This scripture portion serves to indicate that unholy alliances will always lead to catastrophic results, and that God will leave no sin unpunished. It shows that to discern and test the spirits plays a pivotal role in our daily decisions, listening to the word of God and obeying it needs time and not haste. Unplanned journeys and decisions will many times bring undesired consequence. We can learn in this scripture portion that God speaks once, and one has to yield to his direction.

There are false and true prophets; there are wicked and good kings; the false prophets may be quite dramatic and convincing in their presentations; God may in his wisdom judge false prophets and wicked kings by allowing them to be deceived or deluded so that they perish. These and related matters form the context of the Bible injunction about discerning and testing the spirits. Note also that God has given his children his word to enable them to discern and test the spirits in this world in which there is the possibility to be deceived. The passage also highlights that there is often suffering and persecution when God's people follow his word in a sinful world.

It shows that the word of God is truth and that the spirit to discern and the word of God work in collaboration, they both go side by side. "Blessed is the man who walk not in the council of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord" (Psalms, 1:1-3).

One cannot overlook the classic example of Micaiah to discern the spirits under a pressuring situation when he is told "The words of the prophets are with one accord to encourage the king. Please let your word be like one of them and speak encouragement to the king" (1Kings 22:13), but he was bold enough, he had audacity to tell that the king will be killed in the battle.

This is the message to the false prophets of today that they need to encourage people all the time like we see them doing. The true prophet of God needs to rebuke people, council and correct the nation as he speaks the word of God or prophecies. They need to point the people to the will of God not cheap promises and prophecies.

Concerning the false prophets, it shows that they may give people wrong and false prophecies. People relying on false prophets and not the word of God and have discernment of the spirits, are prone to the danger of being encouraged or threatened with false prophecies, and this is the reason many people have been robbed of their valuables by false prophets.

## **2.9. MATTHEW 4:1-11**

### **2.9.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

The scripture portion in Matthew (4:1-11) demonstrates the way Jesus rejected the temptation from the devil and the way he overcame the temptation that would derail him from God's will and desired purpose. MacArthur (2006:1365) says: "God himself is never the agent of temptation (James, 1:13) but God uses even satanic temptation to serve his purpose. Christ was tempted in all points (Hebrews, 4:15) the devil tempted him with the lust of the flesh (Matthew, 2:3), the lust of the eye (Matthew, 8:9) and with the pride of the heart (Matthew, 5:6)". This show how important discernment and testing of the spirits is when one is confronted with a predicament. The discernment and testing of the spirits will make one victorious with joyous results when he takes the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously.

### **2.9.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 4:1-11**

The scripture portion is found in the first book of the New Testament under the group of the books called the Gospels. It forms the first eleven verses of the fourth chapter of this book. We find the dialogue between the two characters namely, Jesus Christ and the devil, who is testing him.

Doriani and Stuart (1996:37) states that repetition frequently indicates the theme for a section, whole books sometimes repeat the same key words and phrases. This is what we find in this scripture portion. The key words and phrases that are being repeated are "it is written" (Doriani & Stuart, 1996:37). When the devil is tempting, Jesus always uses the words and phrase repeatedly and Jesus uses the same phrase to reply to him throughout the scripture portion.

Doriani and Stuart (1996:37) reiterate that only in the last part when Jesus says, "Away from me Satan" (Matthew 4:10) do we find the thematic statement in the scripture portion. Doriani and Stuart (1996:37) defines the thematic statement as the few first words that sum up the whole chapter in the beginning of the chapter or scripture portion, for example, "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew, 4:1).

The purpose of the scripture portion is to teach that Jesus did not yield or submit to the temptation of the devil, so his followers must also not yield or surrender to the temptation

of the devil but must fight until they are victorious and triumphant to all the forces of darkness coming their way.

### **2.9.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 4:1-11**

The scripture portion of Matthew 4:1-11 was written by Matthew the tax collector and one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Green (1995:16) states: "The Jewish customs are familiar to everyone and the debate about the law is a central question, and the Sabbath is still observed. The dispute with the Pharisees serves primarily as warning to the community".

The setting is in the Judean wilderness and the city of Jerusalem as well as the temple of Jerusalem. The time is in the early times of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The nation of Israel and the country is under the control of the Roman Empire under the kingship of Herod, the Roman governor.

### **2.9.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 4:1-11**

Beale and Carson (2007: 14) elude: "Just as Moses had to lead the Israelites during forty years of wondering in the Sinai wilderness as punishment for their sin, (Deuteronomy, 8: 2-3) so Jesus is driven by the Spirit of the Lord into the Judean wilderness for forty days to be tested by the devil (Matthew, 4: 1-2). The exact phrase may allude to forty day and forty nights and may also explain the period of the time Moses spent in fasting on Mount Sinai to prepare to confirm God's covenant with his people".

Beale and Carson (2007: 14) further elaborate that the temptation to turn stones into bread might also echo Moses' rebellion in striking it to make it bring forth water (Numbers, 20:1-13), but in both instances Israel and Moses as the leader failed the test and Jesus passed his.

Jesus as the leader promised by God to come after Moses (Deuteronomy, 18:15-19) was unique and perfect, far better than Moses. Jesus passed all his tests, and he was tempted in all things but was without sin (Hebrews, 4:15) unlike Moses. Jesus proved himself to be a better leader than Moses, and he will never let down his followers. "He was tempted in all sides that is why he is able to help those who are weak" (Hebrews, 2:18).

Green (1975: 64) states that Jesus will once more stand upon a mountain, but as the real ruler of the world, who does not receive his sovereignty at the hands of the devil and does not exercise it through terror and violence. In Psalms (2:8) God says, "Ask me and I will make the nations your inheritance and the end of the earth your possession (Green, 1975: 64)".

### **2.9.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF MATTHEW 4:1-14 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

No one must ever allow the devil to deceive him even if he comes with enticing words, even if he promises one power, fame and all the wealth of this world. He was the deceiver from the beginning. When we look closely in the scripture portion of Matthew 4:1-11 we find that Jesus resisted temptation of the devil and he never bowed to him. Jesus correctly used the discernment of the spirits to know that it was the devil testing him.

Matthew 4:1-4 states, "Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted for forty days and forty nights afterwards, he was hungry. Now when the tempter came to him, he said 'If you are the son of God command these stones become bread'. But he answered and said, 'It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God'".

Green (1975: 58) states that in the earlier periods the community had to make clear to themselves and their Jewish contemporaries why Jesus did not become the expected national messiah who was to achieve world domination for Israel. Green (1975: 58) elaborates: "As was noted from Jesus' birth, visitation, persecution and flight, a likeness was seen very clearly between Jesus and Moses and this made the issue of political salvation all the sharper".

Henry (1991:1622) emphasises that the assurance of sonship is the best preparative for temptation, if the good spirit witnesses to our adoption, that will furnish us with answers to all the suggestions of the evil spirit designed either to debauch or disquiet us. Henry (1991:1622) elaborates: "From when he was newly come from a solemn ordinance, when he was baptised, then he was tempted. After we have been admitted into the communion of God, we must expect to be set upon by Satan, the enriched soul must double its guard".

Henry (1991:1622) says that the temptation Jesus resisted and overcame, Christ refused to comply with the devil, he would not command stones to be made bread just because he was unable to do so, and Jesus was able to do so if he was subjective and ignorant to the evil intentions of the devil. Henry (1991:1622) emphasises to say that Jesus was neither subjective nor ignorant. The danger is, the more plausible the temptation is, and the greater the appearance is looking good in it. The more dangerous it becomes. Christ was aware of the snake in the grass (Henry, 1991:1622).

Matthew 4 5-7 says, "Then took him up into the holy city set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him 'If you are the son of God throw yourself down for it is written, he shall give his angels charge over you and in their hands they shall bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone'. Jesus said to him it is written again 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'".

Green (1975: 64) states that the third temptation Matthew 4:8 begins with something like change of a scene Jesus in like Moses was led up to a high mountain to see all the land, Jesus was offered dominion over the entire world; he could take possession of all the land if he wanted. The lord of the world by virtue of power stands face-to-face with the Lord of the world appointed by God. The one who is given all the power in heaven and on earth (Matthew, 28:18).

Beale and Carson (2007: 15) state that in the second temptation, the devil himself quotes **Scripture**, because Jesus is the son of God, the devil says he should throw himself off the temple because the psalmist promised that angels would take charge over God's faithful people to keep them from harm.

Beale and Carson (2007:15) explain that, "Jesus replies to the devil's misapplication of the scripture by quoting scripture himself as he did to the response of the first temptation. He recognises that to deliberately jump off the temple and insist that God rescue him would be to violate the command not to test God".

Here is when we see the distortion of the **Word**. Green (1975: 63) states that the reliance on the **Scripture** is not to be for the glory of man, but God, for the man who has to demonstrate his faith. God's "no" to a prayer can be just as much an experience of God as a miraculous "yes" but the devil is after a miracle, so that man may become lord of God and compel him to act through the power of his faith. But that would destroy faith and substitute blackmail (Green, 1975: 63).

Matthew 4:8-11 says, "Again the devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him 'All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me' then Jesus said to him 'Away with you Satan, for it is written you shall worship the Lord your God and him alone shall you serve' then the devil left him, and behold the angels served him".

Henry (1991:103) states that Jerusalem is the holy city, so it was in name and profession and there was in it the holy seed. This indicates that there is no city in earth so holy as to exempt and secure us from the devil's temptation. Henry (1991:103) further elaborates to say that the devil can tempt people anywhere in the world now that he tempted Jesus in Jerusalem on the pinnacle of the temple.

According to Henry (1991:103) Christ's casting down would be the temptation of God, as it would require a further confirmation of that which was confirmed in Mark (1:9) "Behold this is my beloved son, whom I am well pleased". According to Henry (1991:103) Christ was abundantly satisfied that God was his father and took care of him. God gave angels charge concerning him. This was to tempt God, as like the Pharisees, when they had so many signs, but they demanded a sign from heaven (Henry, 1991:103).

Beale and Carson (2007:17) state that one might be tempted to think that Jesus, being both God and human being, was telling the devil not to tempt him since he was God and one should not tempt God. Beale and Carson (2007:17) state that temptation is different from test, human beings chose to tempt God even though they should not. They cannot entice God into sin, the whole part of Jesus' temptation is that they were addressed to his completely human nature that was susceptible to temptation, not his divine nature that was unsusceptible to temptation (Beale & Carson, 2007:17).

Beale and Carson (2007:17) elaborate by saying that this final temptation offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if he will worship Satan (Matthew, 4:8-9) after Jesus rested this enticement to so heinous a sin, the devil leaves him and angels come to minister to him (Matthew, 4:10-11). When Jesus had passed his tests without supernatural help, he is permitted to receive it to help him to recover from his ordeal (Beale & Carson, 2007:17).

Henry (1991:1624) states that Satan makes easy prey of men when he can persuade them to think themselves abandoned of God. Henry (1991:1624) elaborates "The fallacy of this promise lies in that, "all this will be given to you", it was but map, a picture and a mere phantom that had nothing in it. Such are Satan's schemes; multitudes lose sight of that which is by setting their eyes on that which is not".

#### **2.9.6. CONCLUSION**

This shows how Jesus was cautious to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits throughout these temptations. He never lost focus even when the enemy pretended to be

uplifting him and give him a false inheritance and glorification. This is where some of the great men of God are losing it and fall into the snares of the devil. When fame comes, when wealth increases, and their reputation grows; they tend to forsake God and think they will make it by themselves.

Obedying the injunction to discern and test the spirit will assist many not to be proud, but humble; we will be focused and see all the snares of the devil, even if he talks so well about us and gives us the honour we do not deserve sometimes. When the devil pretends to be the angel of light and brings false religion, we shall not be easily derailed by his evil tricks.

Jesus was tempted and overcame. Adam was also tempted and fell. Israel was tempted and generally fell. The devil is behind all temptations and may even try to twist **Scriptures** in his efforts to deceive. In the case of Christ, it also had to do with his messianic calling, whether he would continue to choose the road to the cross in obedience to the Father. The context of the injunction to discern and test the spirits is due to the reality of temptations still being there in the world.

## **2.10. ACTS 8: 9-24**

### **2.10.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

This scripture portion of Acts (8:9-24) is a narrative about how Phillip was sent to Samaria to preach the Gospel and the awesome positive response of the Samaritans to the message of the Gospel. The focal point is the response of Simon Peter (Acts, 8:18-24), that covers the request of Simon the sorcerer the time he sees Peter laying hands on the Samaritans and are receiving the Holy Spirit.

Pawson (2015: 863) states that Phillip went to Samaria and saw many respond to his preaching. There was a great deal of antipathy between the Jews and Samaritans, and the disciples themselves had not been altogether generous (Pawson, 2015:864). Pawson (2015: 864) states that many Samaritans came to faith and later Peter and John arrived to pray for them so that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit. Not all will be written about this scripture portion due its length, but the verses of importance will be selected based on their relevance to the study.

### **2.10.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF ACTS 8:9-24**

The scripture portion is found in the book of Acts, which is also called Acts of the Apostles in the books of the Bible in the New Testament canon. It is found in the middle to the last verses of chapter eight of the book of Acts. The writing is a narrative with the last verses forming a dialogue between Peter and Simon, the sorcerer. We find evident repetition of words "Holy Spirit" and "baptism" throughout the scripture portion. The scripture was written by Luke, the physician to Theophilus, the governor of that time. The language of writing the scripture was Greek. This was in the early days of the first church or the early church.

Dorani and Stuart (1996:37) states that many passages open or close with a great truth from which the rest of a section develops. These are so-called thematic statements that introduce the whole section. In this scripture portion we find the thematic statement in Acts 8:9: "But there was a certain man called Simon who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria claiming he was someone great".

### **2.10.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ACTS 8:9-24**

MacArthur (1982:1614) explains that the city of Samaria as the ancient capital of the northern kingdom of Israel fell into the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC. Over two hundred years of idolatry and rebellion against God. After resettling many of the people in other lands, the Assyrians located gentiles from other areas into the region resulting into the mix of Jews and gentiles who became known as the Samaritans (MacArthur, 1982:1682).

When coming to the issue of the authorship of the scripture portion, Longman and Garland (2007:702) state that with Luke and Acts being originally one work in two volumes, which at some point during the latter part of the century or very early in the second century, began to circulate as two separate works; what is said regarding the authorship must apply equally well to both of the books.

The setting was in Samaria and the time was early after the ascension of Jesus Christ and the Pentecost day when the church was first persecuted.

### **2.10.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ACTS 8:9-24**

Beale and Carson (2007:524) state that Luke sees the **Scripture** fulfilment fulfilled in Jesus Christ in terms of the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy and in terms of the reintroduction of the Old Testament writings that point to God's saving work. In the book Deuteronomy, God said he will send Israel a leader who is like Moses and they must obey him (Deuteronomy, 18:15-19). To the Samaritans, a leader given was not from God but was from the devil. Simon the sorcerer deceived young and old through his sorcery and magic. But God sent Phillip to the city to open their eyes through the message of the Gospel.

This alludes to the fact that when the nations of this world were blind and in darkness, God sent Jesus to be the light of the world (John, 8:12). When the nation is in darkness, being deceived by false prophets, God will always bring his servant to preach the true message of the Gospel to get them out of that darkness. There is also a need to show that those in other nations are on an equal footing with those who believe and are from the Jews. There was however a need for unity; the church in Samaria was not to be seen as disconnected from the apostles and the church in Jerusalem.

### **2.10.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF ACTS 8: 9-24 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

The obedience to injunction to discern and test the spirits will help church leaders and all Christians to see and know when they are facing false prophets and they will never fall easily into their snares.

In this **Scripture** portion we read about how Phillip went to Samaria and started the work of the ministry. We read also about Simon the sorcerer who deceived the people of Samaria with his magic and sorcery and was confronted by Simon Peter who saw that he was a selfish, false prophet who wanted the gifts of God for his self-glorification and all evil intentions.

Acts 8:9-11 reads: "But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great. To whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest saying 'This man is the great power of God'. And they headed him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time".

Henry (1991: 2096) states that Simon Magus was busy here and had gained a great interest among the people. They believed that the things Phillip spoke of, to unlearn that which is bad, proves many times a harder task than to learn that which is good. Henry (1991:2096) elaborates that Simon assured himself of that which was considerable. He gave out that he was himself some great one and would have all the people believe so and pay him all the respect accordingly. He had no desire to neither reform their lives, nor improve their worship and devotion, only to make them believe he was some divine person (Henry, 1991:2096).

Longman and Garland (2007:839) further allude that Simon the sorcerer, also called Simon Magus, was a believing heretic in the Early Church. Justin Martyr, who was himself Samaritan, says that Simon treated himself as the highest god. Longman and Garland (2007:839) elaborate to say that Arenaetus writing speaks of Simon as father of Gnosticism and identifies the seed of the Simon Magus that corrupted the Christians in Rome by his teachings and how repeatedly he was basted by Peter in their displays of magical powers.

Acts 8:18-19 says: "And when Simon saw that through the laying of the apostle's hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit'. This attests to the fact that Simon was still not with a repentant heart but only thirsty for more power. He wanted for the apostles to give him the gift of the Holy Spirit not to serve God and his people but for his own glory, while he is at the same time associated with the apostles as one of them.

Henry (1991: 2077) states that Simon the sorcerer put a great effort into Christianity as if the miracles that were done, were worth it for the profit, were done by magic arts, only of different nature from what he himself had practiced formally. Henry (1991: 2077) emphasises "Simon put in a great affront to the apostles as if they were mercenary men, who would do anything for money and loved it as well as he did, whereas they had left everything for Christ (Henry, 1991:2077)".

This serves as a caution to ministers of the Gospel who want money for everything they do in their ministry, for example, appointments prayers, and the so-called word of prophecy at random during mid-week, admission fee for membership in the church, prayer for the sick, and water baptism with payment. This shows no love for the flock but the love of money that Paul says is the root of all evil (1Tim 6:10). This kind of practice calls for our dependence to the Lord for his protection and providence.

Longman and Garland (2007:841) elaborate further to say that Simon's response to the presence of God's power is one of those tragic instances that accompany every advancement of the Gospel wherever and whenever God is at work. There are not only genuine responses but also counterfeit ones. Henry (1991:2097) emphasises that Simon had showed he had a very high opinion of himself and that he had never humbled his heart.

Acts 8:20-24 says, "Peter said to him 'Your money perishes with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness and pray to God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity'. Then Simon answered and said, 'Pray for the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me'".

This scripture portion indicates that without hesitation, Peter could discern the evil spirit working in the heart of Simon and rebuke it. This alludes to the fact that Peter was able to obey and apply the injunction to discern and test the spirits correctly.

Henry (1991:2097) attests that the just rejection of Simon Peter's proposal and cutting reproof Peter gave to Simon Magus was sufficient to caution him of his evil intentions. Peter showed Simon his crime. Simon had accumulated the wealth of this world as if it was equivalent to anything and as if what Solomon said, "Money answer all things" (Ecclesiastics 10:19). Henry (1991:2097) elaborates further to say that relating to the life that now is, money would answer all things relating to the order of life, would purchase the pardon of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.

Henry (1991:2097) attests that all the buying and selling of pardons and the indulgences in the church of Rome are the product of this same wicked thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money, when the gift of grace so expressly runs without money or without price.

Beale and Carson (2007:572) further elaborate to say that Peter's words to Simon Magus offer a small cluster of texts reflecting scriptural phraseology, the curse, "May your money perish with you" is reminiscent of Daniel 2:5, 3:9. Beale and Carson (2007:572) elaborate to say that Peter comments that Simon is full of bitter poison, bound by unrighteousness juice renowned for its bitter taste. The implication may be that he will experience the bitter results of his sinful attitude. The bind of unrighteousness is the evil that has desire that has taken Simon Magus captive despite his belief and baptism (Beale & Carson, 2007:572).

Longman and Garland (2007:841) elaborate even further to say that Simon Magus regarded the bestowal of the Spirit of God as a special effective bit of magic and Peter's analysis of the situation was that Simon's heart is not right before God. Henry (1991:2097) emphasises that we are as our hearts are, if they be not right, we are wrong. Our hearts are open in the sight of God who knows them, judges them and judges us as of them.

## 2. 10.6. CONCLUSION

This indicates that the nation can have a leader, or a prophet sent by the devil to deceive and mislead the whole nation without realising it. The nation can distinguish if the leader is from God or the devil through the obedience to the spirit of discernment and testing of the spirits. The Samaritans failed to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits, this was the injunction well familiar in the Jewish nation since there were also some Jews in the city. Peter was able to discern that Simon Magus was with an unrepentant heart and he rebuked his sin of deceptive spirit and self-glorification.

Many times, it takes a community a very long time to realise the spirit that is controlling them, especially if it pretends to be religious. Many communities are controlled by the spirits characterised by alcohol abuse, murder, high rate of divorce, adultery, and fornication as well as many other behavioural problems, not knowing that is the evil spirit of the false prophet who controls that city, is the demon of the place.

The scripture portion highlights the fact that in the spread of the gospel is encountered with false religions and magicians and other beliefs. This encounter may lead to people confusing the Spirit and God's gracious gifts with what they were used to. We often speak about syncretism. Many of the things that happen in some African Initiated Independent Churches, which are often taken as miracles, happen to be associated with what used to take place in ancestor worship. The injunction from the Bible to discern and test the spirits also has to do with this reality. Otherwise, people may have brands of Christianity, which are not different from their previous religious beliefs and practices.

The **Scripture** portion (Acts 8:9-24) bring to conclusion that Apostle Peter took the injunction to discern and test the spirit seriously, lived by it, and applied it in his ministry. It was not difficult for him to discern that Simon Magus was a hypocrite intending to gain the gift of God only for his self-gratification and emancipation to his evil intentions.

Peter maintained the highest discipline of the disciples not to sell the gifts of God for money, obeying the word of Jesus that says, "Freely give for freely you were given" (Matthew, 10:8). Peter fully endured with the power of the Holy Spirit to discern evil intentions in Simon Magus and confronted him and reprimanded him until he repented from his wicked thoughts and requested to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money.

This is a message to the church leaders who are hungry for power, fame, and wealth who will do anything no matter how wicked for self-gain. The commercialising of the church and turning it into the marketplace selling water, oil salt, clothes, soap, and many other things in the promise of miracles and supernatural powers for work promotion and business prosperity.

## **2.11. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:10**

### **2.11.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

In this **Scripture** portion Paul writes to the church in Corinthians about the gifts of the Spirit. The focus will be on 1 Corinthians 12:10 where Paul mentions the gift of discernment of the spirits. We will briefly look at the literary context, historical context, and the redemptive history. We will then take a closer look at the scripture itself and see what one can learn about discernment and testing the spirits.

### **2.11.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:10**

The **Scripture** portion is one verse found in the twelfth chapter of the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. There is the repetition of the word “to another” that appears several times in this verse. Here is also some pattern of words and a particular sequence of words divided by a comma. It is in the form of a poem with a sequence of repeated words. The **Scripture** portion is in the last verse of the chapter of the whole chapter. Lienhard (1980:506) states that the term “The discernment of the spirits” is found once in the Bible at 1 Corinthians 12:10. Paul is writing there about “spiritual gifts” and he lists nine of these spiritual gifts. Paul make three points concerning these; all these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, the same Lord and the same God. Their end is the common good (Lienhard, 1980:506).

Lienhard (1980:508) elaborates: “Few other passages from the New Testament are sometimes joined with 1Cor 12: 10 when reference is made to discernment of spirits, they are ‘disputes’ over opinions ‘diakriseis dilogismon’, Rom 14: 1 which is echoed in the ‘diakriseis logismon’ of later spiritual writers ‘the word of God discerning’ ‘kritikos’ the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and also in Heb 4: 12 ‘to distinguish good from evil’. As well as ‘test the spirits’ ‘dokimazete ta pneumata’”.

### **2.11.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12: 10**

Pawson (2015:952) states that the city of Corinth that Paul visited was very wealthy and terribly pagan. The inhabitants worshipped the gods of Greece and Rome including Poseidon, god of the sea, and Aphrodite, goddess of love.

MacArthur (2006:1695) alludes that the most serious problem of the Corinthian church was unwillingness to divorce the culture around them. Most of the believers could not separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral and pagan ways. Pawson (2015: 953) continues to elaborate on the social and political context of the city to say that the city was mostly populated by freedmen, former slaves who had either bought their freedom or earned it in some ways. The church displayed evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit; its members had been baptised. Pawson (2015: 953) states that the city had considerable Roman influence and it enjoyed Roman law and order.

#### **2.11.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:10**

The **Scripture** portion of 1 Corinthians 12:10 talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit that continues in the next chapter of 1 Corinthians (13:1-13; 14:1-40). One will understand of this **Scripture** portion when he runs through all these verses. Paul was speaking about the gifts that will be with the church and operate in the church until Jesus Christ comes again. Henry (1991:2269) talks about the spiritual gifts in general, focusing on charity in 1 Corinthians 13:13 but focusing also on the redemptive history of these spiritual gifts. Henry (1991:2269) states that the extraordinary gifts on which the Corinthians valued themselves were of short continuance; they were only to edify the church on earth but in heaven would be superseded which yet is the very seat and element of love. From its long continuance duration, charity never fails (Henry, 1991:2269).

#### **2.11.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12: 10 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

The discernment of the spirits essentiality is for all the saints and all have to take the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. One cannot overemphasise the essentiality of the gifts of the discernment in the church today, when there are many false apostles with false doctrines. MacArthur (2006:1716) attest to this point in an elaborative manner: "Thought the operation of the gifts of discernment has since apostolic times because of the completion of the **Scripture**, it is still essential to have people in the church who are discerning. They are the guardians, the watchmen who protect the church from demonic lies, false doctrines, pervasive cults and fleshy elements".

The Bible (1982: 1020, NKJV) states that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are "to another the gift of working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discernment of the spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Corinthians, 12:10).

Henry (1991:2266) attest that the spiritual gifts though proceeding from the same Spirit are varied. He elaborates further on the gift of discernment to say that discernment of the spirits is the power to distinguish between true and false prophets or to discern the real and internal qualification of any person for any office or to discover the inward working of the mind by the Holy Spirit (Henry, 1991:2266).

Beale and Carson (2007:737) elaborate even further to say that several of the gifts that Paul mentions were already associated with the spirit in the Old Testament and Jewish, including wisdom and knowledge or understanding (Exodus, 31:3, 35:31; Isaiah, 11:2; Daniel 1:4, 5:11). Beale and Carson (2007:737) elude further: "Miracles were especially associated with God's special intervention in the Exodus and in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. In the Old Testament healing was expected to accompany forgiveness and restoration of God's people".

#### **2.11.6. CONCLUSION**

The teaching of Paul to the church of Corinth was not essential to them only, but its essentiality is still evident to the church today as we always witness to its relevance.

Paul's teaching about the spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of discernment is one that is brief but very essential. The obligation of the church is to take this vital gift of discernment seriously and to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

It is imperative to the church to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits if it has to clean and rescue itself from self-appointed, false apostles and prophets with all their heretical influences and teachings. This will finally eliminate and eradicate the false doctrines and false apostles with the teachings of the antichrist (1 John, 4:1-3). If the church obeys the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

The issue of discernment and testing the spirits as raised in 1 Corinthians 12:10 have to do also with gifts of church leadership. This has, among others, to do with the ability to distinguish truth from error. This is part of the context of the Bible injunction to discern and test the spirits. There is a critical need of this throughout the history of the church. Most of the letters of the New Testament were written to also combat false teachings in such a way that they develop the ability to distinguish truth from error. The need to discern and test the spirits is due to the fact that the Christian is not to believe anything but certain things.

## **2.12. 1 JOHN 4:1-3**

### **2.12.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

In this scripture portion, John cautions his fellow Christians not to believe that every spirit is from God but encourages his followers to discern and test every spirit whether it is from God or not. Henry (1991:2450) attests to the statement above that John the apostle having said that, God is dwelling in and with us, emphasises that Spirit may be discerned and distinguished from other spirits that are in the world. He calls the disciples whom he writes to, to question and scrutinise the spirits and spiritual professors that had now risen (Henry, 1991:2450).

### **2.12.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 4:1-3**

The **Scripture** portion is found in the fourth chapter of first epistle of John, the first three verses of this chapter. It is a warm but cautioning portion like a father speaking to his children, or an elder brother peaking to the young ones. John, several times, uses the word "beloved" to show his sense of adulthood and maturity compared to his recipients.

Pawson (2015:1208) further alludes to say that the letters are warm and reflecting of the character of the saint who is now probably in his eighties before he was exiled in the Island of Patmos. Bruce (1970:25) states that the epistle of John neither begins nor ends like an epistle, it does not stand with any indication of identity or whom he addresses; not even an end with personal greetings, where the scripture portion 1 John 4:1-3 is allocated. It only concludes with a message of encouragement and reassurance (Bruce, 1970:25).

### **2.12.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 4:1-3**

Pawson (2015:1209) states that the author of the scripture portion was John, one of the twelve apostles called by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry, and the only one to live to an old age. He looked after Mary, the mother of Jesus, until she dies. According to Bruce (1970:13) Christianity may have been introduced to the province of Asia by individuals before the middle of the first century but it was effectively established during the Ministry of Paul in Ephesus at around 52 AD.

Pawson (2015:1209) elaborates that the letter with the **Scripture** portion was written at the time when the church was being affected by good or ill, by travelling Bible preachers and he was very concerned about the damage some were causing.

### **2.12.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 4:1-3**

Henry (1991:2450) says: "Jesus Christ is to be confessed as the son of God, the eternal life, and word that was with the father from the beginning, as the son of God that came into and came in our mortal nature". Henry (1991:2450) further eludes that it was known by God that the antichrist would arise and make a long and fatal war against the Christ. The antichrist's spirit began early even in the times of the apostles.

Bruce (1970:13) elaborates: "This Antichrist would have his many prophets and his rise facilitated by other less antichrists and the spirit of error working and disposing men's minds that the perverse of the true prophets in the church of the New Testament days. Bruce (1970:13) elaborates that this spirit stimulated the activity of others who claimed to be prophets but whose claims were unfounded, they did speak by inspiration, showed by the content of their utterances that the spirit that spoke through them was not the spirit of God".

### **2.12.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF 1 JOHN 4:1-3 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

In this part, the focus is on the **Scripture** portion 1 John 4:1-3. John cautions the church not to believe that every spirit is from God, but the spirits must be discerned and tested. John gives the gauge of his time on how to test the spirits. Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, time various gauges have been utilised depending on the unfolding of a phenomenon prevailing at that time.

1 John 4:1-3 says: "Beloved, do not believe that every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you will know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not of God, and this the spirit of the antichrist which you heard he was coming and is now already in the world".

Bruce (1970:103) states that in the apostolic churches, as an ancient Israel, communications were made from time to time by prophets. Men and women who spoke as the mouth piece of a power beyond themselves, every prophet claimed to be a

spokesman of God, to be inspired by the spirit of truth, but in Old Testament and the Old Testament times alike it was still vital to test these claims (Bruce 1970:103).

Bruce (1070:105) elaborates further to say that: "Test the prophets ask them if Jesus Christ has come in the flesh or not and if they agree, then they are to be recognised as speaking by the same Spirit of God". Henry (1991:2450) eludes to say that God has given of his Spirit to these latter ages of the world but not all who profess to come furnished there with each of the disciples is allowed to make judgement of discretion in reference to the spirits that would be believed and trusted in the affairs of religion.

Henry (1991:2450) eludes further to say that it should not seem strange to us that false teachers set themselves up in the church, it was so in the apostles' time, fatal is the spirit of delusion, for prophets and inspired teachers that are by no means so.

Pawson (2015:1219) emphasises that first is the doctrinal test, every Christian must pass this test. It concerns how they think of Christ, if someone has a shaky understanding and is not sure if the human Jesus is the divine Christ, they do not pass the test. Pawson (2015:1219) further elaborates to mention a number of tests namely, the spiritual test, the moral test, the social test, and the love test.

According to Bruce (1970:105) such a denial that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh has already been a sure sign of antichrist, the spirit of the great antichrist of the end times is already present and operative. Through these, "many antichrists who refuse to acknowledge Jesus. No matter how claiming, no matter how plausible, no matter how eloquent the prophet in question maybe. The test of their witness to Christ and his truth is the test by which they must be judged" (Bruce, 1970:105).

Henry (1991:2450) attests: "John give a test whereby the disciples may try the pretending spirits. The spirits set up for prophets, doctors or dictators in religion and so they were to be tried by their doctrine".

#### **2.12.6. CONCLUSION**

Apostle John warns the disciples about the obligation to take the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. Admonishing them that not all the spirits are from God, but the disciples and his fellow members have to discern and test all the spirits. He gives them the gauge to use as they are doing that. To say the Spirit of God must confess that Jesus has come in the flesh, but every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ is from the antichrist.

It is amazing how the prophets of our times are subtle and deceptive not to fall into failing this test, they do everything they can to confess Christ, preach the word with confidence and eloquence in order to hide the signs not to be suspected as false prophets, but they only fail the doctrinal test and the moral test as mentioned earlier by Pawson (2015:1220).

Failing the doctrinal test, we see them idolised by members and doing unbiblical things that cannot be doctrinally justified and scripturally incorrect. We find the distortion of the word of God in order to justify their heretic ill-informed doctrines. This become evident when they are exposed as they commercialise their churches and abuse people's belief systems.

One can see the false prophets fail the moral test characterised by hatred, jealousy, arrogance, pride, fornication, adultery, and financial corruption. Jesus said we shall know them by their fruits (Matthew, 7:15, 17, 20, NKJV) “Beware of false prophets who come to you in the sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do not men gather grapes from thorn bushes or fig from thistles. Even so every good tree bears good fruits. Every tree that does not bear good fruits is cut down into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you shall know them”.

## **2.13. REVELATION 12:9-10**

### **2.13.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

The scripture portion tells about the casting-out of the devil and his angels from heaven. It reveals the character of the devil and his strategy to entice, deceive, and to destroy; that he is still the old serpent that has deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

### **2.13.2. LITERARY CONTEXT OF REVELATION 12:9-10**

The **Scripture** portion, Revelation 12:9-10 is from the last book of Revelation. The word “revelation” is derived from the Greek word “apokalypsis”, which means to unveil or uncover. One cannot speak about the literary context of this **Scripture** portion without considering the nature of the book of Revelation as a whole.

Pawson (2015: 1241) states that the **Scripture** portion extracted from the book Revelation is not only different from other New Testament books in content. It is also unique in origin. Pawson (2015: 1241) elaborates that scholars have noted many differences between Revelation and other writings of Apostle John of one Gospel and three epistles in terms of its style, grammar, and vocabulary that are so unusual for him. Pawson (2015: 1241) emphasises: “This comes to the part where some of the scholars contend the authorship of John the Apostle but not with a convincing argument (Pawson, 2015:1241)”.

This **Scripture** portion is a mixture of the two parts, namely the narrative followed by the poem of praise by one of the angels after the war that was in heaven where the devil was defeated and cast down with his followers. There is a noticeable repetition where the angel continuously commands John to write. Pawson (2015:1242) attests that the author of the book is Jesus himself commanding John to write. John was not the writer of Revelation but the amanuensis who wrote it down (Pawson, 2015:1242).

Another feature to note is the continual usage of numbers and figures, small and huge, with multiples. Figures play a vital role in the book as they reflect deep spiritual and historical meanings. The book comprises of the past, present, and the future, in this scripture portion we see the past and the present.

### **2.13.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF REVELATION 12:9-10**

Morris (1990:292) states that John was writing to a small, persecuted church that was in danger of becoming disillusioned. When the Gospel was preached in their area, people were told that God had sent his son who died on the cross to forgive their sin and open

the way to everlasting life, and all the great promises coming with the new birth. They were glad and looking forward for the coming of Christ, but nothing happened.

Morris (1990: 293) explains that the Romans were as oppressive as ever; some of the believers were killed or imprisoned, evil burned as it has always done. Had it all been a mistake? Was Caesar too strong for Christ? Would wrong always prevail over the right? Morris (1990:293) notes that the **Scripture** portion (Revelation 12:9-10) presents the theology of power, the writer saying: "You are seeing only part of the picture, if you could look behind the scene you would see that God is working his purpose and in his good time he will completely overthrow all evil. The salvation he worked out at Calvary will not fail to achieve its aim".

#### **2.13.4. REDEMPTIVE HISTORY OF REVELATION 12:9-10**

Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven at the time of their original rebellion. He is a malignant liar (1 John, 3:8) his accusations against the believers are unsuccessful because of Christ our advocate (1 John, 2:1).

Henry (1991: 2477) elaborates that, "the servant of God overcame Satan by the blood of the lamb as the meritorious course". Henry (1991:2477) expands further and says Christ by dying he destroyed the power of him that had the power of death that is the devil, secondly by the word of their testimony as the great instrument of war, the sword of the spirit when is war of God.

Morris (1990: 293) states that when we look at John's purpose, we will not find here a full statement of all that Christianity teaches. At the same breath we will find a concentration on those aspects of the faith that would bring home to his readers the truth they needed to know. Morris (1990:293) elaborates further to say that John has the greetings by Jesus Christ, the faithful witness; the faithful one, the first born of the dead; and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Morris (1990:293) emphasises: "Unless we see the Lord for what he is, we will not see anything in its perspective. Having made his point that Jesus is the supreme Lord. John reveals that series of title as this book unfolds. Morris (1990:293) elaborates to say that "John makes it clear right at the beginning that Jesus is the supreme one, he may be lightly esteemed in the parts of the Roman Empire but he is given highest honour in heaven".

#### **2.13.5. SOME ASPECTS OF THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION 12: 9-10 THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS**

The church leaders and the church members in general need to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits so that that they must not be enticed and deceived by the devil, old serpent and the dragon.

The last **Scripture** portion we need to focus on is the book of Revelation. This **Scripture** portion 12: 9-1 takes us back to the book of Genesis where it all began. It reveals the character of the devil and his mission, including his strategies concerning the church and all humanity namely, enticement, deception, and destruction (John, 10:10). But it leaves

us also with hope for the work that Christ has done by defeating the devil with his crucifixion, death, and resurrection from the dead by which he destroyed the works of the devil (1 John, 3:8).

The Bible in Revelation (12:9-10) says: "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard the loud voice saying in heaven "Now salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down".

John speaks about the battle that was in heaven where the devil and his angels were defeated and cast out of heaven to the earth. Henry (1991: 2477) states that the dragon, also called Satan, and his angels prevailed not; there was a great struggle both sides, but the victory fell to Christ and his church and the dragon and his angels were not only cast out but were conquered (Henry, 1991: 2477). In this Scripture portion, the main focus is on the victory song that was sung as the gist of the matter, to expose Satan, his evil character and mission that he will die to accomplish.

Morris (1990: 295) states that John is not writing about God, who as it happens, is stronger than the kings of the earth. His God has a strong moral purpose, and the pain that comes on evil people are not simply suffering, they are judged – the due reward for what they have done. Morris (1990: 295) elaborates: "The triumph of God is not described without a realistic sense of the power of evil. Behind all human evil is the malign visage of Satan. There is a war between the forces of good and evil here on earth but that is only part of conflict".

Henry (1991: 2477) states that Satan by his malice, was the accuser of the brethren and accused them before God day and night. He appeared before God as an adversary to the church continually bringing indictments and accusations against them whether true or false. Morris (1990: 295) elaborates: "We are caught with a conflict greater by far than we see here on earth". Groningen (1996: 99) elaborates to say that Satan is the tempter and deceiver. He is the tempter of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew, 4:10; Mark, 1:13; Luke, 4-8), when Jesus spoke about his death, there came the tempter to address Peter and told him that Jesus must not speak like that (Matthew, 16:23; Mark, 8:33). Satan continuously sought to influence and use various people, leaders of the Gospel (Mark, 4:15; Acts, 26:18) and he sought to destroy Jesus (Matthew, 2:13; Revelation, 12:1)" as noted by (Van Groningen, 1996: 99).

Pawson (2015:1293) states: "The battle between good and bad will not continue forever. The reason being that; the forces are unequal in number, the devil is comprising of one third of the heavenly host (Rev 12: 4) and two third are led by the archangel Michael who will lead his forces to the victory". The devil will be hurled down the earth later he will be defeated and thrown in the lake of fire (Rev 20:3)".

Van Groningen (1996: 99) elaborates further: "Satan is the master tempter, he is the adversary and accuser of God's people, and he is the great opponent of Jesus Christ. He is the one to be cast out forever (John 12:13, Rev 20:10) after being bound and crushed (Rom 16: 20) and cast into the lake of fire (1Peter 5:8)".

Henry (1991: 2477) concludes with this powerful remarks: “Let us therefore give heed that we give him no cause of accusation against us, and that when we have sinned we presently go in before the Lord accuse and condemn ourselves and commit our cause to Jesus Christ”.

### **2.13.6. CONCLUSION**

In this last **Scripture** portion for the last book of the Bible called Revelation, we see again the character of the old serpent, the deceiver, our adversary called Satan that is the same devil that was from the beginning in the Garden of Eden beguiling Adam and Eve. The Bible in the **Scripture** portion of Revelation 12:9-10 unveils him with the same features and characteristics as well as the same strategies namely, enticing, deceiving, and destroying.

This takes us back to the spirit of discernment and testing of the spirits. Because the devil is the spirit, we cannot see him with the naked eyes but that of the spirit, through the spirit of discernment. The Holy Spirit in us can help us see the devil and be able to frustrate his evil intentions. This is the reason all servants of God; church leaders and all membership in general must have the spirit of discernment, to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits, to distinguish between the spirit of God and that of the devil.

The devil with his evil intention and with his deception is able to disguise himself as a serpent (Genesis, 3:1-7) and used Pharaoh to kill the child Moses (Exodus, 1:15-16); Balaam to entice the children of Israel (Numbers, 31:16); Saul to kill David (1 Samuel, 19:11-12); Jezebel to kill the prophets of God (1 Kings, 18:4); and Herod to kill the child Jesus (Matthew, 2:19-20). The devil is also able to disguise himself as the angel of light (2 Corinthians, 11:14).

All will agree that the church of Jesus Christ must be up in arms today like never before, but not carnal arms, spiritual arms (Ephesians, 6:13-18). One of the most important armour not mentioned is the discernment and testing of the spirits so that we know and see our adversary and all his subtle strategies.

In the same breath, one must not undermine the work accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul and all the apostles took time to write to the church about its victory that was perfected on the cross. To say that the church of Jesus is not the kind that is still waiting for victory over the devil, but is a victorious church now due to the finished work accomplished on the cross of Calvary, and that we need to walk in that victory until Christ comes again (2 Corinthians, 2:14). For his is the church with the Holy Spirit (John, 14:16), with authority (Matthew, 28:18) and blessed with all spiritual blessings now in the heavenly places (Ephesians, 1:3) and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew, 16:18).

The passage is also given to help the church understand the source of its sufferings. It is because of being on the side of Jesus that it is hated; it is also because of the fact that the church has a critical role to play in the advancement of the kingdom of God through the propagation of the gospel that it is persecuted.

In the face of persecution there is a need to persevere. There is a pastoral need to be able to discern and test the spirits in that context because when Christians are severely

persecuted there is pressure on them to become unfaithful and also to be confused as to whether or not God loves them, although he allows them to go through such severe sufferings. The context of the Bible injunction to discern and test the spirits therefore includes this pastoral concern that believers persevere until the end.

#### 2.14. GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this general conclusion, we will cover a number of facts and issues based on the findings we have made as we indulged in the study of this chapter. Not all **Scripture** portions will be covered but many that are relevant to drive the point home will be briefly dealt with. We will summarise the lessons we have learned in the chapter as we looked at the kings, prophets, leaders, and individuals who did well to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits and those who failed to do so throughout the Bible in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In the beginning of this chapter, the first **Scripture** portion of Genesis 3:1-2, we read about how the devil beguiles the man and woman to doubt the word of God, disobey his word and fall into sin that brought catastrophic consequence to all humanity. This brought the death and the total separation of man and God spiritually and physically.

We learn in this **Scripture** portion that the devil, the old serpent, still uses the same tactics and strategies to make people doubt the word of God and disobey his commandments; he still uses his old tactics of distortion and exaggeration of the word. Deceiving and making multitudes doubt the word of God and disobey him.

In Genesis 3:21 we see the kindness of God trying to restore man to his former glory by killing the lamb and covering their nakedness with it instead of leaves that man and woman covered themselves with in order to hide their nakedness. We learn that all humanity was born in sin but God brought his son and made him a living sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin, he restored man to his former glory and even with a better covenant and promises through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians, 5:17; Colossians, 3:1-4).

In the **Scripture** portion of Exodus 7:8-12 when Pharaoh saw the miracles performed by Moses, he tried to compete and called his magicians to imitate Moses, but their staffs were all swallowed by the staff of Moses. We learn from this scripture portion that the devil and his agents of darkness will always try to compete with God and his true servants by fabricating counterfeit miracles and false prophecies but they shall not be able to stand the test of time for they shall always be exposed and defeated by God and his true servants. This is occurring as we see the false prophets today being exposed through media and on social platforms.

In the **Scriptures** portion of Deuteronomy 13:1-2 and Deuteronomy 18:22, the two scriptures both warn about false prophets and the Israeli prophets leading the nation to follow other gods. The Israeli nation is cautioned not to follow and not to fear the false prophets. We learn not to follow the prophets irrationally without thinking. We learn that we need to discern and test what they say – whether or not it is in conjunction with the word of God, and we must not follow such prophets.

The next scripture portion in the same book of Deuteronomy; Deuteronomy 18:22 teaches that we must test the prophets within the effects of what they prophesied about, if the prophet's prophecies do not come to pass, he is a false prophet and the people must not

fear that kind of prophet, nor believe what he says because it is not coming from God but from his own human inventions.

In the book of Samuel, we learn that prophet Samuel was a seer and he did well to discern that Saul did not fulfil the command of God to give the Amalekites to a total annihilation but he spared for himself fat cows, goats and sheep, young men and women, he even spared the life of Agag their king. We learn in this scripture portion that if one is a leader and he obeys the injunction to discern and test the spirits, one will not miss a point to do the will of God in complicated situations without any fear or favour. He will have audacity to face kings and political leaders and confront them with their wrongs.

We learn in the scripture portion of 2 Chronicles 18:1-34 that Jehoshaphat allied himself with the evil king of Israel, Ahab. In this scripture portion we learn the essentiality of choosing God fearing friends and partners in the work of the ministry. We have learned the way ungodly friends can have a bad influence and derail good people from the will of God. We also learn that Jehoshaphat erred by not taking seriously the injunction to discern and test the spirits. And the way this nearly cost his life and annihilate the Davidic lineage from the throne of David and stand forever in contrary to what God has promised.

We also learn an important lesson that old friends with long histories may sometimes have a hidden agenda to avenge for the long-passed events or be jealous because of one's recent achievements while they have proven to be total failures in life themselves. Ahab did it intentionally to make Jehoshaphat put on the royal robes with a crown and be annihilated, while Ahab himself put on the ordinary soldier's clothing in disguise.

Jesus did well in the book of Matthew 4:1-11 to discern that it was the devil tempting him, he was wise enough to realise that even though he could still turn the stones into bread to eat, it will be playing into the devil's hands. He saw no necessity to prove that he was the son of God to the devil since it is what they both knew. It is insanity to one to prove who he is to the same people who know well who he is. Many church leaders are falling into the temptation of proving the point.

Many church leaders fall into the temptation of power, wealth, fame, and pride. We learn that when the devil tempted Jesus with the riches of the world and its glory, he objected to bow. Many church leaders have bowed to the devil for he promised to give them the riches of this world and its glory; they sold their souls to the devil and they do not know who they are today in terms of their characters and love for God.

Simon Magus, in the book of Acts 8:9-24, is a classic example of the community that is controlled by the false prophet, like what is happening in our communities and cities today. We learn in this scripture portion that the community that is controlled or ruled by the false prophet is irrational in terms of thinking, to an extent of calling the human-being a god and a direct representative of God, they will fear the person and adore him, do everything he says no matter how unbiblical, degrading, and abusive – and they will die to protect him (Acts, 8:9-11).

We also learn that Simon Peter did well to use the injunction to discern and test the spirit and he confronted Simon Magus with his evil intention of buying the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter exposed his evil intentions that he only wanted the gift for his selfish ambitions in order to regain his lost power to control the community of Samaria that he had lost.

We learn that the church leaders will do well to discern and test the spirits, and this will enable them to see if new members coming to the church have good intentions to repent or serve with dignity. Some members will come to the church with evil intentions to destroy the work, others are power hungry and want to take control of the ministry without any experience. While others will come directly sent by the demons to destroy the work of the ministry by sowing divisions, spirit of drunkenness, fornication, and adultery.

In the book of 1 John 4:1-3 we learn the church leaders must not believe that all spirits are from God, but they must test every spirit if it is from God or from the antichrist. John further provides the gauge to test the spirits. He says every spirit that believes that Jesus has come to the world in the flesh is from God but every spirit that does not believe that Jesus has come in the flesh is not from God but from the antichrist (1 John, 4:2-3).

We live in the days when people believe that every spirit is from God and that every prophet comes from God. We learn in this scripture portion that people must not be impressed by good sermons and promising prophecies, but they must test the source, the fountain where that prophecy originates. For the prophets to preach powerful sermons, with boldness, confidence and eloquence is not sufficient. We need to dig deeper and see the spirit inside that prophet. We learn in this scripture that miracles and elegant clothing and fancy cars are not sufficient evidence that this is the genuine man of God.

## **CHAPTER 3 SOME OF THE INSIGHT THAT CAN BE LEARNED ABOUT DISCERNMENT AND TESTING OF THE SPIRITS FROM CHURCH HISTORY WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO CHARISMATIC CHURCHES**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2, we have closely looked at the biblical content and the meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits, of which the aim was to explore the biblical content and meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits. We have learned how the Old Testament people and apostles in the New Testament have obeyed or disobeyed the injunction to discern and test the spirits with their various consequences either good or catastrophic ones.

In this chapter, we will look at some of the insights that can be learned about discernment from church history with specific reference to charismatic churches. We will look at the injunction to discern and test the spirits, on the way in which the church leaders have defined and handled the injunction to discern and test the spirits, throughout the history of the church with reference to the charismatic churches.

In order to do justice to this topic, we will in this third chapter of the dissertation, take a brief look at the church fathers. We will consider some of the church fathers and their various views with regard to the Bible on injunction to discern and test the spirits. We will look at the struggles waged by the church to maintain and preserve the pure message of the Gospel and Christian life. We will finally look closely at the relevance of discerning and testing of the spirits with regard to the charismatic churches. The chapter will then be concluded with a general conclusion.

### **3.2. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Edwards (1997:v1) states: "Many people think that they ought to understand more about the history of Christianity which developed since the days in Galilee or Jerusalem". Edwards (1997:v1) elaborates to say that committed Christians have an obvious need for wishing to learn more about the spiritual family to which they belong even if the family's history contains much that is disgraceful and bewildering.

Lindberg (2006:2) states that Christian identity clearly originates in the historical person of Jesus who was born, suffered, and was crucified. Christians put a unique spin on this history when they confess that this historical Jesus is also the historical Christ who was raised from the dead and who will return to complete history (Lindberg, 2006:2).

Gonzalez (2010:1) further elaborates: "From its very beginning the Christian message was grafted unto human history. The good news Christians proclaimed through the ages is that in Jesus Christ and for our salvation God has entered history in a unique way". Gonzalez (2010:1) emphasises "History is crucial to understand not only about the life of Jesus Christ but the whole biblical message, the Bible tells us the story of God's revelation in the life of Jesus Christ and the people of God the Israelites".

### **3.3. THE INJUNCTION TO DICERN AND TEST THE SPIRITS BY CHURCH LEADERS THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**

In this sub-section we will look closely at the issue of injunction to discern and test the spirits in addition to the views of the church leaders in the Early Church and throughout the history of the church, with reference to the charismatic church leaders. One will realise that various church leaders held different views that impacted and shaped the era they lived, based on the manner in which they obeyed or disobeyed the injunction to discern and test the spirits. All be followed by concluding remarks.

Lienhard (1980:507) states that the term discernment is used frequently, some might think too frequently, that in contemporary spiritual terms it has a biblical term and has a long and somehow a complex history (Lienhard, 1980:507). In modern use, it is found in three different phases, namely Ignatius discernment, community discernment, and discernment. Lienhard (1980:507) defines discernment as an inception which involves choosing the way of light of Christ instead of the way of darkness of the evil one, living out the consequences of his choice through discovering what specific decisions and actions are demanded for one to follow Christ here and now.

#### **3.3.1. THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH**

In this section, we will briefly look at the patristic fathers, from the period after the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus; as well as their early life and their views and their contributions with regard to the subject to discern and test the spirits. Vos (1984:7) highlights: "As the apostles passed from the scene, others arose in the church to take their place, called Fathers "Fathers in God" because of the esteem in which they were held by church members due to their historical relationship to latter church developments in about AD. 95." (Vos, 1984:7).

Peterson (2007:55) elaborates that the term "Patristic" comes from the Latin word meaning father. The Patristic period in history ranged from 100 AD to about 500 AD. During this time creative thinkers attacked the basic doctrines of Christianity in response to controversies within the church, as well as persecutions and threats from other historical developments.

Vos (1984:7) further divides the fathers into their various groups and the features that distinguished them with pertinence to the periods they operated in.

According to Vos (1984:7) the fathers are frequently divided into four groups, namely; the Apostolic Fathers or Post Apostolic Fathers 95 AD – 150 AD; the Apologists 140 AD – 200AD; the Polemists 180 AD – 225 AD; and the Scientific Theologians 225 AD – 460 AD. Vos (1984:7) further elaborates that the Apostolic Fathers are characterised by edification; the Apologists by defence on attacks on Christianity; the Polemics by attack against the heresy within the church; and the Scientific Theologians by a scientific study of theology in an effort to apply the theological investigations of philosophical modes of thoughts of the day (Vos, 1984:7). We will look closely at the church fathers namely, Origen, Athanasius, and John Chrysostom.

#### **3.3.2. ORIGEN 185-254 AD**

Vermes (2012:213) states that Origen, philosopher, theologian, and biblical expert all in one was a versatile, exciting, and influential church father in the early Centuries of Greek Christianity. Origen was actually a productive writer; he is arguably the most outstanding witness of the development of Christological ideas in the pre-Nicene church. Cross and Livingston (1988:1009) state that Origen was an essentially a Bible scholar whose thought was nourished on scriptures, the inspiration and integrity of which he affirmed against the Marcionists (Vermes, 2012:213).

Commented [A2]: Marcionites?

Looking at the above statement, we will take a brief glance at the work and contribution of Origen concerning the subject of discerning and testing the spirits. Cross and Livingston (1988:1008) state that Origen was a fertile author even though many of his writings have perished and most of the others survived only in fragments or in Latin translation.

#### **3.3.2.1. EARLY LIFE OF ORIGEN**

McManners (1990:52) says Origen was the son of Christian parents. The martyrdom of his father in 203 AD left him with cold antipathy to pagan establishments, whether in government or in high culture. This lasting empathy coexisted in his mind with a rare mastering of philosophical debate and classical literature; sturdy ascetic renunciation marked his character.

Boer (1976:92) states that Origen was born of Christian parents in Alexandria about 185 AD. As a young man, he was known for his pious character and brilliant mind. He attended the Catechetical school and studied under Clement. Boer (1976:92) elaborates: "At the age of nineteen he became the head of the school because the mature teachers were not available". McManners (1990:52) states that there are intricate philosophical and logical disputes of the Hellenistic schools, which we now understand only because Origen gave a clear account of the points at the issue.

Vermes (2012:213) contributes: "In his teen having lost his father Leonidas, victim in 202 of the persecutions of the Christians by Septimus Severus Origen was anxious to emulate him, he was fanatically keen to become a martyr himself". Vermes (2012:213) elaborates that, Origen taking literally the hyperbolic of Jesus Christ that those who follow him must be eunuchs, his practical reason being that of spiritual freedom in dealing with young women. McManners (1990:52) elaborates on this issue of Origen's self-castration: "A steely ascetic renunciation marked his character and is reported by Eusebius that in his zeal of youth he had subjected himself to castration to free him to instruct female pupils without scandal".

#### **3.3.2.2. THE CONTRIBUTION MADE BY ORIGEN WITH REGARD TO DISCERNING AND TESTING THE SPIRITS**

Vermes (2012:213) states that Origen's extreme devotion was translated into a continuous fasting, he abstained from wine, he slept very little, and went bare-foot everywhere. By the age of seventeen, this brilliant but eccentric pupil of Clement had already taken charge of the lower section of the catechetical schools in Alexandria.

We will look closely the work of Lienhard (1980:512) who has made such a huge contribution in the compilation of the work of Origen with regard to the subject to discern and test the spirits. Lienhard (1980:512) states that the first Christian writer to discuss this process is Origen (185- 254 AD). Lienhard (1980:512) elaborates that he frequently cited opinions, the whole biblical teaching on discernment of spirits could be assembled from the few chapters of Origen's work called "On first principles" in this work written shortly before 230 AD, Origen produced what has been called right or wrong the first systematic theology (Lienhard, 1980:512).

Lienhard (1980:512) emphasises: "The greater part of the third book of Origen deals with the freedom of the will and the question of evil, as Origen tries to defend human freedom against the Gnostics denial of it. Lienhard (1980:512) states that Origen concedes the existence of good and evil spirits among the rules of this world and their ability to influence men. The good spirit is recognised by the fact that the soul tranquillity is undisturbed and its freedom respected. Origen have introduced the doctrine of discernment of spirits.

McManners (1990:52) highlights: "Out of his advanced lectures emerged a powerful refutation of the entire Gnostic world –view and principles of biblical interpretation, a work entitled on the First Principles, the book as a whole was survived only a revised and partially expurgated Latin translation damaged his reputation for pure Orthodoxy". McManners (1990:52) elaborates: "This was mainly of his belief that, God is pure goodness so that divine punishment are always therapeutic, not merely retributive, and if freedom is alienable in all created rational beings, then ultimately even the most wicked will be purified by divine love and fit for salvation. Then Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the father and all will be all in all".

Lienhard (1980:512) states that for Origen, discernment was a gift which enabled its recipients to distinguish between good and evil spirits. He affirms thoroughly that discernment of the spirits is a gift of the Holy Spirit and that man cannot distinguish spirits without this gift. Origen reasons to say that Christ's discernment involved forty-two generations (Matthew, 2:17), and man's return to God must also involve that number of steps.

Lienhard (1980:514) elaborates, "Origen has a distinctive place in his theological system for a doctrine of discernment of spirits. Free choice was an essential part of that system, for Origen both good and evil spirits try to influence man". Lienhard (1980: 512) elaborates further to say Origen believes that man is not naturally capable of distinguishing with certainty between these kinds of spirits, to do so it requires a spiritual grace or gift. The possession of this gift is a sign of progress in the return to God. Lienhard (1980:512) elaborates even further to say Origen finally suggests that the criterion for discernment, namely; the fact that a good spirit leaves the mind calm and the free will. McManners (1990:52) states that to interpret the Bible, Origen exploited the Platonists tripartite division of the cosmos into matter, soul, and mind.

One must also mention the fact that the early church viewed Origen not in a positive light due to a number of factors. McGrath (2013:30) says: "Origen by following the example of Clement of Alexandria (150-215) both adopted the Platonic and other classical Greek philosophical teachings such as Stoicism".

McGrath (2013:30) says: "Writers such as Titus Flavius Clement (150-215) better known as Clement of Alexandria who was head of the Alexandria's catechetical school during the 190s realised that Hebraic ways of thought and characteristic of the Apostolic". McGrath (2013:30) emphasises: "Christianity should be formulated using concepts borrowed from Platonism and other classic Greek philosophical schools such as Stoicism which enhance their appeal to the important audience".

McGrath (2013:30) elaborates that Origen (184-253) who emerged as the head of Alexandria catechetical school in the first decade of the third century, also believed that Hellenic philosophical systems owed their origins to divine revelation and this held that they were justified in reclaiming these revelations in service of theology (McGrath, 2013: 30). Gairns (1996:108) highlights that some writers, such as Tertullian, held that this approach was corrupting, opening the door to heresy and dilution of Christian truth. Gairns (1996:108) states that this method of interpretation has done much harm to the cause of correct interpretation to the **Scripture** and has resulted into absurd and often unscriptural ideas.

### **3.3.3. ATHANASIUS 296-373 AD**

One cannot overemphasise the enormous contribution of Athanasius to the subject of discernment and testing of the spirits, especially when we look closely at his famous work "Vita Antonii" that is about the life of Antony, his mentor and role model. Boer (1990:116) states: "focus is on the one of the greatest figures of the Early Church, Athanasius who have made an enormous contribution in the subject of discernment of spirits".

(Boer, 1990:116) states that Athanasius helped to formulate the discussion of Nicaea and spent the rest of his life defending it. Athanasius was the man of strong and noble character. One imperative factor to note is the fact that the councils played a very prominent role in the formulation of the number of theological matters by taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously.

McGrath (2013:57) states: "When the Nicene Creed of 381 AD declared that Christ was of the same substance with the Father, it was insisting that the Son was to be seen as God incarnate, this affirmation has since come to be widely regarded as a benchmark of Christological orthodox within all the mainstream Christian churches whether Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox".

Athanasius had a great ability as a leader and administrator. He was a leading theologian in the church. He was sympathetic to monastics and Egyptian monks. Cross and Livingston (1988:101) initially alluded: "Athanasius the favour of the monks Pachomius and Serapion and biography of the life of Antony. He aided the ascetic movement in Egypt and was the first to introduce knowledge of monasticism in the West".

#### **3.3.3.1. EARLY LIFE OF ATHANASIUS**

Boer (1990:116) says that the greatest figure of the Early Church was Athanasius. He was born in Alexandria in 296 AD and died there in 373 AD. Cross and Livingston (1988:101) elaborate about the early life of Athanasius to say that he was educated at the Catechetical school in his native city.

Cross and Livingston (1988:101) say that he became deacon and secretary of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, and attended him at the Council of Nicaea 325 AD. He finally succeeded him as bishop in 328 AD (Cross & Livingston, 1988:101). "His resolute character as well as his theology was the outstanding obstacle to triumph of Arianism in the East" (Cross & Livingston, 1988:101).

### **3.3.3.2. THE CONTRIBUTION MADE BY ATHANASIUS WITH REGARD TO DISCERNING AND TESTING THE SPIRITS**

Lienhard (1980:514) states that the importance of the work of Athanasius "Vita Antonii" for the history of Antony can hardly be overestimated. Athanasius probably wrote the work in 357 AD, the year after Antony's death. Cross and Livingston (1988:67) state: "Antony himself (251-356) gave away his life possessions and he devoted himself to ascetism. He retired completely into the desert where he is said to have fought with the beasts. The holiness and his life seen in contrary to the wickedness of the contemporary world". According to Lienhard (1980:514) Antony attracted a number of disciples and he came to organise them into a community of hermits who lived under rule.

The introduction and conclusion imply that it was written for a group of monks in a place where monastism was only recently established (Lienhard, 1980:512).

Lienhard (1980:514) highlights that the life of Antony in the work of Athanasius, treats discernment of the spirits more thoroughly than any other patristic writing, and the enormous impact which the life of Antony has made.

"A man need much prayer and self-discipline that he may receive from the spirit the gift of discerning the spirits and be able to know their characteristics, which of them are less evil which a more, what is the special pursuit of each of them and how each of them is to be overcome" (Lienhard, 1980:514).

Lienhard (1980:514) expands: " One passage on distinguishing good from evil spirits is particularly worth noting: Athanasius has Antony say that a vision of the holy ones is not agitated but occurs quietly and gently, so that the soul is filled with joy, gladness and confidence, but the assault of the evil one is noisy and is followed immediately by apprehension of soul, confusion and disorder of thought, dejection and hatred towards ascetics, spiritual sloth, the memory of the one's family and the fear of death".

Another imperative factor to mention is the enormous role played by Athanasius in influencing a number of theological aspects in the early church, namely, the theology of the person of Jesus Christ as God. McGrath (2013:57) states that one of the contributions that Athanasius made was a Christians worship and prayer to Jesus Christ and this pattern can be traced back to the New Testament itself and it is of considerable importance in clarifying early Christian public worship.

A second point to consider is the personality of the Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity. McGrath (2013:57) states that the debate centred on the group of writers known as the "pneumatomachoi" in Greek meaning "opponents of the Holy Spirit" who argued that neither the person nor the works of the Holy Spirit were to be regarded as the same status or nature of the divine person. In his letter to Serapion, Athanasius declared that the

baptism formula clearly pointed to the Spirit sharing the same divinity as the Father and the Son and this argument finally prevailed (McGrath, 2013: 57).

The accepting of the books of the Bible canon of the New Testament in its early stages was influenced by the huge contribution made by Athanasius. McGrath (2013: 55) states that by the middle of the fourth century, agreement seemed to be reached on the New Testament canon in the form it is accepted without the need for any international council to settle the issue. Athanasius of Alexandria circulated an Easter Festival letter of 367, which set out the New Testament canon in the form it is accepted today (McGrath, 2013:55).

#### **3.3.4. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 347-406 AD**

Davis (2005:408) states that Chrysostom is widely regarded as one of the most notable of the church fathers, historian, Henry Chadwick notes John's writing and preaching as the most notable and edifying of all the fathers. Davis (2005:408) elaborates that beyond theological discourse, John's writing provides commentary on the Greek Church and the social history of the late fourth century.

Boer (1990:154) initially highlights: "In Chrysostom, we meet one of the greatest preachers of the Bible and the teachings of the apostles in the history of the church, a man of great courage which was not however always accompanied by great wisdom. As a result, his name was, he is great in the church, his reward is great in heaven but on earth it was death in exile". Boer (1990:154) elaborates that John was only called Chrysostom meaning "golden moth" after his death. Davis (2005:409) says: "Chrysostom's reputation in Constantinople, though was something else as he took on the culture of lavish celebration and held fast to his preference to the monastic discipline he became a monk".

##### **3.3.4.1. THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

Boer (1990:154) states that John was born in Antioch, Syria about 347 AD. His father was a highly placed general in the eastern Roman army and he died while John was a child leaving his wife, Athuisa a widow at the age of 20, and she did not remarry but was a great influence on John.

Womack (1982:11) writes about the early life of John: "Born in the year 347 AD. John Chrysostom lived in the ideal time to become one of the world's greatest orators. He had the advantage of experiencing a liberated Christianity having a devout and enterprising Christian mother and receiving a classical education". Boer (1990:154) alludes that John studied under Libanius, the famous teacher of literature and oratory in the East. Womack (1982:11) elaborates that John was educated at the travage of the second sophistic by one of the sophistic educators, yet he escaped the temptation to succumb to the artificiality of the sophistic rhetoric.

Davis (1982:408) further elaborates that after a long education in literature and rhetoric, John's early career was in law and politics, however, his conversion and baptism led to a masked change; the start of a new journey that led him to a monastic life, to the priesthood in Antioch and his reputation as a preacher of the Gospel soared (Davis, 1982:408).

Womack (1982:11) states: "The style of his preaching the scriptures was refreshingly simple, the message goal of his sermon was publicly centred and the goal of his preaching was to change the lives of his hearers". Davis (2005:409) alludes: "Exiled in his last years, Chrysostom continued to influence the church and to comment on the church life through his letters".

One will be fascinated by this poetic approach of Davis (1982:409) as he sums up the amazing life of John Chrysostom. This testifies the way God can change the life of a person who thinks that he has achieved it all to something even far better in life.

Davis (1982:409) states about the life of John: "From a hesitant convert to a reclusive mystic, from a highly praised preacher to a resented bishop, from an effective civic leader to an experienced thinker contributing from the fringe. John Chrysostom's vocational journey included quite a diverse experience claimed ministry". Womack (1982:11) attests that John Chrysostom gave the world of his time hope in Christ. Not a hope that was now, but the hope that he had lived and wanted to share with others. His approach to death is refreshing for it sees death in true a Christian point of view, not something to fear but the end of the goal towards which he has been striving.

#### **3.3.4.2. THE CONTRIBUTION MADE BY JOHN CHRYSOSTOM WITH REGARD TO DISCERNING AND TESTING THE SPIRITS**

Lienhard (1980:509) says the oldest extended commentary on 1 Corinthians is the series of 44 homilies by John Chrysostom, which he delivered while a presbytery at Antioch. In the 29th homily on 1 Corinthians 12, Chrysostom began by stating that the chapter is obscure, but the obscurity is due to the fact that he and his hearers are ignorant of what took place in Corinth.

Lienhard (1980:509) says Chrysostom twice discusses the phrase "discernment of the spirits". In the first place, he explains that the people of Corinth in Paul's times, were heavily addicted to Greek's customs, so that soothsayers abounded. For this reason, Corinthian Christians received discernment so as to discern and to know who is speaking by a clean spirit and who is speaking by an unclean spirit.

Lienhard (1980:509) says in the second place, Chrysostom defines what discernment of the spirits is; he defines discernment of the spirits as knowing who is a spiritual man and who is not, who is a prophet and who is a deceiver. He explains that Paul wanted prophecy to be respected in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, but that false prophets abounded, discernment of the spirits was a gift whereby a Christian could identify the kind of spirit that spoke through a man, namely soothsayer, prophet, deceiver, or false prophet and also distinguish different kinds of persons.

For Chrysostom, the injunction to discern and test the spirits was not only on one aspect but his whole life and ministry's work. There are specifically a number of issues that he had a great impact on and influenced his society, where he has left an irreplaceable record. In the case of his preaching; family and marriage issues; his view point on death and the dead; and the way he comforted the families and communities in their bereaved moments.

### **3.4. THE CASES OF STRUGGLES IN THE CHURCH**

One will also have to take into consideration that the church with a history of over two thousand years, had many struggles that led to many divisions throughout history. One will also notice that one thing that has rescued the church from total destruction and vanishing into thin air, is the discipline to discern and test the spirits, and to hold on to the teaching of the apostles and believing in the scriptures.

In this sub-section, we will take a closer look to the struggles that led to the divisions from within the church that were all unable to lead the church to its total annihilation. The focus will be on Marcion and his followers who attempted to derail and destroy the early church. Consequently, the Montanus movement and the Anabaptists who tried to destroy the church due to their wrong interpretation of the scriptures in the early church will also be reviewed. Our focus will also be on the Reformation of the Roman church in 1517 by Martin Luther and his followers; the Holiness movement; the Pentecostals; and the Charismatics of the early twentieth century.

We will learn how Martin Luther and his followers rescued the Roman Church from its way to self-destruction due to penances and indulgences doctrine, when Luther resolved to study the scriptures and have faith in the Bible as the only word of God. We will learn lastly about the Pentecostals and their contribution to the work of evangelism, with brief concluding remarks in each sub-topic.

#### **3.4.1. THE STRUGGLE WITH MARCIONISM**

Peterson (2007:78) states: "Another challenge from the poorly organised Christian community church was presented by Marcion". Marcion grew up in a Christian home but he developed a hatred for both the material world and Jews. As a result, he could not see how the evil world in which he lived was created by the God of the Christians. Peterson (2007:78) elaborates that the solution for Marcion was to separate the loving God seen in Christ from the petty Yahweh of the Jews. Marcion believed that in the world was evil that could not have been created by the good God of the Christ. The world must have been created by Yahweh the God of the Israelites. He believed that this Yahweh was inferior to the supreme God revealed in Jesus Christ. Peterson (2007:78) states that Marcion rejected the incarnation, the birth of Jesus Christ by the Virgin Mary, and the final judgement.

Peterson (2007:78) elaborates even further: "Based on his ideas Marcion developed distinctive view of the supreme. For Marcion the Old Testament revealed only the piety God Yahweh and therefore it should not be read by Christians. He accepted only few of the New Testament writings but they must also not include anything on the Old Testament scriptures and his canon consisted of ten Paul's letters and parts of the Gospel of Luke".

Vos (1977:38) states: "About 140 AD. Marcion compassed a canon of a mutilated Luke and ten of Paul's epistles. He rejected the Old Testament, in defence the church had to decide what books belonged in the canon". Vos (1977:38) elaborates that Marcion and the Gnostics make inroads into establishing churches, and the Montanists began to promulgate the ideas of continuing revelation.

The injunction to discern and test the spirits has always been at the core of the church; that is the reason the early church was able to see that the belief of Marcion is heresy, which cannot be tolerated in the church and worked hard for its eradication. McGrath (2013:54) emphasises the importance of the usage of the Old Testament letters by the early church. McGrath (2013:54) attests: "The first believers used the term scripture or writing in Greek called 'graphe' to refer to a book on the Old Testament, in that this were coming to be regarded as of foundational importance to the Christian Church". McGrath (2013:54) elaborates to say that the debate would continue over the nature of that influence, with a growing consensus that Christianity should appropriate the idea, but not the practices of the people of Israel in terms of Jewish laws of food and sacrificial regulations.

This teaches the church of our days that the church need not tolerate or embrace any doctrine but to critically scrutinise and test any belief or so called revelations as many of them will be from evil spirits to derail the church in its mission to preach the Gospel.

Peterson (2007:78) states that due to the challenges of Gnostics and Marcionistes, the church had to create ways to define who was a true Christian and who possessed the truth of Christ. These efforts led to three developments, namely; canon, creed, and bishops – other effort the church had to develop an official canon.

The church needs to respect and obey the Bible as its canons, the authoritative scriptures that are useful for guiding the lives of the people, and the word of God that cannot be contradicted by any church leader based on the revelation he had or experience he has. The creed that is scripturally based and with the bases of the apostolic teachings will assist the church to make good confessions that will protect it from any heretic teaching.

One will admire the contribution of Vos (1977:39) in stating the number of tests that the early church has undergone in order to ensure that only the relevant books are included to compile the official canon for the true church of Jesus Christ.

Vos (2007:39) mentions a number of tests to determine the authenticity of the book to qualify in the canon inclusion, namely canonicity: this kind of test means to check for the books that were believed to be inspired, but they also had to consider the fact that inspiration is intangible and is subject to difference of opinions. Vos (2007:39) elaborates that the secondary test of apostolicity was required. This was the test to ensure if the books were written by the apostle or someone close to the apostles. The last was the moral or doctrinal elements, to check if the book included moral or doctrinal elements (Vos, 2007:39).

#### **3.4.2. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The struggle with the Marcionism was the serious one that the early church had to wage. And the church of today can learn a lot about it. Marcion believed that in the world was evil that could not have been created by the good God of the Christians. The world must have been created by Yahweh. He believed that this Yahweh was inferior to the supreme God revealed in Jesus Christ.

This indicates that Marcion was not willing to submit to the teachings of the apostles but allowed his perception and rational the wrong interpretation of the scriptures to control him. He ended up with a heretic doctrine that misled many ignorant people. Peterson (2007:78) states that Marcion developed a distinctive view of supreme.

For Marcion, the Old Testament revealed only the piety of God Yahweh and therefore it should not be read by Christians. He accepted only a few of the New Testament writings but they must also not include anything on the Old Testament Scriptures. His canon consisted of ten of Paul's letters and parts of the Gospel of Luke.

This is an indication and caution that church leaders who do not obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits will end up with heretic doctrines that are not in line with the scriptures. It shows that what we see in some churches today where the leaders are idolised, hero-worshipped and members are submitting to wrong teachings. The same leaders must be cautioned with cases like this of Marcion so that they will soon be exposed and these ignorant members will see who they are.

### **3.5. THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CANON OF THE SCRIPTURES**

Edwards (1997:51) states that neither the argumentative defences offered by the few Christians who were writers, nor the dramatic advertisements by such costs by martyrs would have been enough to make the church more truly universal or even to make the church sure that it survived as one cult of an empire swirling with cults, but two steps were taken: Edwards (1997:51) elaborates: "These was to reach agreement about the new scripture which should be placed alongside Hebrew Bible and be used during worship in Catholic churches. A document which was included in that category 2 Peter already referred to Paul's letters as scriptural. It was probably written in the first century".

Holladay (2005:26) says when we use the Bibles used within Orthodox Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches were found with considerable variations in the choice and arrangements of the books that comprise the Old Testament. Their New Testament, by contrast, are eventually identical each have 27 letters arranged in the same order.

Edwards (1997:51) elaborates: "Didache began with an expression of the new way of life based on Matthew Gospel. The famous four letters of the Gospels and the letters of Paul. Apart from Hebrews seem to have been generally accepted by the end of the second century".

Edwards (1996:51) gives the meaning of the word canon. Edwards (1996:51) states that in Greek a canon is a "rule" and it was the Catholic Church that gradually made it a rule about the New Testament rule by **Scripture**. The contents were not selected because they were believed to be the word of God.

Gairns (1996:115) states that people often err by thinking that the canon was set by church councils that pronounced upon the subject of the canon of the New Testament were merely stating publicly. The development of the canon was a slow process substantially completed by 175 AD, except for a few books whose authorship was still disputed.

Gairns (1996:115) gives a number of reasons that made the church to develop the Bible even if it was a long process that took many years to complete. Gairns (1996:115) states: "Certain practical reasons made it essential that the church develop the list of books that should comprise the New Testament. Heretics such as Marcion were setting up their own canon of scriptures and were leading people astray". Edwards (1997:51) attests "When excommunicated in Rome in 144 AD. Marcion founded churches which spread this vision of Bible-based Christianity widely and the decision against him did not halt the manufacturing and circulation of other scriptures elsewhere".

Gairns (1996:115) says in persecutions many were not willing to risk their lives for a book that was to be regarded irrelevant and useless. They wanted to have something that they were sure that was an integral part of the canon of scriptures. The apostles were slowly passing away from the scene, there would be a need for some records that could be recognised as authoritative and deemed fit for use in worship.

To test for canon scriptures was the only way to ensure that the correct books were included since there were many other books that could be part of the canon. But injunction to discern and test the spirits was in the forefront to lead the church leaders to include the relevant and correct books. Gairns (1996:115) mentions a number of criteria that were implemented, and this indicates that with the spirit to discern and test at the centre stage one will never go wrong.

Gairns (1996:115) says the major test for the right of the book was apostolicity – a book written by the apostle or one who was closely associated with the apostles such as Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark. The capacity of the book to edify when being read publicly and its agreement with the rule of faith is another test. In the final analysis it was the historical verification of apostolic authorship or influence and the universal consciousness of the church guided by the Holy Spirit that resulted in the discernment concerning what books should be considered canonical and worthy of inclusion.

Gairns (1996:115) states that the epistles of Paul were first to be collected by church leaders of Ephesus. This collection was followed by the collection of the Gospels sometime after the beginning of the second century. The Moratorian Canon was discovered by Lodovico (1672-1750) in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, dated about 180 AD. Twenty-two Old Testament books were looked in as canonical.

Holladay (2005:26) says for the first time the list of 27 writings appeared that contained exactly the same writings as our New Testament Canon in 367 AD. when Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (296-373 AD), issued his Thirty-Ninth Festival letter. Holladay (2005 26) elaborates: "In Athanasius's list the four Gospels come first in the following order Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and Acts is mentioned next following by the seven catholic epistles of Paul, one of James, two of Peter, three of John and one of Jude, then comes fourteen epistles of Paul". Holladay (2005:26) says the rationale for the arrangement of the Catholic letters was to list first the letters attributed to the apostolic figures Peter, James, Jude, and Revelation.

Edwards (1996:51) elaborates to say that eventually the whole of what became known as the New Testament was agreed, although the earlier surviving list of the contents in

the form of that proved permanent dates from no earlier than 369 AD, and was blessed by a council of bishops in Rome, 20 years latter

This is an indication that the scriptures of the Bible were not an overnight event in a fancy hotel, but it was a process that took years to unfold. It was a painstaking exercise that needed careful consideration led by the Spirit, to discern and test the spirits. This is due to the fact that they took the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. It shows that no one has the right to include or extract any verse from the scriptures or ignore any book of the Bible.

### **3.5.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As one considers the long process of compiling the canon of the Bible, one will realise that this needs the obedience to the injunction to discern and test the spirits. The church leaders did well to take the injunction seriously, even though they had serious pressure from Marcionists who already had their canon of scriptures and other smaller heretic movements that were proceeding to start churches; but the church took all the painful stress to compile the Christian Bible for years.

One will also be impressed by the criteria they utilised to select the books that would be relevant to authenticate the Bible as we have it today. One will also think that there are no other criteria would be used in addition to these mentioned in this study. The bishops did well to bless the Bible in 369 AD. This indicates that the Bible was now a closed canon of the scriptures and this means that the church had no other books to be included or excluded.

Unlike Marcion who excluded the Old Testament, the Gospel of Matthew, and some others for his personal reasons of hating the God of the Jews. No one is expected to temper with the books of the Bible as now, it is a closed canon of scriptures. This also talks to the misinterpretation of the Bible scriptures like the Montanists and the Anabaptists did and plunged their members into numerous sorts of calamities. The church leaders will do well not to emulate these evil examples but obey the injunction to discern in their upholding and interpreting of the scriptures of the Bible.

### **3.6. THE STRUGGLE WITH MONTANISM**

One will be fascinated by this powerful statement by Gairns (1996:95) when he sums up the challenges that were faced by the church of the second century. We will learn that the early church had its own challenges like any church in any historic period. Same as the church of our times with its own predicaments, some of the challenges are as old as the bible while others are new, and that the early church did so well to obey the injunction to discern in test the spirits.

One will admire the enormous contribution made by Gairns (1996) in his work: "Christianity throughout the centuries. A history of the Christian church" with its detailed information and clear illustrations. Not undermining the contribution of other authors who have also made huge contributions.

Gairns (1996:95) states: "The Christians of the second century and the third century had to fight what every strategist tried to avoid, a war on two points. While the church was fighting to preserve its existence in the face of attempts by the Roman state to abolish it, it was also fighting to preserve purity of doctrine within the church".

Gairns (1996:100) elaborates that converts to the Christian faith came from Jewish background salvation by works or from the intellectual environment of Greek philosophy. Many of the converts, until the church could instruct them properly, tended to carry their old ideas into the new environment of the church. Others tried to make Christianity appear intellectually respectable to the upper classes of the state. The threat of legalism or philosophical perversion of Christianity was very real in the church during this era (Gairns, 1996:100).

Gairns (1996:100) alludes further: "In some instances overzealous leaders developed a particular interpretation to correct real or fancied evils in the church and got many to follow their heretical ideas until heresies finally resulted into schism that latter turned into sects". Gairns (1996:100) highlights: "Montanism emerged in Phrygia after 155 AD. As an attempt on the part of Montanus to meet the problems of formalism in the church and the dependence of the church on human leadership instead of the guidance of the bishops in the local church". Gairns (1996:95) says this attempt to combat the formalism and the human organisation led to Montanus teaching the doctrine of the Second Advent and the Holy Spirit.

McGrath (2013:37) concurs with Gairns (1996:100) that the Montanist movement of the mid second century centred on the three charismatic individuals in the Province of Phrygia, namely, Montanus and the two colleagues, Prisca and Maximillian. Montanist is best understood as a religious renewal movement similar in some ways to modern Pentecostalism. Although Montanist had a considerable influence within the church, especially in Africa, it is best seen as a movement operating outside the administrative and power structures of the church.

Gairns (1996:100) states that as so often happened in such moments, Montanus swung to the opposite extreme and developed fanatical misinterpretations of the scripture. In his peculiar doctrine concerning interpretation, Montanus contended that he was the Paraclete or advocate through whom the Holy Spirit spoke to the church, just as the spirit had spoken through Paul and the other apostles. This raises the issue of what kind of claims can church leaders make. Is it possible that when leaders claim too much for themselves that they are unique to the extent of being mediators between God and others; claiming apostolic status and authority; and that they are very different from those they lead? Such teachings should help in discerning who they come from, due to the fact that in that kind of direction they are likely to err and be a heretic.

Montanus believed that the heavenly kingdom of Christ will soon be set up in Pepuza, Phrygia, and that he would have a prominent place in the kingdom. He and his followers practiced strict ascetic life and there was to be no second marriage if a mate died. Many fasts were to be observed and followers were supposed to eat dry food. These kinds of revelations and prophecies are dangerous due to the fact that they are mostly left unfulfilled and turn to be heretical. Leaders need to be cautious with such claims as many

of them turn out to be false. But with the injunction to discern and test the spirits, they will know where to make their boundaries in terms of such prophecies.

Edwards (1997:43) states that Montanus and two female companions, Prisca and Maximillian, claimed to be the prophets of the Paraclete, inspired to announce in the language of the spirit that the thousand-year reign of Christ is about to begin as the New Jerusalem descended on two villages in the interior Asia Minor. Edwards (1997:43) elaborates that before its arrival, great austerity and martyrdom was welcome and condemnation of bishops was met by an organised new network of churches.

Edwards (1997:43) elaborates even further on the doctrine of Montanus to attest the way they became unscriptural but, at the same time, led so many astray. Edwards (1997:43) states: "Montanism combined some of the heady atmosphere of Gnosticism with revival of excited spirit of the revelation of John. Although its early prophets were disappointed, it appealed not only to marginalised women and country folks but also the educated men like Tertullian". McGrath (2013:37) contributes: "This allowed women to assume the charismatic leadership roles that were becoming problematic within church structures which were increasingly conforming to Roman social norms".

Gairns (1996:100) states that the church reacted against these extravagances of Montanism by condemning the movement. The council at Constantinople in 381 AD, declared that Montanists should be looked at as pagans.

Gairns (1996:71) makes this profound statement in his concluding remarks on the Montanism case that the church needs to take note of throughout all its remaining days before the second coming of Christ.

Gairns (1996:71) notes that Christians must never forget the Jerusalem Council in 48 AD. The same problem was faced by the Reformers who saw that the Roman church was demanding man-made works in addition to faith as the contradiction for salvation. Modern liberals with their emphasis on pleasing God by ethical deeds make the same mistake. The problem of Jerusalem is a perennial one, and the principles that have prevailed then are the principles that have relevance throughout the history of the church (Gairns, 1996:71).

The powerful statement mentioned by Gairns (1996:71) need not to be overlooked by charismatic church leaders because this statement calls for the true introspection that will make one to go back to the basics and take the injunction to discern and test the spirit seriously. One will come to ask the questions like "Where did we go wrong? And what is the correct way to take?"

Gairns (1996:71) states "Man's pride in reason and his rationalizing tendencies can still lead to heresy as it did in the Colossian church. Retention of the religious heritage of the pre Christian period in the individual life may led to a mixture of truth and error with dear consequence for salvation". Misuse or overemphasis of some scriptures may lead to error. Sometimes a leader with mistaken enthusiasm, who seeks to protect the truth may subvert it, such was the case of Montanism in the second century.

Gairns (1996:71) states: "It is little wonder that Paul was to carry the message of salvation to the gentile nations of Roman Empire and to start Christian culture on its triumphant

westwards march across Europe. He was the unique interpreter of the meaning of Christ's life and death in terms of salvation for sinful man. He kept the faith free from mixtures of legalism and rationalism, he worked out the detail of organisation in Christian church and was in constant correspondence with them to help them solve their problems in a Christian manner".

### **3.6.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The peculiar doctrine based on the Montanus case indicates that it emanates from the wrong interpretation of the **Scriptures**. This led to unfamiliar practices that are not based on the teaching of the Bible. The charismatic church leaders will do well to take the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. This will help them not to introduce false doctrines in the church.

Church response, due to the injunction to discern and test the spirits, was so well executed in time to combat the spread of Montanism. Gairns (1996:100) made a good contribution that cannot be overlooked with regard to tangible steps the church have taken in this circumstance of Montanism spreading.

Gairns (1996:100) states that the church made a public declaration that the Montanists were pagans. One will notice that this was a brief statement but a very powerful one at the same time. How many times have we see heretical practices in some churches today, but the church fails to stand up and give a prophetic voice? The church is not bold enough to declare that followers of Montanism are pagans, but we compromise and forge fellowships with them, and welcome them in our conferences and fraternal meetings.

### **3.7. THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE ROMAN CHURCH**

One of the cases where we can admire the importance of the injunction to discern and test the spirits is during the period of the Reformation, and the way the Holy Spirit used the individuals like Martin Luther and John Calvin to save the Medieval church from the heresies introduced by the Roman Catholic bishops of that period. This indicates that the church will never be exempted from heresies and false prophets and church leaders, but only ordinary, visionary, disciplined, and dedicated, bold leaders will save it.

Jones (1995:1) states: "For centuries the Medieval church was presented as rotten to the core and its survival in the face of the protestant onslaught put down to the ruthlessness of the inquisitors' students, the Jesuits, warrior popes and king like Philip the second".

Johnston (1996:4) states that historians normally date the birth of the Reformation as 31 October, 1517, the day on Martin Luther allegedly nailed his thesis to the church door in Wittenberg. The thesis was originally written in Latin. Noll (2011:10) attests to Johnston (1996:4) on the reformation of Martin Luther.

Noll (2011:10) states: "A Reformation that gave birth to the Protestantism began with a local protest in a small German town in 1517. Martin Luther a twenty-four-year-old monk of the Augustinian order had earnestly been seeking peace with God by practicing the rigours of his monastic calling". Noll (2011:10) elaborates that in 1517, Martin Luther was

troubled specifically about the indulgences, the officially authorised certificate that individuals could purchase to lessen the time that the deceased spend in purgatory.

Johnston (1996:4) elaborates: "Luther initiated what he imagined would be a scholarly debate on the doctrine of indulgences. Since 1476 it was a belief that one could purchase indulgences for the dead and this reduced their time in purgatory, this was belied to be the place of purification from sin before they enter heaven".

Johnston (1996:4) makes a clear distinction of the three things that were the corner stones of the church of the Medieval times, and the same that turned to make the Medieval church the most corrupt and rotten church in all history of the Christian church, namely; doctrines of the indulgences, the penance, and the doctrine of purgatory, which were all unbiblical.

According to Johnston (1996:4) the Catholics had been required to confess their sins to their priests at least once a year, this was the sacrament of penance, the great medieval instrument of justification. Johnston (1996: 4) elaborates that penance was when sins were forgiven, grace distributed, and justification obtained.

Johnston (1996:4) elaborates to say that indulgences were not a sacrament but a privilege, an extra source of grace. They drew their power from the belief that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross had more than compensated for the sins of every generation learning surplus of his goodness. The indulgence doctrine was further extended to the dead with the belief that a person can buy the forgiveness of sins for his beloved one or a friend even after he died from the priest and they bought the certificates for that.

Martin Luther because of his obedience to the injunction to discern and test the spirit, he felt that this was not correct and needed to be debated and challenged among his fellow students. His commitment to the injunction to discern and test the spirits gave him the audacity to challenge the status quo; this led to the reformation that impacted the whole world of his time even until to this day.

Noll (2011:11) states that Luther was perturbed together with many others as they were looking to the church for deep spiritual discernment and self-introspection, but the church seemed to be offering a superficial fire sale. Noll (2011:11) elaborates: "To Luther the cross selling of forgiveness represented that has gone wrong with the church. Through his intensive study of the scriptures he was coming to a set of firm connection, namely; forgiveness was a God's gift not a human prerogative, it stormed from divine grace not from something people did for themselves, it means a change of heart not a business transaction".

One will realise that the injunction to discern and test the spirits gave Martin Luther a new direction of hope and joy. The revelation to know that we are justified by faith through Jesus Christ is not man's efforts but it come from God who justifies everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, his son.

Noll (2011:5) states: "Luther's new understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone was to become the cornerstone of the Reformation. It was a view espoused by Zingler, Brucer and John Calvin and all main steam Protestant theologians. They believed

that righteousness was not a standard which man had to attain in order to receive the grace but a gift which was received on the basis of faith in Christ" (Romans 1:17).

### **3.7.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Martin Luther and Calvin did well to question and challenge the heretical practices of the Roman church in the medieval period. Because of the injunction to discern and test the spirits, they were able to discern that what the bishops were doing was not in line with the apostolic teachings and the scripture. This is a caution to all the church leaders that anyone who disobeys the injunction to discern and test the spirits will end up on the wrong side of the Bible today.

This is a lesson that the church leaders must not be the law by themselves, but must always depend on the Holy Spirit to give guidance and lead their churches.

### **3.8. THE STRUGGLE WITH THE ANABAPTISTS**

One will learn that the Anabaptist case is a classic example of church leaders who are eager for change and transformation; those church leaders who want to practice things in a different manner, but end up on the wrong side of the extreme due to a lack of discernment. They claim to be practicing the Scriptures but end up with unfamiliar practices that are degrading human dignity of many by feeding them snakes, rodents and drinking fuel based on the literal interpretation of John 14:12, when Jesus says we will do greater works; and Mark 16:18, that says those who believe will drink poison and it will not kill them. Romans 13:2-7 teaches that we must submit to the authority. But the Anabaptists had a problem with submitting to the authority and had instant prophecies that were not fulfilled especially on the issue of the second coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians, 2:1-2) Paul says no one knows about the date.

McGrath (2013:184) speaks about radical transformation, the term radical transformation refers to a group of lowly reforming movements in Germany and Switzerland, and it was believed that the reformers, Martin Luther and Zwingli, had compromised their own basic reforming principles. They had more radical thinkers who had argued, that they only implemented half of the reformation according to (McGrath, 2013:184).

Vos (1984:92) elaborates to say that: "By no means did all those who break out with Rome agreed with Zwingli or with Martin Luther or Calvin. As early as 1523 in Zurich separatists Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz questioned a number of teachings and practices of Romanism and began to insist on adult baptism, their activities caused the city council to persecute them".

McGrath elaborates even further on the meaning of the Anabaptists. McGrath (2013:184) says the term Anabaptist literally means "re-baptism" and refers to what was perhaps the distinctive feature of the Anabaptists practice; the insistence that only those who had made a personal public profession of faith should be baptised. Infant baptism was not enough. The second baptism was necessary as a mark of an authentic Christian believer (McGrath, 2013:184).

Vos (1984:93) contributes: "Anabaptists became the term generally applied by Zwinglians Lutherans, Roman Catholics and others to those who would not fellowship with the above mentioned groups, who rejected the connection between the church and state. And who rejected infant baptism". Vos (1984:93) alludes further: "The term Anabaptist was a general descriptive and widely diverse views were held around them. Some were pantheistic some extremely mystical some anti-Trinitarian and some of them extremely millenarian and some quite biblical".

Gairns (1996:229) says the Anabaptists appeared particularly to the workers and the peasants who were not reachable by older reformers. This complied with a frequent tendency to literal interpretation of the Bible by ignorant men often led by mystical leaders. The hard times of the sixteenth century led many of the lower class to accept the consolation they found in Anabaptists. Gairns (1996:229) alludes further to say that the Anabaptists were simple, believing Bible people, some of whom were led astray by ignorant leaders who interpreted the Bible literally for their own advantage.

When looking at the above powerful statement by Gairns (1996:229) one will think about the false prophets of our times who preach the Gospel with wrong interpretation so that they deliberately mislead people for financial gain, fame and prosperity, for example, by misleading people with counterfeit miracles of raising dead people; and selling counterfeit miracle water and oil in the promise of miracles for financial gains. One will also think about why these church leaders will not obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits so that they can do better, not to go so low.

McGrath (2013:185) notes a number of elements that can be discerned within the various groups of the Anabaptists movement. A general mistrust of external authority, the rejection of infant baptism in favour of adult believers, the common ownership of property, and emphasis upon pacifism and non-resistance.

For many charismatic church leaders who are misinterpreting the Scriptures, going to the extreme is the end result; unfamiliar and unbiblical practices are the final products. This is characterised by false prophecies and death threats to non-submissive members. This leads to the compromising of the message of the Gospel leading many ignorant people astray, thereby abusing their belief system and degrading their dignity. They will force everyone to come in but threaten anyone who wants to avoid them and their teachings.

McGrath (2013:185) says many princes and city councils regarded Anabaptists with a mixture of open contempt and hidden fear when some in the movement began to proclaim the eminent return of Christ and the destruction of the existing power structures. In 1534, a leader named Melchior Hoffman began to preach that God had chosen Strasbourg as the New Jerusalem and called for the overthrowing of city authorities; alarms began the ring throughout the city. The event that galvanised the city was in 1534 when the Anabaptists took the city of Munster and declared that everyone in the city must be baptised or face execution, all property was to be distributed equally among the population.

### **3.8.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The Anabaptists case is a typical movement or church that misinterpret the Scriptures, whether for its ignorance or for its selfish interest to abuse its membership for reasons like financial gains. When the church does not take the injunction to obey and test the spirits, it lands into various kinds of temptations; it ends up with heretic teaching to save its face.

Like the Anabaptists did, to have false prophets who propagated the wrong doctrine that Christ will come soon in the small town of Strasbourg as the New Jerusalem and called for the overthrow of city authorities, alarms began to ring throughout the city. The overthrowing of the city was not a good idea but the preaching of the gospel for the community was going to be the best one.

The Anabaptists with the wrong theology troubled the hearts of many and put many of their members into serious distress that was not called for. They derailed from the basic teaching of the apostles and even Jesus Christ himself that his second coming will not have a specific date. The Anabaptists erred by rejecting any local authority and to form their own city council where all members would have to be baptised or face execution. The message of the Gospel is not a matter to be forced on the people, for the Gospel is good news that must be accepted willingly, with joy.

This calls to all church leaders who are preaching false teachings that they will not hide behind the Bible for ever, but they will soon be exposed and people will see who they are and that they have been deceiving them all that time. This teaches the church leaders and all Bible preachers to have the correct interpretation and be honest about the message of the Gospel, and remain true to the members of the church God has given to look after.

### **3.9. THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT**

Gairns (1996:494) says that while the church had already discussed the stress and a separatist baptism with tongues as evidence, the holiness churches emphasised a second work of entire sanctification that enables one to attain perfection. This idea manifested itself in the United States in the teaching of Asa Mahan (1799-1889) and Charles G. Finney, of a second work that would enable the Christians to be perfect with the "old man of sin" dead.

McGrath (2013:258) states that the emergence of the Holiness movement is often seen as the as a response to the ideas and values of revivalism. Unlike forms of Pentecostalism that emphasised differences in doctrinal orthodoxy, the Holiness movement was much more orientated towards morality and spiritual life. McGrath (2013:258) says it had intended to reassure ethics to the status that later the fundamentalists have accorded doctrine. This emphasis on "Holy living" came to be linked with support for the abolition of slavery.

In this study, one will be tempted to use the terms Pentecostalism and Charismatic interchangeably when dealing with the subject of the Holiness movement, this is due to the fact that there is a very thin line of demarcation between the two historically.

Burgess and McGee (1989:9) state that the terms Pentecostal and Charismatic are used interchangeably because they have many features in common; even for the expert it is frequently difficult to draw a dividing line when points of delineation are decided upon and connected, the dividing line is invariably crooked, perhaps broken and sometimes split into various branches.

Anderson (1992:2) initially alluded: "Here is a great deal of discussion among scholars over which terminology is appropriate; and it would seem that whatever term one uses will cause some controversy". According to Anderson (1992:2) the term Pentecost is taken from the Day of Pentecost experience of Acts 2:4, probably the most distinguishing proof text in Pentecostalism when the believers in Jerusalem were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with new tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The second reason that complicates the line of demarcation is the history of origin for the two movements since they both have their origin in the Holiness movement.

Lindberg (2006:193) attests to this fact in his work. Lindberg (2006:193) states: "Rooted in the Holiness movement in the first place, Spirit baptism began at Bethel College in Topeka Kansas". Pentecostalism is the communities and churches marked by belief that the experience of the first Christians on the day of Pentecost (Acts, 2:1-6) continues in the present including the gifts of tongues, prophecy, healing, and exorcism.

Peterson (2007:292) emphasises: "Pentecostalism developed out of the nineteenth century Holiness movement, which comprised of the Christians who believed in the possibility of complete sanctification and sinless living". Peterson (2007:292) elaborates that the Holiness tendencies were found in many denominations but were especially strong in the Methodist churches because of Wesley's emphasis on sanctification and direct out pouring of the Holy Spirit were experienced within many in the nineteenth century.

Patte (2010:198) further elaborates that Pentecostals wished to restore to the church a Pentecostal apostolic faith through speaking in tongues, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and other spiritual gifts with a fervent expectation of Christ's return. According to Patte (2010:198) the Apostolic Faith intended to displace dead forms and creeds as well as wild fanaticism with living, practical Christianity, love, faith, and unity as well as biblical liberalism becoming popular in support of biblical miracles and prophecies.

McGrath (2013:258) says the Holiness tradition's emphasis on issues of Christian living was not only limited to attempt to end slavery but Oberlin College became the centre of some serious attempts to eradicate racial and gender barriers within both church and society. Nel (2015:13) attests to the fact that one of the important venues for the outpouring of the twentieth century, Azusa street in Los Angeles, was seen as a humble stable where social barriers were overcome and the colour line was washed away in the blood.

Gairns (1996:496) attests on the way the Holiness movement impacted other sectors of the church like the Evangelicals.

Gairns (1996:496) states that over fifty evangelicals went to Chicago over Thanks Giving weekend in 1973, and issued a declaration of social concern and political action, a

meeting of five hundred in Chicago 1993, with Ron Sider as president, condemned racism and poverty and stressed social reform as well as evangelism.

One will admire the enormous contribution of Gairns (1996:490) when he alludes to the contribution made by the Pentecostals to world evangelism with their radical and effective strategies on mission work as well as the rapid growth in various parts of the world.

Gairns (1996:490) says black Pentecostals who were prominent, formed their denominations. Charles H. Mason 1866-1961 had about 6.5 million members in 1994, making it the largest Pentecostal body in America. Speaking in tongues became common in the mission. People who came to visit had similar experiences and carried the message to other countries. William Seymour, a black student, later became the leader of a mission at Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906. It was an interracial mission with black interracial leadership and many members. That has send missionaries to many parts of the world and has impacted many parts of world with Pentecostalism.

### **3.9.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

One cannot overemphasise the fact that when the church obeys the injunction to discern and test the spirits they will do great exploits for the Kingdom of God. The development, contribution, and the impact made by the Pentecostals and the Charismatic with their origin from the Holiness movement are classical examples of the attested statement. Their humble beginning was ridiculed by both the fundamentalist churches and society, but God was in them and with them to take the church in a new direction of effective and fruitful mission work that will change the shape of the world.

Their impact indicates that after many debates of the early church, the Roman church, the reformers, Protestants and others, it was the time for the church to breathe a new breath of fresh air of Pentecost, revival and renewal. The men like Moody, Parham, Seymour and others did well to obey the injunction to discern and test the spirits. They were used by the Holy Spirit to give new direction to the church.

This also attests to the fact that it is correct for people sometimes to use discernment, and to search for God's will for other actions and phenomena before they strongly judge and condemn as long as they are in the confines of the demarcations of tests of the sprits as mentioned in the previous chapters in this study. The missionary work of the Pentecostals and the Charismatics as the decedents of the Holiness movement's success cannot be overemphasised as many can still witness its impact and lasting fruits until this day.

One must also highlight that there are sectors of the movement in which there are extremes and therefore they also need to be carefully tested. The testing need not to be done only not a small number of churches, by watching the numbers, for the biggest churches in South Africa need also to be tested and this test has to be done through the Bible.

One will also admire the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God to start other small organisations that were dealing with social ills like abolishing slavery, racism, poverty and gender inequality in the church and society emanating from these denominations. The

direct direction of the Holy Spirit is when the Holy Spirit says what is in line with the Bible and has its basis from the Bible and the teaching of the apostles. This indicates that when the church obeys the injunction to discern and test the spirits not only will heresies be rooted out but the church will also have a new agenda and new mandate to fulfil the Great Commission in a peaceful environment.

Until this day, big volumes are still written about the Pentecostals and the Charismatic in a negative light as being heresy, but their triumphing spirit and impact cannot go unnoticed, based on their lasting impact and enormous contribution to the world evangelism. However, one does not say that we should rather test and discern based on the pragmatic principle of what has worked. One does not imply that a ministry that is having an impact in evangelism is beyond testing and discernment. Nor does one imply that such groups are off limits.

I think one must still wait with great expectation for the day when all who ridiculed them, segregated them and hated them as well as condemned them will publicly confess that they have erred to misjudge them and their practices as heresy.

### **3.10. TO DISCERN AND TEST THE SPIRITS WITH REFERENCE TO THE CHARISMATIC CHURCHES**

In this sub-section, we will look closely at the injunction to discern and test the spirits with reference to the charismatic church leaders. We will look at how church leaders have viewed and responded to the Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena as they have unfolded in recent years.

It is imperative that we look also at the impact of the injunction to discern and test the spirits on the Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal of the charismatic churches and the mainline churches by the Holy Spirit. This is not to try to change the focus and the topic of the study but to show that when church leaders come to the point of taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits, the focus takes a new direction towards God's will that is sometimes unanticipated but always good and perfect (Romans, 12:1-2).

Synan (1982:187) utters a very powerful statement that cannot be overlooked in this study as we look at the impact of the Holy Spirit in leading the charismatic renewal. Synan (1982:187) states that discerning of the spirits listed in by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, although less spectacular than speaking in tongues and healing, this discerning gift has been exercised through centuries by ecclesiastical authorities judging various renewal movements that have been periodically arising in the church. Synan (1982:187) elaborates: "In the operation of this gift, John said 'Try the spirits whether they are of God' (1 John, 4:1) to which Paul added 'Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good' (1 Thessalonians, 5:21)".

Smylie (1979:32) quotes what was realised by Van Duzen during his Caribbean holiday in the 1950s when he recognised Pentecostalism as a "third force" alongside Catholicism and Protestantism. Smylie (1979:32) states: "The President of the New York's Union Theological Seminary concluded that Pentecostalism represented the powerful third force alongside of the Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the world community". Synan

(1982:191) elaborates on the issue and the concept of the Pentecostalism and Charismatic Renewal movement as the third force.

Synan (1982:191) says as the struggle continues, one is forced to speculate on the future of the Charismatic renewal in the light of this task of discernment by the churches of Christendom. After reviewing three volumes, one begins to feel that few renewal movements in church history have been so closely scrutinised as the Charismatic Renewals. Synan (1982:191) alludes further: "Early observers of the Movement such as Henry P. Van Duzen and Lesslie Newbegin saw Pentecostalism as something new and generally different from the liturgical Catholicism and Protestantism a 'Third Force' to use Van Dusen's phrase in nineteen fifty-five".

Synan (1982:191) states that since 1960, the charismatic renewal was seen as something of an attempt at domesticating the movement and containing it within the structures of the traditional churches of the Holy Spirit and a stream of grace, which will ultimately disappear into the life streams of the renewal church. Smylie (1979:32) elaborates to say that Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant bodies have felt the surge of the Charismatic movement accompanied by glossolalia, and the denominations have had to test these spirits to see if they are from God; some Protestants and Roman Catholics believe that God's Spirit has been manifested in the charismatic movement.

Synan (1982:189) attests that the more negative of the documents came from the older holiness and fundamentalists movements, which had encountered Pentecostalism earlier in the century, the Christian and Missionary Alliance reaffirmed the 1963 "forbid not, seek not" dictum. Baptist and Nazarene churches refused to deal with scriptural and theological issues raised by the renewal and rejected it out of hand because it did not accord with their doctrine and traditions. Synan (1982:190) elaborates that the more positive documents came from the mainline liturgical churches. The first three produced by the American Episcopal Church, the mainline denominational to feel the impact of the movement.

The fact is that discernment should not only be done among one group's members but should be done across various groups, interchangeably. It is not only those that are within our group, we must also allow those that are outside us to evaluate us as long as what they say when looking at us is Bible-based.

Smylie (1979:35) states that although Edwards distanced himself from enthusiasts, he showed everlasting sympathy for the psychological experiences of others, even those accompanied by body emotions. Edwards argued that the inner experience must be confirmed by public tests and converse with God the father, and the Son. Smylie (1979:35) elaborates "Alone of truth as revealed in the Bible. A love and service of neighbour and love of righteousness and turning from unrighteousness. So sure was Edwards that Awakening was the work of the Holy Spirit, he considered it the prelude to the millennium".

Synan (1982:188) states that this early discernment was a process that included lurid and critical articles in the religious and secular press; actual physical attacks and persecutions; extremely negative theological and criticism by holiness and fundamentalists churches; and severe psychological and sociological indictments from

social scientists. For their part, the mainline churches took little or no notice of the movement. Smylie (1979:32) says: "We must be careful not to judge the religious experiences of others too quickly and yet ready to submit every form of spiritual life to the norm of the spirit and life of our Lord Jesus Christ".

One needs also to take notice that in these above statements, we are not trying to promote the theology of experience that is irrational, irresponsible, fabricated and unrealistic, or abusing people's belief systems for financial gains. But one tries to highlight the genuine experiences as the work of the Holy Spirit that can be subjected to the testing as according to the scripture of 1 John 4:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21. To do that, will be contrary to the purpose of this study. That will be to concur with the false prophets of our times who do not want their practices to be subjected to the test that was earlier mentioned by Smylie (1979:35) when he reiterated that the inner experience must be confirmed by the public test. This means the inner conviction of the person claiming to have experiences must be open for public scrutiny in a critical manner. He must not be offended when the public challenges and wants answers from what he teaches or practices if it is based on the scriptures and is in line with the apostolic doctrine.

Robeck (2006:12) states that at Azusa Street, mission people spoke in tongues, prophesied, preached divine healing, went into trances, saw visions, and engaged with other phenomena such as jumping, rolling, laughing, shouting, barking and falling under the power of the Holy Spirit. Robeck (2006:10) elaborates: "Those were highly unusual within the established religious communities of Los Angeles as the result the mission members were subjected to regular and frequent ridicule, viewed as fanatics, many of its members were arrested and jailed on grounds that they were insane".

Synan (1982:188) says it was only after 1960 that these churches were forced to take recognition of Pentecostalism and then only after large numbers of their members began to bring the movement into their own churches. It was only then that the churches began to meet claims of the Pentecostals on a biblical and theological level. Synan (1982:188) further attests: "The earlier attempts of the Pentecostal movement were abrupt and decisive. The other holiness churches and fundamentalists, who were competing in the same religious market dismissed them as being mentally unstable, in heresy or possessed by demons" (Synan, 1982:188).

Smylie (1979:38) states that at Azusa Street, with the preaching of the black Baptist Pastor, W.J. Seymour, one of the Parham's students, Pentecostalism gained attention and spread in a national and international movement as a "weird" babel of tongues. The Topeka and Azusa Street appeared as the surprising work of God to those who were involved and sympathetic towards the Pentecostal, the Pentecostal movement and Pentecostalism spread. Some people travelled long distances to Azusa and left to carry Pentecost around the globe Smylie (1979:38)

Robeck (1985:208) made a huge contribution as we look also in his book called Azusa Street, where he has written a comprehensive report and a full detailed work about the events in Azusa Street mission house and Apostolic Faith Church in Azusa Street under Pastor Joseph William Seymour. Robeck (1985:208) states: "Defined in the broadest sense is one of the greatest movement in the history of the Christian church. It takes its

place alongside the Reformation, the Anabaptist movement, the rise of Pietism, the Evangelical Reawakening and other renewal movements in church history”.

Robeck (2006:10) elaborates on the Mission house of Azusa Street with its unique character and features as well as the enormous contribution it has made in the Charismatic renewal that impacted the whole world. Robeck (2006:10) attests: “Azusa Street rightfully continues as the primary icon expressing the power of the world wide Pentecostal movement. At the time when postmodern thinking attempts to cut the heart out of history and tradition, the recovery of story can still provide a new impetus towards an encounter with God and spiritual growth”.

Robeck (2006:10) elaborates further to say that today the largest competitors of the Roman Catholic majority in Latin America is the Pentecostal one in practice, and majority of African Christian churches are Pentecostal Charismatic.

Smylie (1979:41) states that while the Charismatic movement itself had a short independent of those two traditions, nonetheless the movement seems to be an aspect of the religious favours which characterised the 1950s as it moved into denominations. Internationally, in many of its aspects, the charismatic movement has been encouraged by Billy Graham and Oral Roberts and brokered by popular religious magazines (Smylie, 1979:41).

Smylie (1979:44) states: “We are here in the era of the spirit, new age in history, there were three different overlapping periods in which the three persons of Trinity were successfully manifested. The first was the dispensation of the Father, the second was the dispensation of the Son and the third of the Holy Spirit”.

Cole (1997:13) has made a meaningful contribution when it comes to the issue of discernment of the spirits and pertains to its meaning and function with regard to interpretation. Cole (1997:13) says “Rightful interpretation calls for discernment. Discernment looks out for dangers to avoid, ever evaluating of under evaluating of manufacturing religious experiences and temptations, to resist example falling into the temptation of fallacy or the turning our experiences into the normative theological patterns for others to follow. Or treating God as though we were just like best friends”.

Cole (1997:15) expands to say that discernment operates on the crucial theological principle of “sola scriptura”; scripture provides the key criteria to deploy in the practice of discernment. In particular, the discerning Christian and the church applies the Bible test, the Christological test, and the moral test to claims based on religious experience. The need for discernment is especially acute in postmodern times (Cole, 1997:15).

Robeck (1985:208) states that others talk second about the need for discernment. Too often Charismatic Pentecostal leaders assert that signs and wonders are not to be questioned, to do so would be to blaspheme God. Robeck (1985:208) elaborates that just the opposite, and a list of eight criteria to use in discerning the validity of any work of God; that is, the glory of God, the Lordship of Christ, agreement with the scripture, the fruit of the spirit, maturity, balance, the unity of the body of Christ, and wholeness.

It is imperative that one take note that Robeck (1985:208) explicitly highlights those vital points as the signs or the gauge to test the spirits as he mentions his eight points to proof

and to test whether or not the phenomenon or the practice, or even the movement, is inspired by the Holy Spirit and coming from God. This is essential to test the interpretation, experiences, prophecy, healing, and all religious phenomena and practices.

One work that one needs to look at and admire is the work of Vinson Synan (1982:187) when it comes to the issue of the injunction to discern and test the spirits in reference to the charismatic churches. Synan puts more emphasis on the aspect of charismatic renewal as the result of the spirit of discernment in the charismatic churches that spreads to the mainline churches like Roman Catholic, Lutheran Church, Presbyterian, and others for example.

Synan (1982:191) talks about the new fascinating concept and the new phenomena the mainline churches will experience caused by the charismatic renewal initiated by discernment through the Holy Spirit called "Renewal and transformation taking place at the same time" Synan (1982:191); "In other words ultimate goal of the movement is the renewal within the churches rather than reformation outside the churches. At the same time the classical Pentecostal churches continue to explore worldwide growth outside the pale and control the major denominations, renewal and reformation are taking place at the same time, a phenomena unique in church history" (Synan, 1982:191).

Synan (1982:192) alludes on the issue of the institutionalisation process of the Charismatic Renewal movement that is continually building up towards the emancipation of this movement worldwide. Synan (1982:192) attests: "There are signs that the charismatic renewal is fast becoming institutionalised as various segments of the movement established offices in and publications of their own. Catholic Charismatic Renewal is directed nine story building in South Band Indiana for example". Synan (1982:193) elaborates: "Aside from the question of growth rates and whether the movement has reached its peak, the Charismatic Movement has already proved to be one of the major stories of this century and as such will be subjected of extensive scholarly research for year to come".

Synan (1982:193) concludes with the powerful words that must be a serious caution to the Charismatic Church leaders and the Charismatic Renewal Movements, not to be temporary phenomenon like the other renewal movements who have come and vanished into thin air, like The Quakers led by George Fox, The Pietists led by Spener, and the Jesuits led by Ignatius Loyola, to name the few. Synan (1982:193) says: "One would hope that the Charismatic Renewal will continue to be as a prophetic force to entire church and not degenerate into a group of stale denomination bureaucracies, as so many others renewal movements of the past have done". Synan (1982:193) emphasises: "Perhaps the inherent freedom of the Holy Spirit which can control human events but which can never be controlled will keep the movement vital and alive".

### **3.11. GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The Christian church has been involved in the matter of discernment and testing of the spirits. It is not a new injunction. It is also clear that the issues that the charismatic movement raised in the last century were not new. What had changed are the times and the contexts.

We also learn that various things were used in the process of discernment and testing of the spirits. Chief among them is the Bible, councils, creeds, statement of faith, books that were written, and even preaching and general teaching. The exercise of discernment can lead to splits in the church. It involves some conflicts and it is therefore true that many hesitate to do it.

The chapter has also yielded many issues that can be included in the questionnaire for the empirical part of the dissertation. These will be used in the next chapter.

We learn about the church fathers and their contribution to our theology. One also realises that any direction that the church has taken, was shaped by history and events of that time and these have shaped our theology and Christianity as we find it today. We realise that the church fathers influenced the theology of Christianity as they were trying to defend the Christian faith and give it reasons and rationality against the hostile Greek world. The Greek philosophers were attacking it and attempting to compete with it through reasoning that was always influenced by the Greek culture. The church fathers in their attempt to defend Christianity sometimes made errors that led to divisions among Christians.

There is the great wealth that was contributed by the church fathers like; Origin, Athanasius, and Chrysostom. The work that has never been explored and exploited by the church today due the fact that it belongs to certain groups of the Christian church, for instance Roman Catholic, but these were written long ago, far before the existence of the Roman Catholic period.

In their work, Kelley and Roger (1993) explain how these saints were committed to the Christian faith, how they dedicated their lives to it and were prepared to die for it. Some retired to ascetic life in the deserts and deserted their lives. Most came from a Roman Catholic background, some long before the Roman Catholic period, but the fact remains, they were all Christians who follow Jesus of Nazareth. The wealth and sacrificial death they died and commitment, is an epitome that can be emulated by the church once we study these amazing stories of these historical men and women who made our story of Christianity, and we are also part of those characters of that chapter that is approaching an end when Jesus comes again.

We read in this chapter about the martyrs, the people who died for their faith like the father to Origin. From the book of Acts 7:54 -60, we read that Steven was the first martyr to die for his faith. Thereafter there are many people who died for their faith. Most interesting, McGrath (2013) attests to the fact that, the more people died, the more others came to the Christian faith. The burning of the City of Rome in 370 AD led to many Christians being persecuted and executed by the emperor but did not deter people from being Christians. In this case, we learn that Christians must not compromise their faith, no matter the situation even if it means death.

We learn about the heretical teachings that were formulated by other church leaders in the early church like Marcion and Montanus, as well as the heretical teaching of Gnosticism that has also plagued the church for many years.

One will mention the lesson that we have learned from the case of the heretical teaching of Gnosticism. Gairns (1996:98) says: "Gnosticism sprang from the natural human desire

to create a theodicy, an explanation of the origin of evil". Gairns (1996:98) elaborates: "The Gnostics because they associated matter with evil sought a way to create philosophical system in which God as a spirit could be freed from association with evil and in which man could be related on the spiritual side of reality".

The Gnostics believed on matter and spirit, the ideas of philosophers like Plato and Socrates. The concepts of the trinity that fuelled a spirit of division of the church needs to be avoided. The movements that struggled with the church like Marcionism, Montanism, and Anabaptists, taught us that wrong interpretation of the scriptures and to teach heretical doctrines that are influenced by culture, will not help but only lead to self-destruction. This is the lesson that church leaders must learn today. When heretic doctrines are all over the place.

In this chapter, we have learned about heretical teachings like Marcionism, Montanism and Anabaptists. We have also learned that the church was prompt to curb and eradicate heresies. I think the church today should be responsible for condemning heretic doctrines. The church must have the audacity to condemn any teaching or any unbiblical practice or doctrine without timidity.

In the case of false claims and false prophecies, we have learned that the early church was active to curb the heresy and false claims of Montanism. It is the responsibility of the church to condemn false claims and false prophecies. The Montanists claimed that the second coming of Jesus Christ was eminent and will take place on the mountain in Papuza. In this case, we have learned that the church must not entertain false claims but must publicly condemn them. The church leaders must abstain from making false claims that are unbiblical for these will damage the image of the church, distort the message of the Gospel, and derail many Christians.

In the work of McGrath (2013) we learn how Constantine, the Roman Emperor, became a Christian, persecuted Christians became first-class citizens of the Roman Empire. But that also came with the challenge that Constantine utilised the church to further his political ambitions – to unify and strengthen his empire.

The emperors were involved in assisting the process of the unity of the church but had their political agenda at the same time, like Emperor Constantine, who saw the church as a good instrument to unify his empire and foster loyalty and obedience among his subjects. The church has learned a lesson that it must never allow itself to be used by any political figures to further their political ambitions, but to stand with the prophetic voice against any political, social injustice, or oppression.

The Reformers were involved as they were trying to reverse the gains of the apostolic fathers to keep the Gospel pure from human impurity. They were trying to bring back the Gospel to its basics. This was the period when the Roman Catholic Church was abusing the Gospel for its selfish gains, selling the indulgences and the heretical doctrine of purgatory, as well as the wrong belief that Roman Catholic bishops had the right to sell a place in heaven to members after death.

Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley rejected the heresy of purgatory and indulgences and emphasised the doctrine of going back the scriptures with the slogans such as "sola fide", "sola scripture" and "sola gratia". But this also brought further divisions

among the followers of Luther, Lutherans, Followers of Calvin, Presbyterians, and those of John Wesley who call themselves Methodists (McGrath, 2013:150). We have learned, in this case, that when some leaders take the injunction to discern and test the spirits, they will encounter some divisions in the church but they need not to despair.

One will notice that the renewal of the church has taken place in various periods of the church in history. We have also learned that the taking seriously the injunction to discern and test spirits in the church, is not only assisting the church to detect if there are evil spirits, but it can also be vital for giving the church new direction toward the perfect will of God. Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God".

One will notice that there was a church renewal in the early Roman Catholic period, and before, many other smaller renewal movements like the Jesus Society of Ignatius Loyola and the Pietists and Quakers in the West and the East; even Russia was part of the greater movement of renewal because God always wanted to renew his church.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal in Latin America as well as the Charismatic Renewal started early in the twenty-first century in the church in Topeka Kansas and went to Azusa Street mission house. Synan (1982) and Robeck (1985) both attest to the fast growing pace of the Charismatic Movement and the growth of the movement that was first despised, undermined, and persecuted by the mainline churches but now is growing all over the world, to be the largest after that of the Roman Catholic Church – this will impact the whole world.

Synan (1982:191) talks about the fascinating point and the unique phenomenon of renewal and transformation taking place at the same time. Synan (1982:191) defines the concept of renewal as the phenomena the mainline churches will experience caused by the charismatic renewal initiated by discernment through the Holy Spirit called "Renewal and transformation taking place at the same time". Synan (1982:191) says: "In other words ultimate goal of the movement is the renewal within the churches rather than reformation outside the churches. At the same time the classical Pentecostal churches continue to explore worldwide growth outside the pale and control of the major denominations, renewal and reformation are taking place at the same time, a phenomena unique in church history".

Another lesson that we have learned is that the church must not disregard the local authority. The church must not disregard or undermine the authority under its jurisdiction. Paul, in Romans 13:1-5, commands the church to submit under the authority. He says all the authority comes from God. The church must refrain from the cases like that one of the Montanists who rejected the authorities.

We have also learned about the danger of self-exaltation. Montanus was a typical example in this case by claiming that he is a "Paraclete" the title of the Holy Spirit. This type of self-exaltation is common among some church leaders today. One will refer to the cases where some church leaders are called by the titles like "the comforter", "the mediator", "the representative of God", "the way", "the seven angels" and many other blasphemous names. This leads to a situation where they are being idolised and

worshipped by their members. To be respected as a church leader is a good thing but not to be revered as God.

We have learned that going to the extremes in interpreting the scripture is a hazardous thing for the preachers of the Gospel. Refraining from going to the extreme when teaching the Bible by discerning and testing the spirits is the core and main purpose of this study. Taking seriously the injunction to discern and test the spirits will assist the church leaders to teach the scriptures with correct interpretation of the scriptures. We have learned that the literal interpretation of the scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit will assist and keep many preachers on the safe side of scripture interpretation.

We have learned that theological training of the church leaders is imperative for effective preaching of the word and for well-functioning church structures as well as its governance. The poor educational qualifications of church leaders and lack of theological training will be a hindrance to the effective and correct interpretation of the Bible scriptures. This leads to preachers with poor sermons, who do not enrich nor capacitate their audience, but end up with heretical doctrines and with maladministration of church resources.

Marcion's case is the typical example in this instance that Marcion failed to bring the harmonious cohesion between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He separated the God of the Jews and that of the New Testament of which is still the same God. Because of his hatred for the Jews, he formulated a theology that would plague a church for many years.

## **CHAPTER 4 EMPIRICAL SECTION: INTERVIEWING, QUESTIONNAIRES, ANALYSING RESULTS, EXPLORATION OF EMFULENI MUNICIPALITY AREA, AND CONCLUSION.**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the empirical aspects of the study on the injunction to discern and test the spirits among church leaders in the Emfuleni municipality area. By means of questionnaires, the chapter attempts to determine the situation with regard to how church leaders in the Emfuleni municipality area are taking the injunction.

### **4.2. BASIS OF THE RESEARCH**

In Chapter 2, the study focused on the biblical content and the meaning of injunction to discern and test the spirits. This was done with the aim to explore and highlight the biblical content and meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits and the focus was on both the Old Testament and New Testament to look at how people obeyed or disobeyed the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

Chapter 3 focused on some of the insights that can be learned about discernment from church history with reference to the charismatic churches and the aim was to highlight some of the insight that can be learned about discernment and testing of the spirits from church history with reference to charismatic churches.

### **4.3. DEMARCATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The study concerned itself with the theological and biblical analysis of how the charismatic church leaders in the Emfuleni municipality area take and practice the injunction to discern and test the spirits. The study used the Bible intensively but not exhaustively, it also used books, journals, and articles. The investigation focused primarily on biblical texts and literature and the main focus of the study was churches in black communities in the Emfuleni municipality region.

### **4.4. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

There are two methods of data collection, namely, qualitative and quantitative approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:193) and May (2008:193) concur that qualitative content analysis stands with the idea of process and views the author as a self-conscious actor addressing an audience under particular circumstances, the task of the analyst becomes a "reading" of the text in terms of its symbol.

May (2008:192) elaborates to say that the quantitative method considers products and say little of process; in this approach the empiricist is raised for it deals only with the

information which can be measured and standardised and for this reason considers only data which can be simplified into categories.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) describe qualitative research as involving the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, case studies, personal experience, introspection, life story, interviews, artefacts, cultural facts and productions, observational, historical interactional, and visual text that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in an individual's life.

Gomm (2008:269) states that the term "ethnographic data" is often a general-purpose term for any qualitative data; sometimes the "ethnographic" is used in contradiction to ethnographical, the former attempting to study meaning by getting into the minds of the people observed, the latter looking for what it is that makes actions meaningful; the former attempting to study meaning by getting into the minds of the people observed, the latter looking for what it is that makes actions meaningful.

In this study, we have chosen a qualitative approach for various reasons that cannot be all detailed but to mention the few, we looked closely at the work of Mashall and Rossman (2011:142). They state some points on how imperative the qualitative interview is. Mashall and Rossman (2011:142) state that qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing where two or more individuals discuss a theme of mutual interest. In any interview this method may be the overall strategy or only one of the several methods employed

Mashall and Rossman (2011:142) elaborate that a research design can also stipulate phenomenological, in-depth interviewing, as the sole method of data collection. For example, by linking that approach to socialisation theory, one can begin to build the case that grounds an important theoretical literature.

#### **4.5. ETHNOGRAPHY**

Denzil and Lincoln (2000:680) state that in most social interactions people assess behaviour not in terms of its conformity to social cultural norms in the abstract, but in regard to its consistency, which is a perceived pattern that somehow makes sense to others in a given social situation. This principle is related to the traditional anthropological distinction between ideal and real culture. Gomm (2008:379) elaborates that ethnographic data is often a general purpose term for any qualitative data. Mashall and Rossman (2011:146) highlight the factor of ethnographic interviews being grounded in the genre of cognitive anthropology. According to Mashall and Rossman (2011:146) the ethnographic interview is grounded in the genre of cognitive anthropology, and it elicits the cognitive structure guiding participants' world views. Ethnographic questions are used by the researchers to gather cultural data; ethnographic interviewing is an elaborate system of a series of interviews structured to elicit participants' cultural knowledge (Mashall & Rossman, 2011:146).

#### **4.6. BIOGRAPHICAL AND AUTO –ETHNOGRPHICAL METHODS**

Denzil and Lincoln (2000:379) state that these strategies are a form of self-narrative and place the self within a social context and as a result, a person learns how they are defined by the world and how to define their relationship with others through on-going reflection. These methods are applied by a researcher who is a native and an insider, who has an intimate familiarity with the group being studied (Ellis & Bochner in Denzil & Lincoln, 2000:739).

#### **4.7. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The methods of collection of data to deal with this section, include inert views, interview schedules and questionnaires, observation, and documents.

##### **4.7.1. INTERVIEWS**

Gay (2010:184) states that qualitative data emerge from a wide spectrum of sources, one of the most common is field studies; when the researcher enters a selected setting to gather data often through the use of observation or interviews. While observation is likely to elicit qualitative data, interviews may be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative information (Gay, 2010:184).

Gay (2010:184) states that qualitative interviews can be used as the main instrument of data collection or in conjunction with observation, document analysis, or some other type of data gathering technique.

Creswell (2009:181) suggests that the researcher conduct face-to -face interview with the participants, interview participants by phone or engage in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and are intended to elicit views and opinions from participants.

Denzil and Lincoln (2000:646) are of the view that both qualitative and quantitative researchers tend to rely on interview as the basis method of data gathering, whether the purpose is to obtain a research in-depth experimental account or an event or episode in the life of respondents.

In each of the participating local charismatic churches in the Emfuleni municipality area, church leaders were interviewed. This was done after the participating church leaders signed a consent form. The researcher also ensured that where there were gate keeping structures such as church boards, that these were aware of the participation of their church leaders.

##### **4.7.2. QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONNAIRES**

Gomm (2008:208) states that many data come from asking people questions and recording their responses. Whether this is an experimental research, social survey research or through the longer more discursive interview of questionnaire research. In

each case, the data collected are shaped by the way the questions are posed and the manner or the context in which they were asked.

Denzil and Lincoln (2000:649) state that in the structured interviewing, the interviewer asks all respondents the same pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories. Gray (2005:189) states that questionnaires reflect the design's views of the world, no matter how objective a researcher tries to be. This is true not only of the design of individual questions but often about the very choice of research subject; what we chose not to ask about.

Gray (2005:189) further elaborates: "It helps if questions are phrased in a way that is clear, concise, and not ambiguous to everyone in the sample and free from jargon and abbreviation. While the over-all content, style and structure of questionnaire must justify the respondent each individual question must stand for its merits".

The theme is that there is generally little room for variations in responses except where open-ended questions may be used. Denzil and Lincoln (2000:649) elaborate that the interviewer records the responses according to coding schemes that have already been established by the project director or researcher supervisor. The interviewer controls the pace of the interview by treating the questionnaires as if it were a therapeutic script to be followed in a standardised and straight forward manner (Denzil & Lincoln, 2000:649).

The questionnaires were designed, the questions were phrased in a way that were clear, concise, and unambiguous to everyone in the sample and free from jargon and abbreviation manner. While the over-all content, style and structure of questionnaire were to justify the respondent, each individual question stood for its merits.

Laurie and Jansen's contribution cannot be overlooked in this study. According to Laurie and Jansen (2016:173) if you as the researcher asks a question that is outright or your phrasing comes across as too direct, participants might typically assume that the questions reflects your view or assumptions about them. By carefully phrasing the questions as if is coming from others and not from you personally, the participant may feel less put on the spot. It also helps to avoid the impression that you the researcher have critical or biased views.

In this study, the questions were prepared in such a way that were not direct. The participants are sensitive if the questions reflect the researcher's views, as these would make participants assume that the questions reflect my view or assumptions about them. By carefully phrasing the questions as if they were coming from others and not from me personally, the participant did not feel put on the spot. It also helped to avoid the impression that I have critical or biased views.

#### **4.7.3. OBSERVATION**

Gay (2010:185) states that observations are one of prime data collection methods for naturalistic or field work settings. Observational data is primarily descriptive of settings, people, events, and meanings that participants ascribe to them. Observations may be collected with the knowledge of those being observed or without their knowledge.

Researchers may also remain detached from the field setting as a non-participant or become a member of group or setting.

Gay (2010:185) states that participant observation has quite a distinct history from that of the positivist or variable-centred approach. While its origin may be sought in social anthropology it was the Chicago School of Social Research that encouraged students to study by observation. The aim of participant observation as well as its history are different from what is commonly termed positivism.

The point mentioned by Laurie and Jansen (2016:XV111) on observation in social research cannot be over-emphasised. According to Laurie and Jansen (2016:XV111) social research is primarily a matter of listening and watching social phenomena while developing and applying conceptual tools to understand and explain what you find. Social research answers questions about what the distribution of characteristics in a population describing the causal or contributing factors that explain why you are finding particular patterns of behaviours.

In the interview, observation was cautiously done by listening and watching social phenomena while developing and applying conceptual tools to understand and explain what I found. To answer the questions about what is happening, describing events, attitudes, distribution of characteristics in a population describing the casual or contributing factors that explain why I am finding particular patterns of behaviours of some of charismatic churches with unfamiliar practices in the churches that they lead. The kind of practice that are degrading human dignity and are abusing people's belief systems.

The verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participants was observed. Their dressing, hair styles, tidiness, body language and voice tones were observed and recorded in the notes book.

#### **4.7.4. DOCUMENTS AND MEDIA**

Gray (2010:325) states that whatever data gathering tool is used, it is probably advisable to keep a diary throughout the action. As a minimum, the information that was gathered provided a factual description of events, dates, and people. Media can be used either to stimulate discussion or recall events during the research process or as a means of anticipating evidence in data gathering; participants may sometimes need visual evidence to remind them of events (Gray, 2010:325).

#### **4.8. ETHICAL ASPECTS**

Flick (2009:37) states that in many domains, research has become an issue of ethics questions of how to protect the interest of those who are ready to take part in a study. Scandals referring to manipulated data have repeatedly drawn research ethics to the forging of personal code of ethics have been developed in several disciplines and in several countries for the same discipline.

Denzil and Lincoln (2009:138) observe that, consistent with its commitment to individual autonomy, social sciences in the Mill and Weber tradition insists that research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which

they are involved. Proper respect for human freedom generally includes two necessary conditions. Subjects must agree voluntarily to participate, that is, without any physical or psychological coercion; in addition, their agreement must be based on full and open information. Subjects must be told the duration, methods, possible risks, and purpose or aim of the experiment.

Flick (2009:36) draws attention to the fact that codes of ethics are formulated to regulate the relations of researchers and the people and the fields they intend to study. The principles of research require that researchers avoid harming participants involved in the process by repeating and taking into account their needs and interests.

The ethical aspects were fully observed during the interview. Namely the rights of participants, the consent form, confidentiality, protection of participants, anonymity, and rights to withdrawal from participation by any participant should he feel like doing so.

#### **4.8.1. CONSENT FORM**

Curtis and Curtis (2011:15) state that key concern that contributed to the decrease in popularity of some research approaches in the social science notably unobtrusive approaches is that of ethics especially with regard to informed consent. The most important aspect of ethically appropriate research is voluntary informed consent. It is generally considered to be an essential requirement of ethical research in the context of minimising the task of harming and the risk of a lawsuit.

Bryman (2012:138) makes a statement that needs to be highly emphasised on the issue of consent forms. Bryman (2012:138) states that covert information transgresses the principle of informed consent due to the fact that participants are not given the opportunity to refuse to cooperate if they do not feel like participating.

Gomm (2008:376) elaborates that in the code of ethics for researchers, informed consent is one of the most important principles. Put crudely, participants in any research need to be told what they are letting themselves in for before they make the decisions to cooperate.

These interviews were done after the participating church leaders signed a consent form. The researcher also ensured that where there were gate keeping structures such as church boards, that these were aware of the participation of their church leaders.

Gomm (2008:376) states that informed consent explains as fully as possible and in terms meaningful to participants what the research is about, who is undertaking it and financing it, why is it being undertaken and is it to be disseminated. Gomm (2008:376) elaborates to say that informed consent will be part of a contractual process with a written agreement between the researchers and each subject laying out the terms and conditions of the research.

In this study, the informed consent principles were cautiously implemented in that the critical aspects pertaining to the research were explained as fully as possible in terms that were meaningful to the participants. The explanation answered questions like: what the research is about, who is undertaking it and financing it, why is it being undertaken and is it to be disseminated. Ideally, informed consent was part of a contracting process with

a written agreement between the researcher and each subject, laying out the terms and conditions of the research. The copy is attached in annexure B.

#### **4.8.2. RIGHTS OF PARTICIPATION**

Gomm (2008:379) states that the rights of self-determination, privacy and confidentiality do not mean much unless we specify the degree of harm which follows from their breach.

Flick (2009:36) states that dignity of participants and rights of participants are linked to concern given by participants sufficiently and adequately, and information provided as a basis for given data that is given voluntarily. The researcher need to guarantee participants confidentiality which means that the information about them is only used in a way that makes it impossible for other persons to identify the participants, and for any institution to use it against the interests of the participants.

Bryman (2012:138) states that the principle means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in the study.

Each of the participating local charismatic churches in the Emfuleni municipality area, church leaders were interviewed. This was done after the participating church leaders signed a consent form. Each prospective research participant was given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not he or she wished to participate in the study.

The participants were free to change their minds so as to can withdraw their participation at any time in the process or even before.

#### **4.8.3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONIMITY**

None of the participants were promised any payments for their participation. To ensure the reliability of the information provided, participants were provided with assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants who volunteered to contribute their opinions willingly. The duration, method and the purpose of the study was also thoroughly explained to the participants.

#### **4.8.4. PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE**

One will admire that contribution of Burns and Groove (1999:446) when it comes to the factor of permission that must be granted by the participant to voluntarily participate. Burns and Groove (1999:446) state that agreement to participate voluntarily is necessary after the participant has received some basic information about the research project.

The researcher made use of the letter granted by the university Ethics Committee to ask for permission to conduct research. That granted him the permission to present it to the respondents to either agree or disagree as well as to make participants aware about their rights to withdraw from participation should they feel like doing so.

#### **4.8.5. WITHDRAWAL FROM RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

This means the right of the participant to withdraw from participation despite the fact that he or she initially agreed to participate. Following the initial standards of the research project, the willingness of participants to voluntarily participate was considered paramount to a point whereby the failure to adhere to the standards can lead to the abandonment of the whole project.

#### **4.8.6. HARM TO PARTICIPANTS**

Bryman (2012:136) emphasises on the issue of harm to participants that must be avoided at all costs. Bryman (2012:136) states: "The issue of harm to participants is further addressed in ethical codes by advocating care over maintaining the confidentiality of records. This means that the identities and records of individuals should be as confidential". Bryman (2012:136) elaborates to say that this instruction also means that care needs to be taken when findings are being published to ensure that individuals are not identified or identifiable.

In this study, care was taken for participants not to be harmed in terms of confidentiality to their documents and their emotions. And the participants were always reminded that they are participating voluntarily and are free to stop participating at any time should they feel like doing so. Their emotions were taken into consideration to ensure that they are not too emotional to an extent that they are unable to participate. Should they have come to the point of being too emotional the researcher was prepared to give them a break or reschedule the interviewing for the next day or a day they would feel ready to continue again with the interview.

#### **4.8.7. PROTECTING OF PARTICIPANTS**

One cannot overemphasise the powerful statement by Laurie and Jansen (2016:173) when coming to the issue of protecting the participants. Laurie and Jansen (2016:173) states that as a researcher one has the responsibility for protecting his or her participants' wellbeing. If the researcher suspects that he is causing a participant to feel distressed, he is obliged to end his interaction in the quickest and least harmful way possible.

In this study, the participants were protected, their emotions and feelings were taken into consideration throughout the process. In the case where the participants needed a break for few minutes it was given, and where they wanted to elaborate, were given chance to do so. As well as where they were emotionally charged, the researcher had sufficient and efficient skills to assist them.

#### **4.9. THE SELECTION OF THE POPULATION**

In this instance, we need to firstly understand the meaning of the word population in this context. According to Bryman (2012:187) the population is the universe of units from which the same sample is to be selected. The term "units" is employed because it is not necessarily people who are being sampled. The researcher may want to sample from a universe of nations, cities, or regions (Bryman, 2012:187).

There are various methods of drawing the population that can be used depending on the context and situation of the research, namely random sampling and non-random sampling. To draw the population in this project the researcher has used non-random sampling, and has selected the type of non-probability sampling called snow-ball sampling to draw the population. He drew a population of 24 participants.

Bryman (2012:187) states that with this approach to sampling, the researcher makes the initial contact with small groups of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses this to establish contact with others. It will not be possible to draw a random sample since no one knows the nature of the universe from which it will have to be drawn. Snow-ball sampling is used not with the quantitative research strategy but within the qualitative one (Bryman, 2012:187).

#### **4.10. SAMPLING**

May (2004:92) defines a sample as a portion or a subset of a large group called a population, the population is the universe of the sample.

May (2004:92) states that a survey throughout the use of questionnaires measures the same characteristics of opinions of its respondents, depending on its aims. The procedure a study adopts and the number of recipients who are interviewed, should be such that generalisation can take place from the sample of people interviewed to the population as a whole. May (2004:92) elaborates that it is important that the sample characteristics be the same as those of the population. For this reason, the way samples are done is central to survey design.

The study has focused on the charismatic churches around the Emfuleni municipality area. The sample was a minimised representation of the population in terms of the heterogeneity of the elements and the representativeness of the variables. The elements of the sample were defined and the population was clearly and empirically defined and the population was clearly limited in terms of sampling. Bryman (2012:187) defines the population as the universe of units from which the same sample is to be selected.

Though it was not simple to cover all the churches in Emfuleni municipality region due to the nature of the area, at least two churches were covered per township based on their size, age, and heterogeneity. The main townships in Emfuleni are: Sebokeng, Evaton, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong, and Tshepiso. The churches participating in the interview were those with a total membership of at least one-hundred. They also had to be at least five years old.

#### **4.11. SAMPLING SIZE INCREASE**

The researcher's supervisor advised him to increase the sampling size from 12 to 20, advancing the reason that a smaller sample may be seen as biased and be unable to produce the desired quality results. To be able to increase the sample, the researcher had to increase the number of his population by doing more field work again.

Bryman (2012:187) states the decision about sample size is not a straight forward one. It depends on a number of considerations and there is no one definitive answer. Most of the time decisions about sample size are affected by consideration of time and costs.

The researcher had to increase the population size from 15 to 24 and the sampling size from 12 to 20. Focusing on the church leaders with a large membership of up to five thousand membership even though it was initially supposed to be hundred after the advice of the supervisor. Also focusing on drawing into the sample church leaders who are presently known to be selling holy water, oil and other materials. And all these had led to the changing of the initial figures with these new participants and those who refused to participate for various reasons even if they were given the chance to participate by the researcher.

Commented [A3]: members?

#### 4.12. NON-RESPONSE

Bryman (2012:199) states that the problem of non-response should be born in mind. Most sample surveys attract a certain amount of non-response. The issue of non-response in particular a refusal to participate is of particular significance, because it has been suggested by some researchers that response rates to social survey are declining.

There are a number of church leaders who did not respond, even if the request to participate was done with their secretaries in the offices. The serious challenge was experienced with those churches with large memberships of over 5000 that are regarded to be the largest in the Emfuleni municipality area. But many other church leaders were cooperative to participate and have contributed a lot to make this study a success thus far.

#### 4.13. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Corbin and Straus (2008:46) state that analysis is the process of examining something in order to find out something about it and how it works. To perform an analysis, a researcher can break apart a substance into its various components in order to identify their properties and dimensions.

Corbin and Straus (2008:46) state that the researcher can use the acquired knowledge of those components and their properties to make the inference about the object as a whole. Analysis is a very dynamic process. The analyst has to brainstorm, try out different ideas, eliminate some, and expand upon others before arriving at any conclusion.

Data was analysed with careful consideration of its accuracy and reliability. In this case, the collection of data took place in a qualitative way as mentioned earlier. In this study, the responses of qualitative questions posed in the questionnaire were categorised and clustered into similar response types and the frequencies calculated. With the structured questionnaires, respondents were asked to give their opinions and understanding.

#### 4.14. ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Bryman (2012:565) states that the researcher must guard against being captured by the richness of the data collected, so that there is no failure to give the data made significance

for the social sciences. Bryman (2012:565) further elaborates that it is crucial to guard against failing to carry out a true analysis. This means that one has to protect himself against the condition called analytic interruptus.

**Commented [A4]:** Please revise this sentence. I am uncertain of the meaning.

Analysis of qualitative results was cautiously and accurately done taking all the factors into account that needed to be considered. Data management was a very vital issue that was taken into very serious consideration, well-organised, and properly managed. The researcher used the service and skills of a former graphics specialist to assist him with the work and graphics. Bryman defines the missing data. Bryman (2012:713) states that missing data is relating to the cases that are not available, for example, when a case in the social survey research does not answer questions these are referred to as missing data. In this study, the research has found four missing data information in the case of church leaders, that four church leader are reporting to the church structure and the archbishop since these were not catered in the columns initially.

#### **4.15. DATA ACCURACY**

Denzil and Lincoln (2000:140) emphasise on the issue of accuracy. Accuracy ensures that data are accurate. It is a cardinal principle in social science codes as well. Fabrication, fraudulent, materials, omissions, and contrivances are both non-scientific and unethical.

The accuracy of data was highly considered and ensured that all data was accurate and correct. All relevant factors were taken well into consideration to ensure that data is correct and accurate, by using the skills and service of a former specialist and other one still in the field to ensure that data was correctly handled.

#### **4.16. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

The essentiality of validity and reliability of data collected cannot be overemphasised, since these form the very vital part of the data collected.

##### **4.16.1. VALIDITY**

Aurini, Heath and Howells (2016:61) state that, "Accounting for validity involves the ability to test claims against the real world to show that your account is not wrong. It is the key component of your research design and research proposal".

##### **4.16.2 RELIABILITY**

The researcher knows most of the participants; they are mostly colleagues in the ministry and friends from childhood; while others are old enough to be his father and not very close associates but highly respected church leaders in the community. Others are highly educated while others are not. Even though the researcher knows most of the participants, ethos and values were well taken and not compromised because of his relationship with them.

The researcher's questions were stated and features of the study design were congruent with them. The use of structured interviews was predetermined and the researcher conducted the interviews personally.

**4.17 RESPONSES**

The researcher had to increase the population size due to the fact that some pastors were not interested while some decided to withdraw their participation in the process for various reasons that cannot be mentioned, to protect their identity. The church leaders did not participate for various reasons namely; one had other commitments to attend to; five of the church leaders did not respond; two of them withdrew from participating; one was committed with urgent church matters; and the last one promised to respond later but did not.

The Charismatic church leaders from six main townships in the Emfuleni municipality area namely; Sebokeng, Evaton, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong and Tshepiso, were interviewed; two of the leaders representing each township. This was done on various days and mostly at their homes with some in their church offices.

**4.18 FINAL RESULTS ANALYSIS**

Fifteen Charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni were interviewed.

- Bophelong 3
- Boipatong 2
- Sebokeng 2
- Evaton 2
- Sharpeville 3
- Tshepiso 3

**4.18.1. EMPIRICAL SECTION QUESTIONNAIRE: Analysis of results**

1. Gender

The total number of church leaders based on gender.

Male	Female
14	1

2. Age

The total number of church leaders according to age.

25-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56-65 years + more
	3	5	7

3. Highest qualification

The total number of church leaders according to qualifications.

Matric and lower	Matric Certificate/Diploma in Ministry	Degree in Theology	Honours degree in Theology or higher
5	5	3	2

4. How long have you been pastoring?

The total number of church leaders according to duration in the ministry.

1-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	31-40 Years	40-50 Years
1	6	4	3	1

5. Are you the founder of this church?

The total number of church leaders according to founding churches.

Yes	No
9	6

6. Is this the first church you lead?

The total number of church leaders according to the history of founding churches.

Yes	No
8	7

7. Marital status

The total number of church leaders according to marital status.

Unmarried	Married	Divorced	Widowed
	15		

8. Are you employed?

The total number of church leaders according to employment status

Employed	Unemployed	Self employed	Full time Ministry
2			13

9. Did you attend any theological training to do ministry work?

The total number of church leaders according to their theological training.

Yes	No
11	4

10. Do you report to anyone in the work of ministry?

The total number of church leaders according to their reporting status.

Yes	No
10	5

11. What is your title if you report to anyone?

The reporting status of church leaders.

Evangelist	Pastor	Prophet Prophetess	/ Apostle	Bishop	Missing data
	3	3	2	3	4

12. What is the title of the person you are reporting to?

The titles of the persons they are reporting to.

Not any one	Pastor	Prophet Apostle	/ Bishop	Missing data
0	1	3	7	4

13. How old is the church you lead now?

The age of the churches they lead.

5-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	31-40	Beyond
4	4	3	3	1

14. When was the church founded?

The years in which the churches the participants lead were founded.

1960	1980	1986	1996	1997	1998	2000	2002	2005	2009	2010	2011
1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1

15. Who was the leader who started the church?

The researcher can mention that many of the participants are the founders of the same churches, except for a few who are not, but their churches have been founded by first-generation church leaders. One of the oldest churches was founded by an evangelist who has long passed on. Some of the churches belong to the structures and the church councils, and were founded many years ago.

16. ARE THERE OTHER JUNIOR PASTORS REPORTING TO YOU?

The total number of junior pastors reporting to the church leader.

Yes	No
13	2

17. What is the size of the church you are pastoring numerically

The total number of membership in the churches led by the participants.

100	110	142	150	200	250	300	350	600	920	2000
2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1

18. How many if there are junior pastors under you?

The total number of pastors that are under the leadership of the participants.

0	1	2	4	6	8	11	15	21	45
2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 1: Gender

Gender	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	14	93.33
Female	1	6.67
TOTAL	15	100.00

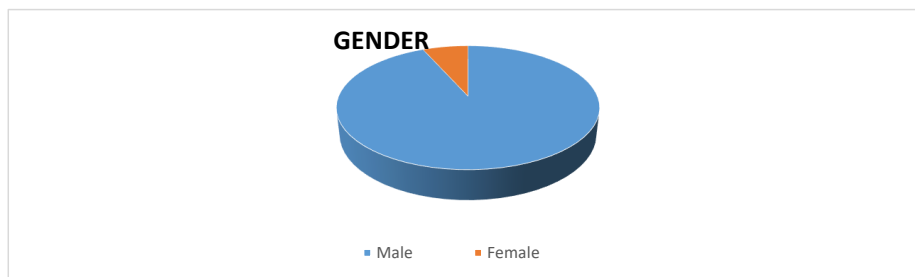


Figure 1: Gender

Table 2: Age

Age	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
25-35	0	0.00
36-45	3	20.00
46-55	5	33.33
56-65+	7	46.67
TOTAL	15	100.00

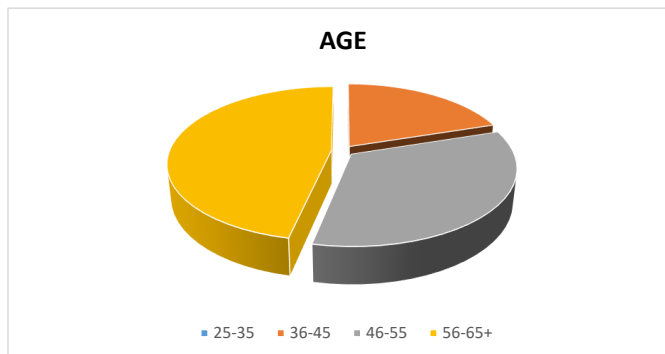


Figure 2: Age

Table 3: Highest Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
No Matric / Matric Only	5	33.33
Matric Certificate/Diploma	5	33.33
Degree in Theology	3	20.00
Honours Degree in Theology or Higher	2	13.33
TOTAL	15	100.00

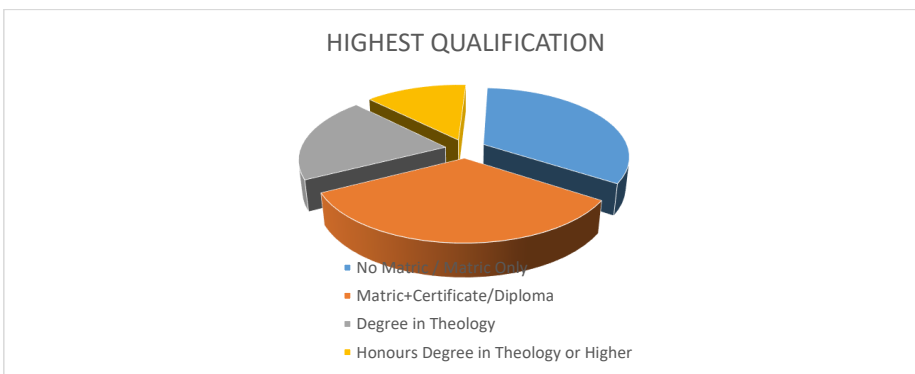


Figure 3: Highest Qualification

Table 4: Number of years pastoring ministry

NO OF YEARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1 to 10yrs	5	33.33
11 to 20yrs	5	33.33
21 to 30yrs	3	20.00
31 to 40yrs	2	13.33
41 to 50yrs	15	100.00

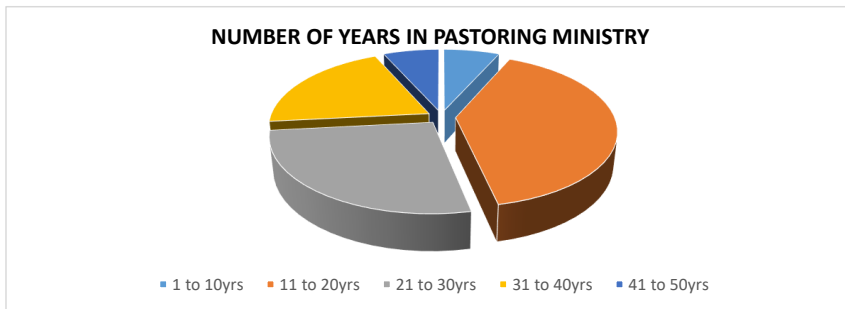


Figure 4: Number of years pastoring ministry

Table 1: Founder of the church

CHURCH	Frequency	Percentage
YES/NO		
YES	9	60
NO	6	40
TOTAL	15	100

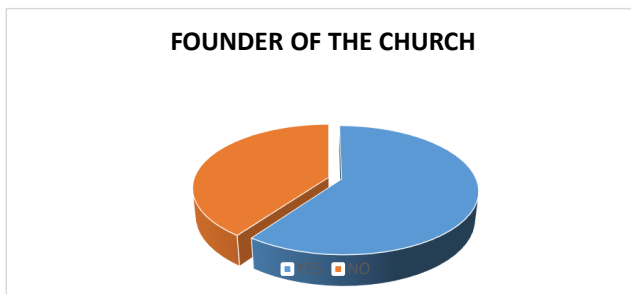


Figure 5: Founder of the church

Table 2: First church you led?

YES/NO	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	8	53
NO	7	47
TOTAL	15	100

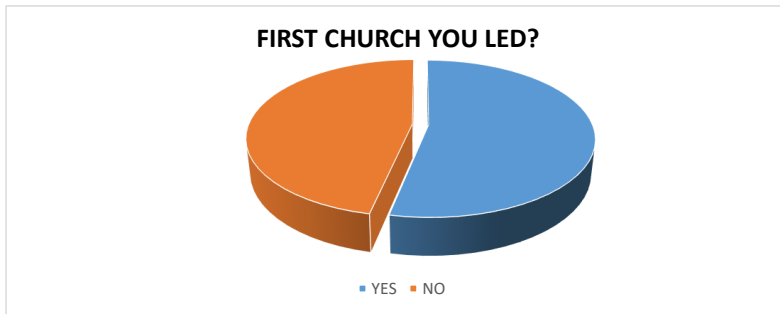


Figure 6: First church you led?

Table 3: Marital status

MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Unmarried	0	0
Married	15	100
Divorced	0	0
Widowed	0	0
TOTAL	15	100

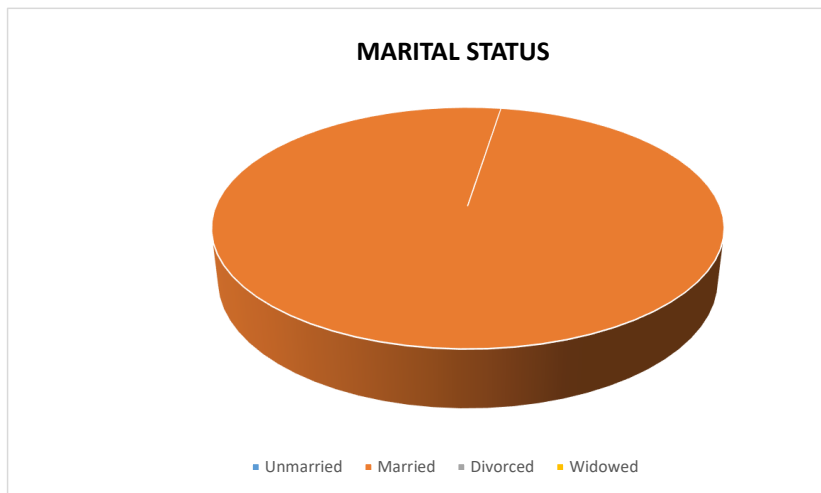


Figure 7: Marital status

Table 4: Employment

EMPLOYMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Employed	2	13
Unemployed	0	0
Full Time Ministry	13	87
TOTAL	15	100

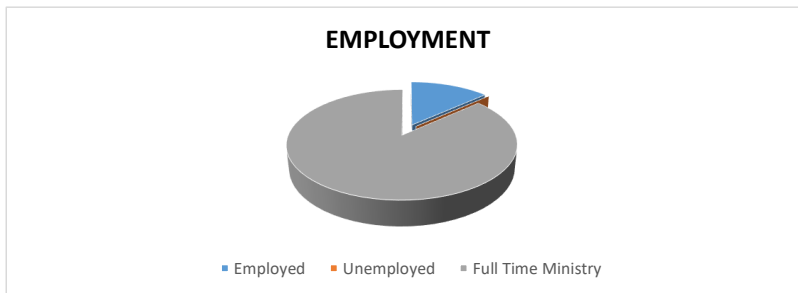


Figure 8: Employment

Table 5: Theological training

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING	YES/NO	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	YES
11	73.33	NO	4	26.66
TOTAL	15	100		



Figure 9: Theological training

Table 6: Reporting to someone

REPORTING TO SOMEONE	YES/NO	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	YES
10	66.67	NO	5	33.33
TOTAL	15	100		

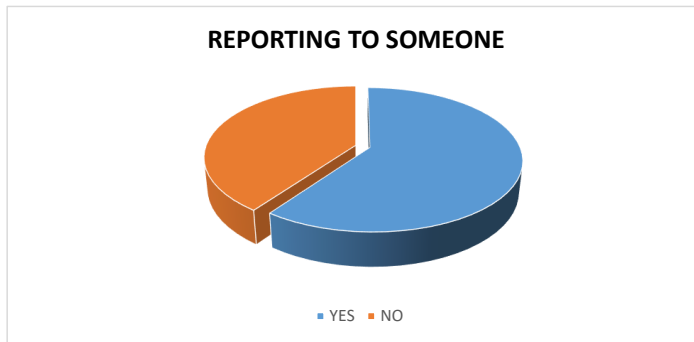


Figure 10: Reporting to someone

Table 7: Titles of church leaders

TITLES OF CHURCH OF LEADERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Evangelist	0.00	0.00
Pastor	3.00	20.00
Prophet/Prophetess	3.00	20.00
Apostle	2.00	13.33
Bishop	7.00	46.67
TOTAL	15.00	100.00

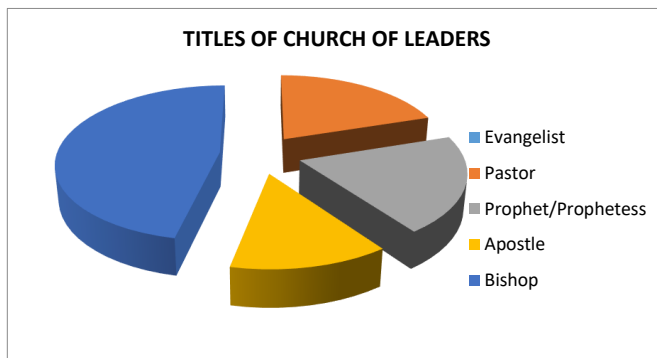


Figure 11: Titles of church leaders

Table 8: Titles of persons church leaders report to

TITLES OF PERSONS CHURCH LEADERS REPORT TO		
NO OF YRS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Evangelist	0.00	0.00
Pastor	1.00	6.67
Prophet/Prophetess	3.00	20.00
Bishop	7.00	46.67
Missing	4.00	26.67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

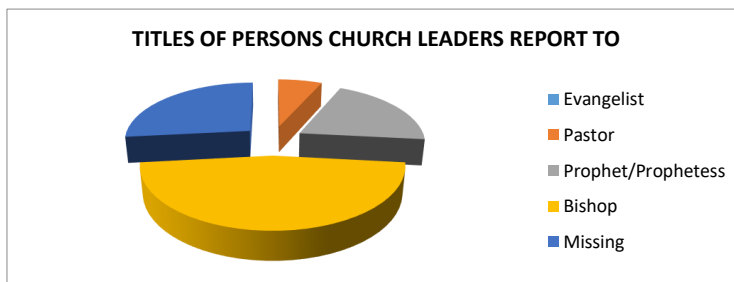


Figure 12: Titles of persons church leaders report to

Table 9: How old is the church

NO OF YEARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
5 to 10yrs	4.00	26.67
11 to 20yrs	4.00	26.67
21 to 30yrs	3.00	20.00
31 to 40yrs	3.00	20.00
Beyond	1.00	6.67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

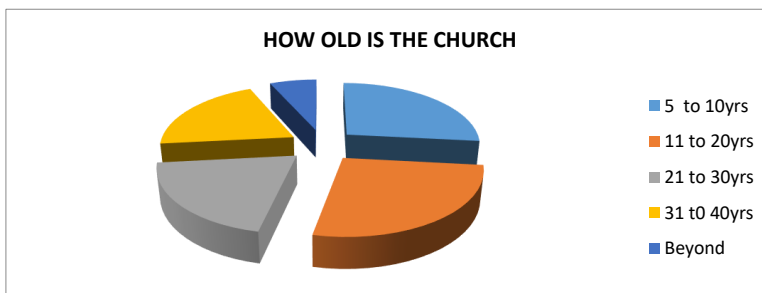


Figure 13: How old is the church

Table 10: When the church was founded

YEAR FOUNDED
1960
1980
1981
1986
1986
1997
1998
1998
2000
2000
2002
2005
2009
2009
2010

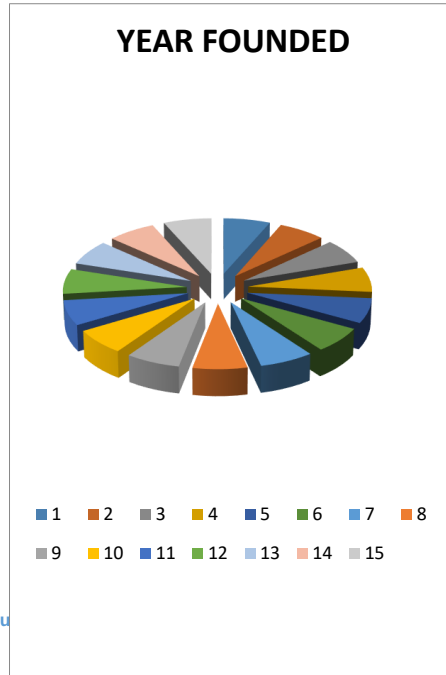


Figure 10

WHO WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH?

Table 16: Junior pastors reporting to you

JUNIOR PASTORS REPORTING TO YOU	FREQUENCY	PERCRNTAGE
YES / NO		
YES	13	86.66
NO	2	13.33
TOTAL	15	100.00

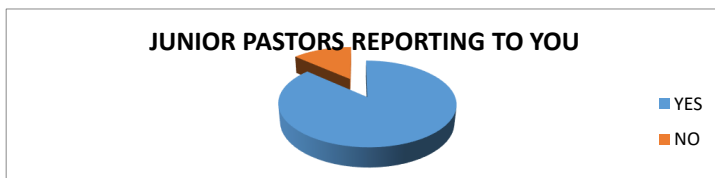


Figure 15: Junior pastors reporting to you

Table 17: Size of membership

SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP
100
100
110
142
150
150
200
200
200
250
300
350
600
920
2000

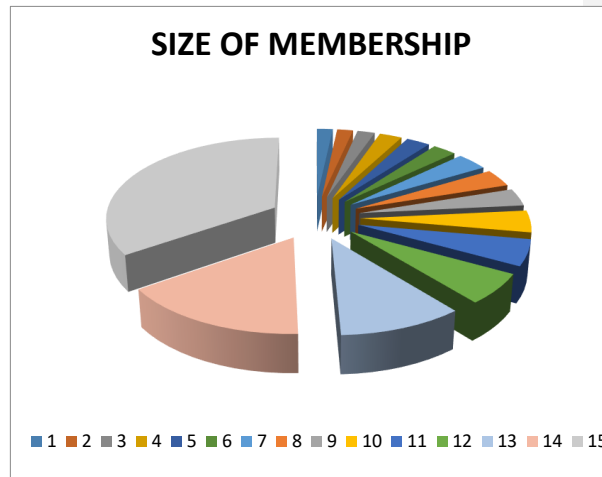


Figure 16: Size of membership

Table 18: Junior pastors reporting to you

JUNIOR PASTORS REPORTING TO YOU		
YES / NO	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	13	86.66
NO	2	13.33
TOTAL	15	100.00

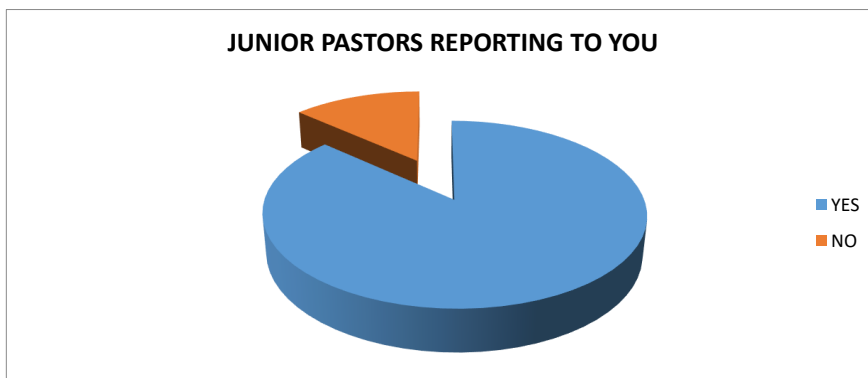


Figure 17: Junior pastors reporting to you

19. Mission and vision

## Questions

Does the church have a vision and mission statement?

Purpose: to know if the church has a faith and mission statement.

Results: 100 % of the church leaders have mission and vision statements for the churches that they lead.

a) What are those things that distinguish the church from other local churches?

Purpose: to know if the church leader has those special features that can differentiate his church from others, with the belief that every church is unique and must maintain that.

Results: The church leaders have some things that their churches are distinguished with. One respondent said that the churches that he leads is community orientated. His church is always involved with the needs of the community.

Some highlights:

One respondent mentioned that their focus is on the economic empowerment as they are about to start a farming project that will focus on food production for church members and the Emfuleni community at large with the sponsors from abroad.

One of the highlights mentioned by church leader was that during the days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic he volunteered to bury unidentified bodies as they were requested by the Home Affairs Department.

One church leader said the church is a prophetic church. Meaning that the church uses the prophetic gift and heals people.

b) What does your church have in common with other local churches?

Purpose: to check if the church has other common characteristics with other local churches based on the Great Commission, so that it does not deviate from the basics of Christian life and teachings.

Answers: 100% of the respondents replied that the common feature for them is the preaching of the Gospel, and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.

Some highlights:

100% of the respondents said they preach the Gospel. Some mentioned that they reach out to preach the Gospel. Other said they make night prayers.

## 20. Church governance

a) Is there a church board in your church?

Purpose: the purpose is to check if the church has a sort of authoritative governing body to caution the church leader if he or she happens to be derailed.

Results: 100 % of the respondents replied that they do have a church board even if is called by various names but is with the same functions, purpose, and authority.

Some highlights:

100% of the respondents said they have a church board, even if is called by different names and have not the same powers depending on the church. The churches led by structure-like council, call it the church board and is with more powers in that it can hire and fire the pastor.

b) Is the board mixed with males and females?

Purpose: to check if the church has embraced and is sensitive to gender equity issues. There are still Charismatic churches that are insensitive to gender equality, segregating and undermining the role of women in the church.

Results: 90% of the respondents have mixed church board members based on gender except one leader who mentioned that he has only males that reflects the will of the people as they are democratically elected.

Some highlights:

One of the church leaders reported that women are very good people to work with due to the fact that they are loyal, committed and reliable people to work with.

c) Is the local assembly independent or does it work with others in collaboration?

Purpose: to check if the church works in collaboration with other local assemblies.

Results: 100 % of the respondents agreed that they work with other local assemblies in collaboration.

The following points were highlighted:

The church leader mentioned that he works with other local assemblies based on local agenda. Another church leader mentioned that he works with others based on the same doctrine.

Three of the church leaders from a Pentecostal background mentioned that they also collaborate and submit to other regional, national, and international structures of their churches that they are historically bound to.

## 21. Discernment cases in the Bible

### a) Do you remember any of the cases in the Bible where discernment was used?

Purpose: to check if the leader has an understanding of the concept of what discernment is. And to check if he is able to think about cases when discernment was used.

Results: 80% of the church leaders responded with "yes" to the question. Showing that they remember the cases in the Bible where discernment was well-used. Except for a few that had difficulty in responding to the question. That seemed as if they do not have an idea of what discernment is.

### b) Which case can you remember where discernment was well-used in the Bible days?

Purpose: to know if the church leader can remember the cases in the Bible where discernment was well-used.

Results: 80% of the church leaders had no difficulty to mention the cases in the Bible where discernment was used. While the remaining 20% had difficulty to mention the cases or even mentioned irrelevant examples.

80% of the respondents mentioned the case of Paul and Silas casting out the piton spirit from the girl. That led them being imprisoned in the book of Acts 16:16-40.

80% of the respondents mentioned the case of Simon Peter rebuking Simon the sorcerer in the book of Acts 8:1-25.

40% of the respondents mentioned the case of Jesus rebuking Peter who was against Jesus talking about his imminent death on the cross (Matthew, 16:23).

One of the respondents said discernment helps the church to function among its spirits working so that we know the journey. He says discernment can go in four levels namely; the obvious level, this operates in any person who hates the work of God. The second level is any person who cannot live a holy life. The third level is the deep one, when a person pretends to be a Christian but still has hidden sins. The hidden level is for the person who knows the Christian life and can do everything the Christians are doing but still used by the evil spirits.

### c) Which case can you remember where discernment was not well-used?

Purpose: to know if the church leader can remember the cases in the Bible where discernment was not well used.

Results: 80% of the church leaders did well to mention the cases where discernment was not well-used while the remaining part had difficulty to remember such cases.

Some highlights:

20% of the respondents had difficulty to mention the cases where discernment was not well-used. They tried to mention the cases but with irrelevant examples.

The case of King Saul not waiting for Samuel to arrive and burn the sacrifice was referenced. He did the sacrifice by himself without waiting for Samuel (1 Samuel, 13:8-14) was mentioned by many respondents.

The case of Balaam and Balak with the instruction to go and curse Israel (Numbers, 22:1-6) was also mentioned by 80% of the respondents.

60% of the respondents mentioned the case of King Jehoshaphat when he went to war with King Ahab that nearly cost his life (2 Chronicles, 18:1-17).

## 22. Communal discernment

a) Do you remember any case where you had a problem in the community?

Purpose: to check if the church leader has an understanding of what is communal discernment.

Results: 80% of the church leaders did well to remember such cases while only few said they did not remember any cases.

Some highlights:

It shows that 60% of the leaders have a problem in understanding what communal discernment is. It is not possible for any leader to claim that they never had problems as church leaders facing the community.

b) Did you meet as the local church leaders in the community to pray that God must lead you to find a solution?

Purpose: to check if the church leader takes the injunction to discern seriously especially during challenging times in the community.

Results: 80% of the respondents said they did meet to pray as the church leaders. While 20% stood their ground to say that they do not remember any of such cases.

Some highlights:

One respondent mentioned the case of gangsters abusing drugs and being violent, which was prevalent in the community, but once they started to meet and pray they got wisdom and discernment from the Holy Spirit to solve it, and the problem was amicably solved. That also worked to bring them together as pastors in that community.

c) Can you briefly tell what the results were after that community and local pastors prayed?

Purpose: to check if the leader is aware that if church leaders come and pray seriously about the matter for discernment the Holy Spirit will give them direction with positive results.

Results: 80% of the reported that they experienced positive results after the church leaders met to pray seeking direction from the Holy Spirit.

Some highlights:

One respondent mentioned that the power of communal prayer has changed many situations in their community. While they met and prayed together due to a community problem they ended up finding the purpose of coming together and praying.

### 23. Discernment in choosing preachers to come and preach

a) Are all people from outside allowed to preach in your church?

Purpose: to see if the church leader takes the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously in choosing speakers coming to preach in his church.

Results: 100% of the participants responded that they never allow any preacher to come and preach in their churches but are selective based on the number of criteria they apply namely:

One of the respondents said that some preachers invite speakers only because they are famous, eloquent and crowd pullers. Not for the fact that the Holy Spirit wants them to come and preach in the churches that they lead.

One of the respondents mentioned the issue of character of the speaker and doctrinal issues, the doctrine of the speaker and that of the church needs to be the same.

b) Are there church leaders you will have difficulty to invite to come and preach?

Purpose: to check if the church leader has the discipline to invite speakers with discernment.

Results: 100% of the participants said yes, they will have difficulty to invite some other preachers to come and preach in the church they lead.

Some highlights:

One respondent said some church leaders have no difficulty to invite any preacher, especially if the speakers are famous, eloquent and are loved by people.

Another respondent said there are also those who are asking to be invited because they are after money.

c) Why will you be not open to other preachers to come and preach at the church you lead?

Purpose: to see if the church leader has some criteria and standards to look at when he invites other preachers to come and preach at the church that he leads.

Results: The respondent said a number of factors will determine who they invite to come and preach, like the doctrine, character, and reputation of the speakers.

The following points were highlighted:

Some other speakers will undermine the host in front of his congregation. Showing how much better he is compared to the host pastor.

Some speakers will talk ill about other preachers. Even about the very same person hosting him to canvas for membership inside the church.

Some speakers will use material things like oil, water, clothes, and ropes without proper consultation and the permission of the host pastor.

Other speakers, because of greed, will start selling things like books, tapes and other materials without the permission of the host pastor. Others will start collecting special offerings for himself without prior arrangement with the host pastor.

Others will start taking personal contacts of church members especially those who are well to do financially so that he phones them in private canvassing for membership.

d) Which factors determine your collaboration with other local pastors?

Purpose: to check if the church leader has some standards or criteria to follow when he collaborates with other local churches.

Results: 100% of the respondents mentioned the factors of doctrine, character, and reputation of the speaker they invite.

Some highlights:

Some of the church leaders mentioned that they collaborate also with the mother body structures at the regional, national, and up to international level bound by the historical background.

The common purpose for community development will make the church collaborate with other churches.

Some church leaders mentioned the point of father-son relationships that initiated their collaboration and relationship for many years.

One respondents mentioned that they collaborate with other churches during the times of crusade or conferences.

24. The teaching from the bible

a) Is the Bible essential in your church?

Purpose: to see if the church leader honours and admires the Bible as the only authoritative book in his church and ministry.

Results: 100% of the respondents replied that the Bible is the supreme book with absolute authority for the churches that they lead.

Some highlights:

One of the respondents said that it is pathetic sometimes to see how some church leaders are not reading the Bible but spend time reading other books. The pastor without the Word is the pastor without faith.

b) Can people teach with other books excluding the Bible in the church that you lead?

Purpose: to check if the Bible is the sole authoritative book for basic teachings of the Christian life in the church that church leader leads.

Results: 100% of the participants replied that there is no other book allowed to replace the Bible in the churches they lead.

Some highlights:

Some church leaders replied that some other books may be used only for reference but not to replace the Bible.

Other church leaders replied that other books may be used for quotations and research but no book will replace the Bible in the churches they lead.

One church leader responded by saying the Bible is the fundamental book in the church that he leads.

c) Are the people allowed to teach in your church on the basis of dreams and visions?

Purpose: to check if the church leader allows his church to be led with dreams and visions.

Results: 100% of the respondents said that dreams and visions will not form the basis of their teaching since they may be unreliable and abused by dreamers to lead the church astray.

Some highlights:

40% of the respondents mentioned the fact that dreams and visions must not be totally rejected since God can also use them to speak like he did to Jacob (Genesis, 28:10-19); Joseph to his brothers (Genesis, 37:1-11); Manoah the father to Samson (Judges 13: 9-12); Joseph husband of Mary (Matthew, 1:18-25).

Dreams, even though God used them and is still using them to speak, church leaders need to test them by comparing them with the scriptures.

80% of the respondents said dreams and visions must not form the basis of the word teaching, since that can derail many Christians. Dreams and vision must not be contrary to the Bible.

One church leader said he does not allow people to teach on the basis of dreams because they always need to be interpreted. Dreams and visions are meaningless without interpretation.

## 25. Miracles, signs and wonders

a) Where all miracles, signs and wonders from God during Bible times?

Purpose: to check if the church leader believes that it is not only God who performed the miracles and wonders in the Bible times.

Results: 80% of the respondents believe that not all miracle signs and wonders were from God during Bible times but the evil spirit also had some way of performing them in order to try to frustrate God's plans.

Some highlights:

80% of the respondents mentioned the case of the magicians of Pharaoh in Egypt (Exodus, 7:10-12) when Moses performed miracles with his staff the magicians tried to compete with Moses.

The case of Balaam and Balak (Numbers, 22: 1-10) was also mentioned by 60% of the respondents. When Balaam the professional curser was instructed to curse the children of Israel.

The case of Simon the sorcerer in the book of Acts (8: 9-25) was also mentioned by 80% That he deceived all the Samaritans young and old with his magic.

b) Are all miracles, signs and wonders in our days from God?

Purpose: to check if the church leader believes that it is only God who is performing the miracles and wonders in our times.

Results: 100% of the respondents disagreed that all miracle of today are from God. But that the same powers of evil that were in the Bible times are still operating to compete and try to frustrate the purposes of God.

The following points were highlighted:

One of the respondents said the miracles of today are not all from God. But are mostly counterfeit miracles for the purpose of making money by some church leaders. He mentioned a number of stories where people learned later the way participants were paid to act out healing miracles.

One of the respondents mentioned a case where the person was paid to act dead and the pastor pretended to make as if he is raising that person to life again. But all was just an act.

c) Should all pastors be attested by miracle signs and wonders to prove that they are called?

Purpose: to ensure if church leaders have that understanding that miracles and wonders are not for all pastors since gifts are gifts for some but not all.

Results: 100% of the respondents disagreed with the statement to say that not all pastors are to be attested with miracle since this is a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians, 12:1-3).

Some highlights:

The following points were highlighted to say that most of the pastors need not to feel inferior that they cannot perform miracles.

One respondent said to many congregants is as if the pastors who are not performing miracles are not called and they leave them for those with miracles and wonders, which is not supposed to be the case.

One respondent mentioned that miracles and wonders are signs for unbelievers, the believers need the word, not miracles to sustain them spiritually and in their spiritual growth.

One participant said we see believers moving from one church to another and one pastor to another because they want new miracles, wonders and prophecies.

## 26. False prophets and teachers

a) Where there false teachers in the early days of the church?

Purpose: to check if the church leaders know that there were false preachers in the times of the Bible.

Results: 100% of the respondents agreed that were false prophets in the early days of the church.

Some highlights and discussion:

80% of the church leaders mentioned the case of Simon the sorcerer, who deceived the city of Samaria's young and old until Peter came (Acts, 8:9-24).

One mentioned the case of the girl with the spirit of python who was rebuked by Paul and he cast the spirit out in the book of Acts (16:16-24).

b) Are there false prophets and teachers in our days?

Purpose: to check if the church leaders do have the understanding that there are false preachers and prophets in our times.

Results: 100% of the respondents agreed that there are false prophets in our time, used by the same spirit that used false prophets of Bible times with the same purpose of frustrating and derailing God's purpose.

Some highlights:

One church leader highlighted some very interesting points about prophecy in the Bible times from the Old Testament and the New Testament. He noted that the prophets were used to confirm what the person already knows, not something that the person did not know as if he is a detective for something known only to himself and telling the person.

He made a few examples, to mention the few; the example of David after he killed Uriah for his wife Bathsheba. King David knew his sin already, it was just a confirmation to him (2 Samuel, 11:1-14); and also that one of prophet Agabus that Paul will be arrested in Jerusalem, Paul already knew about that, it was just a confirmation to him (Acts, 21:11).

This is in contrary with prophets of our times who want to tell people about the personal stuff that they do not know in a detective-like manner, focusing on witches and witchcraft, causing divisions and separation among husbands and wives, relatives and neighbours. Their focus is not on building but on separating and sowing hatred. This is in contrast with the work of prophecy in the book of 1 Corinthians 14:3 that the work of prophecy is building and exaltation.

One church leader took an extreme line to defend the prophets of today by saying that the church is guilty of speaking ill about the prophets today. He said the prophets with their unique ministry in the church need not to be questioned with regard to what they use to heal people or the manner in which they practice their ministry.

He said the prophet can use anything and anyhow because no one can understand the prophets and the unique way they function. He mentioned a number of examples in the Old Testament where the prophets were instructed by God to do and use strange things to pass his message to his nation, Israel and other nations. For example, prophets like Elisha, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Hosea to mention the few.

c) What are some of the things by which false teachers can be detected today?

Purpose: to see if the charismatic church leaders have the discernment to see if someone is a false teacher or false prophet based on the principles of the Bible.

Results: 100% of the respondents were able to mention a number of things in which false teachers and prophets can be detected.

Some highlights:

80% of the respondents of the church leaders highlighted the issue of the usage of material things like selling of water, oil, and handkerchiefs, salt, and ropes, picture of themselves and car sticker with the faces of church leaders.

One respondent mentioned that false prophets can be detected by their intentions. Whether they are after money, fame, stature or not. The spirit behind the prophet, the prophesying manner.

One respondent mentioned that false prophets can be detected by selling to members stickers with the promise of protection, miracles and prosperity.

Others mentioned the issue of prophecies on personal matters. That will consume most of the time in their meetings not the preaching of the **Word**. This kind of prophecy is characterised by bewitching people, leading to divisions and separations of families and relatives.

60% of the respondents mentioned the issues of self-exaltation and idolising by the members who are taught that their pastor is in the position of God to them, they can only pray to God through the name of their leader.

One of the respondents mentioned that the leader teaches members that he is the only one who can bless them if they are submissive, and if they become disobedient he has the powers to curse and kill them; as a result, members live in constant fear of being cursed. Hence, they will do anything instructed by the leader even if it is wrong and unbiblical.

One church leader mentioned the issue of character. Many of these church leaders are characterised by their immoral life. We find most in the cases of promiscuity, and mismanagements of church funds. They are lovers of money who will stop at nothing to accumulate wealth so as to sponsor their luxurious lives.

27. Holy water

a) Do you use holy water in your church or in the church you lead?

Purpose: to check if the church uses holy water for the purpose of prayers and healings.

Results: 99% of the respondents disagreed that they use holy water in the churches that they lead.

Some highlights and discussion:

90% of the respondents said the name of Jesus is sufficient to heal all the illnesses and perform the miracles they need. Using water is like replacing the name of Jesus with something tangible.

One of the respondents said the material things like water or oil and any others weaken the faith of people who believe that something better than the **Word** of God has come and put their faith in such things as water, oil and so on.

One respondent agreed that he uses holy water, including anything that God instructs him to use to heal the people that includes oil, clothes, salt and many other things when he is instructed to use them.

b) If yes, why do you use holy water?

Purpose: to find if there are reasons that the church leader may have to use holy water for the purpose of prayers and healings.

Results: 90% of the respondents said they are not using holy water.

One respondent using holy water said he is using it because in the Bible, Jesus used many things to heal people. Jesus used the things like mud, saliva, touching, speaking the Word and so on.

c) If your answer is no, please explain why you do not use holy water in the church that you lead?

Purpose: to find if there are reasons that the church leader does not use holy water for the purpose of prayers and healings.

Results: 90% of the participants said they do not use holy water, mentioning the reason that holy water make people to replace God with water. They become lazy to use their faith, hoping for quick fix solutions to their problems.

Some highlights and discussion:

One of the respondents said the problem with holy water is because those using it tend to put their faith so much in it that they forget their faith with God. They end up putting all their faith to it.

One of the respondents who uses holy water said that he will use anything that Jesus used to heal the people.

## 19. Church registration

a) Is your church already registered?

Purpose: to find out if the church is registered or not.

Results: 100% of the respondents said their churches are registered.

Some highlights:

One respondent mentioned the problem of church sites that is a burning issue in many areas of the Emfuleni area. This is the challenge that makes many churches be without church buildings even if they can afford to build churches.

b) If no do you have some plans to do so?

Purpose: to find out if the church leader sees the matter of registering the church as important.

Results: 100% of the respondents have registered the churches that they lead.

c) What challenge do you face regarding registration?

Purpose: to find if the church leader anticipates any difficulties with regard to church registration, that may be the reason to delay church registration.

Results: 100% of the participants' churches are registered.

### 30. Church finances

a) What is the main source of your church's income?

Purpose: to find out if the church leader has some source of financial income for the church. The main source is expected to be tithes and offerings as a common practice for many churches.

Results: 100% of the respondents said their income is from tithes and offerings, with a few mentioning fund-raising and one with some overseas sponsors.

Some highlights and discussion:

One respondent works with many pastors under his submission and large congregation but who are mostly not faithful with their tithes and offerings. This made the church to be poor and he is also lacking financially. This calls to the church leaders to constantly teach members about tithes and offering, or if he does not have courage to do it, the church leader must invite other pastors to come and handle the subject.

One respondents mentioned that any church leader who is not teaching his members about tithes and offering is depriving himself and his congregation of God's blessings (Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians, 9:6-11).

b) What is your thinking about opening the church account in the full details of the church?

Purpose: to see if the church leader has respect for church finances and does not to treat it as if it is his private money for his personal use.

Results: 100% of the respondents said that is the good thing to do.

Some highlights and discussion:

One respondent said that opening a church account in the full details of the church will help the church maintain good financial management and records. There will be

accountability. And great financial discipline will be maintained because all relevant stake holders will be involved in the depositing and withdrawing church funds.

One respondent said the church leader will not be tempted to use church money at his free will but will do all things procedurally.

c) What is your thinking about opening the church account in your names and details?

Purpose: to see if the church leader has respect for church finances. By opening a church account that is controlled according to the constitution of the church, not for his private purposes.

Results: 100% of the respondents were against this notion and totally rejected it.

Some highlights:

One respondent said that opening a church account in the details of the church leader will not help the church maintain good financial management and records. There will be no accountability. And financial discipline will not be maintained because all relevant stakeholders will not be involved in the depositing and withdrawing of church funds.

One respondent said the church leader will be tempted to use church money at his free will and not do all things procedurally.

31. Financial prosperity of church members

a) Are there poor people in the church that you lead?

Purpose: to see if the leader knows the general population of his membership and know their financial situation.

Results: 100% responded that yes, there are poor people in the churches that they lead.

Some highlights and discussion

Some respondents added with the scripture that Jesus said "The poor you will always have with you". (John, 12:8).

One of the respondents said it is the responsibility of the church to eliminate poverty in the church by introducing programs that assist the poor to do things for themselves.

b) Are there rich people in the church that you lead?

Purpose: to see if the leader knows the general population of his membership and know their financial situation, including those who are well-to-do, as well as those who are very prosperous.

Results: 90% of the church leaders were hesitant to answer this question and others wanted to change it to say they do have well-to-do people, not rich people in their church. And one could see the mentality they had towards the word rich as if is inappropriate to say somebody is rich.

Some highlights and discussion:

One would think that to be rich is a blessing from God. The mentality that we need to be poor in this world is not from God. God wants his people to be rich and not poor. In the time of the Bible people of God like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were very rich (Genesis, 13:2; Genesis, 26:13; Genesis, 30:25-31).

c) Does the church that you lead have programmes to lift those who are poor financially?

Purpose: to check if the church leader has any concern about those who are needy and have some programmes of poverty alleviation in the church that he leads.

Results: 100% of the church leaders answered the question positively with some hesitant as one looks at their facial expressions to see that they honestly never had such programs.

Some highlights:

Other church leaders mentioned a number of projects like feeding projects for needy members and children. Others mentioned clothing projects and selling projects; a gardening project was also mentioned by some including a lift club. One church leader mentioned a big farm project where they will produce and employ a number of people.

### 32. Cooperation with foreign national pastors

a) Do you know any foreign national pastor in your community?

Purpose: to check if the leader is aware about the presence of foreign national pastors in his community and if he is trying to build some relationship with them.

Results: 60% of the respondents responded positively while the remaining 40% said they never saw them in their communities since they mostly like to stay in suburb areas.

Some highlights:

One respondent said he knows some even if they are not his friends since they do not have much in common in terms of doing ministry work.

One respondent said he had a bad experience with one foreign pastor that made him stay away from them.

b) Have you ever worked together with them in some events?

Purpose: to check if the church leader is open to foreign national pastors and work together with them.

Results: 60% of the respondent responded positively, while others said they never worked with them based on some reasons or perceptions that they have about them, and the remaining part that said they never saw them.

Some highlights and discussion:

One of the church leaders responded by saying that foreign pastors are not honest. He had an experience working with them that are not pleasant to remember.

One respondent said foreign pastors are good people to work with and has good working relations with them.

One pastor said he perceives them to be dishonest people. While one said he does not regard many of them as pastors since he thinks they became pastors only when they arrived in this country. Knowing that by calling themselves pastors will be their way for the good life in this country.

But one needs to bear in mind that these perceptions and allegations have not been tested about foreign national pastors. This is due to the fact that some of them are good people, great men and women of God who have started churches all over the world with great reputations, who are boosting the economy of this country by attracting a huge number of tourists coming to their conferences for healing and teachings in this country.

c) What do you think about foreign national pastors starting churches in your community?

Purpose: to check the attitude the church leader has towards foreign national church leaders, especially when they have to start churches in his or her community.

Results: 40% were against foreign national pastors starting churches. While the remaining 60% were for the idea saying as long as they obey the laws of the country they do not mind.

Some highlights and discussions:

One of the pastor highlighted the fact that South Africans also need to go and start churches in foreign countries.

One of the respondents said the people of our county also need to go and learn other people's cultures and languages in foreign countries.

### 33. Church constitution

a) Do you have a church constitution in the church that you lead?

Purpose: to check if the church has a constitution that governs its activities.

Results: 100% of the respondents have a church constitution.

b) If you have a constitution in your church, what procedures do you follow to change it?

Purpose: The purpose is to see if the pastor has involved all relevant stakeholders in the church to draw or change the constitution. Or whether he is a dictator with absolute powers to change the constitution at his free will to suit him.

Results: 100% of the respondents have the procedure to change the constitution even if some do not have clear guidelines in doing so. One of the respondents are talking about the two third majority while other mentioned the general meeting with the powers to do that.

Some highlights:

The leaders with absolute powers in changing the constitution are likely to err without anyone calling them to order, and are mostly the ones with heretical teachings and unfamiliar practices.

### 34. Women leadership

a) Do you have women in the top leadership of your church?

Purpose: to check if the church is gender sensitive and accommodates women in the top leadership of its structures.

Results: 90% of the respondents said they do have women leadership.

Some highlights:

Some of the respondents highlighted that women are very faithful and committed people in the top leadership structure with their commitment, consistent and loyal as compared to men.

One respondent said he has only males in the top leadership of the church structure that he leads. This is due to the democratic will of the people in the church. They have elected only males. But he is personally not against women being elected in the top structure of any church.

b) What do you think about women in the top leadership of your church?

Purpose: to check what the attitude of the church leader is towards women in the top leadership of the church structure.

Results: 100% of the respondents are in support for women in the top structure of leadership.

Some highlights:

All the respondents said women are good people to work with at the top leadership of the church.

c) Do you have women pastors in your church?

Purpose: to see what the view of the church leader is about ladies who are called to be pastors in the ministry. To check if there is still the traditional mentality that only men can be called to be pastors in the ministry.

Results: 100% of participants are supporting the idea of women pastors even if some of them do not have women pastors at the moment.

35. Statement of faith

a) Who was responsible in making the statement of faith in the church that you lead?

Purpose: to check if there is any statement of faith in the church. The church members without the statement of faith are likely to be easily derailed since they do not have something they believe in written for them always to see and remember.

Results: 100% of the respondents have the statement of faith in the churches that they lead.

b) What do you do to ensure that members know the statement of faith of the local church?

Purpose: to see if the statement of faith has been displayed or has some way of showing for all members to see and read all the times inside the church.

Results: 100% of the respondents said they have some ways of teaching members the statement of faith.

Some highlights:

One of the respondents said he teaches members the statement of faith any time during service when they have time to do that.

One of the respondents said he teaches the statement of faith every time they have a night prayer. They put the time aside during night prayers to teach the statement of faith.

36. Creed for the church

a) Is there any creed that your church has adopted?

Purpose: to check if the church has any creed to teach and to believe in for all members to recite and remember.

Results: 100% of the participants said they do not have creed that they have adopted in the churches that they lead.

One respondent elaborated by saying that he has only adopted part of it in the mission statement of the church.

c) Why was it necessary that you adopt the creed that your church is using?

Purpose: to check if the church leader understands the importance of the creed for church membership.

Results: 100% of the respondents said they do not have any creed they have adopted in the churches that they lead

Some highlights

Most of the church leaders said they did not see the need for having any creed due to the fact that they never saw creeds being used in the Charismatic churches they grew up in before.

Some of the respondents did not have any idea of what the creed is and the researcher had to constantly remind them with some examples about what the creed is.

d) In which way can the creed that you adopted curb the unfamiliar practices in your church?

Purpose: to see if the church leader understands the way creeds will curb heretical teachings and peculiar practises in the church that he leads.

Results: 100% of the respondents said creeds could help them a lot in curbing the unfamiliar practices in the churches that they lead because members would remember what they believe in all the times and would not fall easy to heretical teachings.

Some highlights and discussion:

Some of the respondents were for the first time interested in creeds and felt like introducing some of the creeds to their membership.

Some of the respondents believe that if the church of today was introduced earlier to the creeds, the church would not have been such easy target for deceptions like we see is happening today.

### 37. Teaching and preaching

#### a) Normally, how long are your sermons?

Purpose: to check the duration pastors are preaching the sermon in the church. It is a belief that the pastors with short sermons are not able to articulate and will make their members have deep knowledge of the word as compared to those with an hour or so.

Results: 80% of the church leaders said they can preach less than one hour except one who said he normally preaches more than an hour.

Some highlights and discussion:

The respondent who said he normally preaches for more than one hour mentioned the fact that if one wants his congregation to be **Word**-based, he needs to have more time to preach the **Word**. He mentioned also that people rooted in the **Word** are not falling prey to heretical teachings and false doctrines.

#### b) What do you do other than the normal way in sermons preaching?

Purpose: to check if the pastor is skilled enough in terms of using other methods of preaching unlike the traditional method of standing at the pulpit and preaching.

Results: 80% of the respondents did not show that they use other methods or use any other resources for the preaching of the sermon except the usual traditional methods, except two who mentioned a number of ways to preach the sermon.

Some highlights and discussion:

Some of the respondents said they use a Bible study method, i.e., discussion methods with the whole church sometimes.

Others said it depends on the size of the church and the nature of the meeting as well as the time that the church has to introduce these other methods in an effective manner.

One respondent said he normally gives the members some notes on the particular topic and discusses them during the service.

#### c) How do members normally respond to your sermons while preaching?

✓ Tick the correct box

Making a noise and standing	Seated and taking notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Purpose: to check if the pastor enjoys the sermon where members will stand and shout or the situation where members will sit down and take notes. Members who will sit down are likely to be good listeners as compared to those who will stand and make a noise.

Results: 90% of the respondents said the members are seated and taking notes except one who said that it depends on the kind of the sermon.

Some highlights and discussion:

One respondent mentioned that if the sermon is a teaching kind, members sit down and take notes but if it is exciting, or motivational, members will stand up and shout.

### 39. Leadership and theological training

a) What do you think about giving theological training to lay preachers?

Purpose: to see if the church leader values theological education of lay preacher before they start doing ministry work.

Results: 80% of the participants value theological training even though there are some whose members did not go for theological training. The remaining part said they have other means of doing it.

Some highlights and discussion:

One respondent mentioned that all the pastors serving under him did not go for any theological training, since he did not see its importance by then.

One respondent mentioned that he does theological training by himself for his lay preachers to be ordained as pastors.

One respondent in favour of theological training for lay preachers mentioned the fact that lack of theological training is the main cause of heretical teachings, unfamiliar practices and church splits and separations among church members.

"The wrong interpretation of the scripture is caused by lack of theological training by lay preachers" said one of the respondents.

b) Will there be any benefits to give lay preachers some theological training, Explain.

Purpose: to see if the church leader acknowledges the benefits lay preachers will offer if they have some theological training.

Results: All the respondents responded by saying theological training is good for lay preachers even though they differed with the issue of who must do it.

Some highlights and discussions:

80% of the respondents were for the idea that lay preachers need to go to theological school while one insisted on the issue of doing theological training by himself for members.

c) How do you use lay preachers with theological training?

Purpose: to see if the church leader has some programs and projects where he will use lay preachers with theological training.

Results: 100% of the church leaders said they are using lay preachers effectively and have some programs to do so.

Some highlights and discussions:

One church leader responded by saying that he uses lay preachers with theological training to preach at the church, and to conduct outreach meeting and crusades.

One respondent mentioned that they use lay preachers with theological training to lead various sub-departments like choir, worship team, intercessions and morning devotions in the church and to conduct funeral services if he is unable to attend.

One respondent mentioned that they use them for leading home cells, and to visit the sick and the needy.

d) What procedure do you follow to ordain new pastors?

Purpose: to check if the church leader has the procedure to ordain new pastors in the ministry.

Results: The participants responded in various ways, some mentioned that the lay preachers must first go for theological training, followed by probation for a certain period, and then will be ordination to be a pastor. Others said nothing about a probation period.

Some highlights:

80% of the respondents mentioned that theological training is important, except one of the pastors who did not go to any theological training, but sees its importance after our discussion.

One of the respondents mentioned the fact that lack of theological training is one of the causes for heretical teachings and peculiar practices in our communities.

One of the respondents mentioned that a lack of theological training is the main cause of rebellious spirits among young church leaders who have the tendency to go out and start their new churches once they are being rebuked or disciplined. This results into the split of many churches as they leave with a number of church members sympathising with them.

40. Experience and the work of the ministry

a) Do you think is a good thing to rely on experience only to do the ministry work?

Purpose: to see if the church leader understands the way only experience can lead leaders astray if is used without the **Word** of God.

Results: 100% of the participants were against the point of relying on experience only, and said that this will not be sufficient for the work of ministry.

Some highlights:

100% of the respondents said they cannot rely on experience only since that will make them unfruitful in the ministry.

b) What do you think about you relying on experience only when doing the work of the ministry?

Purpose: The purpose is that the church leader must understand that relying on experience only can be insufficient and dangerous to the ministry work.

Results: 100% of the respondents replied positively that relying only on experience can be dangerous for the work of ministry.

Some highlights and discussions:

One of the respondents mentioned the fact that church leaders need to read, and attend seminars so that they get new information and new ways of doing ministry work.

One participant mentioned that church leaders need to separate time for prayer and seek new direction from God that the must be effective in the ministry work.

One respondent said experience must not be totally rejected since it is the best teacher, and is accumulated through many years of hard work. There is no school for experience and there is no amount of money that can buy it.

One respondent mentioned the challenge faced by young pastors who reject experience and experienced church leaders and hope that they can do without them, but end up making a lot of mistakes in the ministry work. This is the case with the young pastors and prophets who are feeding people rodents, grass, and making them drink petrol to prove their faith.

c) Is there any collaboration between experience and the Word in your doing of the ministry work?

Purpose: The purpose is to check if the church leader understands the collaboration that may exist between the **Word** and experience.

Results: 100% of the respondents replied that there is a collaboration and there must be that collaboration between the two.

Some highlights and discussion:

One respondent mentioned that experience and **the Word** must work together for church leaders to have a balanced view of things. The leader who depends on experience only will not do well. As much that one who will rely on **the Word** only will also have some challenges due to the fact that there are other older church leaders who have passed through that road.

One respondent said mixing the two, namely **the Word** and experience will save time, energy and resources for many church leaders who will go to others and ask for some advice that is **Word**-based. God fearing, older church leaders will help to talk to the

leaders facing challenges in the ministry and in life, with their rich experience in their walking with God.

#### **4.20. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion is based on the last section from 4.14. It focuses on the empirical research and the results concerning Charismatic church leaders' in Emfuleni municipality area responses and discussions with regard to the subject of injunction to discern and test the spirits. We will look at the findings of the research and the insights that were arrived at in the earlier chapters, namely; chapter one, chapter two and chapter three respectively.

The first concern the researcher has noted is the titles of the church leaders and the number of the pastors reporting under them. The title of the church leader and the people reporting to them is calling for a concern in the sense that there is a discrepancy and incongruence between the title of the bishop and the pastors. According to the investigation conducted one will find in many cases that the bishop subordinates are one or two with the highest number of fifteen and with no branches mentioned in many cases.

One will be tempted to ask if church leaders only rush to the position of a bishop or is this based on the other reason not mentioned even if this was not part of the questions of the research. Or there is a history in the church somewhere where it faced a church split.

One of the respondents highlighted on this issue to say that any title must be followed by certain credentials and gift of the spirit in order to fulfil the ministry in that office. He mentioned the case of the pastor who has not grown spiritually, the prophet with the title but not prophesying, and an evangelist without passion for the souls.

The theological training of the church leaders in the Emfuleni municipality area is the second point that calls for concern. The investigation shows that out of the respondents in the sample many have matric only. Even though many of them have attended theological training but still without matric.

One will also mention the fact that some of the respondents have a diploma, degree, honours and one with a master's degree in theology. This is encouraging and giving hope to the church in the Emfuleni municipality area. One will think that this is the reason for the slow church growth in the area. As one will suggest that if church leaders are with low qualification in majority they cannot be effective to impact that community with the message of the Gospel. With the challenges like decline in membership and exchanging of membership from one church to another not real soul winning of new converts.

On the very same score the researcher must not hold his breath to mention that there are highly qualified church leaders in the Emfuleni municipality area with doctors and professors in theology, even though they were not participants in this study due to the fact that they are not in the demarcation lines of this study.

The size of the churches numerically is one of the points that has been noted by the researcher in his investigation. The incongruence between the number of memberships and the years the church was established, for example, the church that was established in 1998 has 100 members, whereas the church established in 1999 has 150 members.

This shows a small growth or interruption that took place sometime in the history of the church. This is what the church leader needs to find out that what it that interrupts church growth in the Emfuleni municipality area is. The researcher needs to mention that there are also very big churches, well-built to the world class stature with over five thousand members, even though their church leaders were not participants in this study due to the reasons mentioned already.

Discernment cases from the Bible and today is the core of the study and what the researcher was mainly focusing on. Many of the respondents did well to mention the cases of discernment in the times of the Bible. But based on their responses, the researcher is still not convinced that many of the church leaders in Emfuleni municipality region understand the injunction to discern and test the spirits or if they take this injunction as seriously as they are supposed to.

The concept is somehow far-fetched for them, as is supposed to be the injunction that they need to obey on daily basis of their lives. This is an indication that the church leaders need to have seminars and meetings where they will deal intensely with this subject. This is due to the fact that the cases of discernment are what we face on daily bases not only on one occasion, but in a life time.

On the question of miracle signs and wonders, all the respondents agree that miracle signs and wonders were not all from God during the Bible days, as well as those that are being performed in our days. They agree that the evil spirits were responsible for many of the miracles in Bible times. This includes many of the miracles that being performed today, many of them are still not from God but from evil spirits.

At the same score, the researcher cannot hold his breath to attest that there are still many miracle signs and wonders performed with the power of God. There are many genuine miracles performed by respectable men and women of God to demonstrate the power against the forces of evil like Moses did in front of Pharaoh and his magician, and what Elijah did to frustrate the prophets of Baal.

One respondent said people need to check the source of a miracle that entails the spirit behind the working spirit. The researcher emphasises that this is where the injunction to discern and test the spirits is needed so as to know the spirit in operation.

On the question of false prophets and teachers, all the respondents agree that there were false prophets during Bible times, and there are still false prophets and teachers in our times as mentioned in many examples. The respondents mentioned that we can detect false prophets by their character, love of money, love of fame, false doctrine, and unfulfilled prophecies.

At the same time, one need to mention that there are good prophets, to be a prophet means to be someone in the office of prophecy to comfort, rebuke and encourage the people of God. As we saw in the study in chapter two. At the same breath there are men and women who can also be prophets who forth tell or fore tell the future, but that is very rare in our times, except what is done by false prophets to make money. These are men and women of God who are highly respected in the Emfuleni area. These men and women respect the office of prophecy and are highly honoured by the church and

community because of the pure and consistent ministry that they have provided in the Emfuleni municipality area for years.

The issue of holy water was dealt with by the respondent in various ways; many of the respondents were against the use of holy water to say that it undermines the name of Christ to replace him with its power to heal and do miracles. Only one respondent was resolute and stood his ground to say that he is using holy water, oil, clothes, and other materials to heal people and said that he will use anything that God tells him to use to heal his people.

He further elaborated to say that Jesus used many things to heal the people including water, saliva, mud, the speaking of the word, touching of people, and many other things. He said as the follower of Jesus he will do the same and use anything to heal the people.

Leadership and theological training is one issue that was dealt with in the questionnaire. Many of the respondents agree with the issue of theological training of leadership but they differ on the way it needs to be done as some of the church leaders believe that they must do it personally while others believe that they must send their members to the theological school that agrees with the church doctrine. But all the respondents agree that theological training is important for leadership.

Experience and the work of the ministry is one of the questions that enjoyed great attention in the questionnaire. All the church leaders were for the idea that relying on experience only in doing ministry work is not profitable. They all believe that they need to grow and learn new things if they need to be efficient and effective in their work of ministry. The respondents believe that when experience is collaborated with the word of God, then that will be profitable to them. They all agree that experience is needed but it must not overrule the word in doing ministry work. Those with experience need to be respected but it must always be in line with the word.

These are the points covered from the empirical research that are regarded to be essential even though there were others of the same nature but the researcher thinks to write them all will be an unnecessary exercise of repetition that will not benefit this study.

#### **4.20. THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH AND THE INSIGHTS THAT WERE ARRIVED AT IN THE EARLIER CHAPTERS.**

In this part, the researcher will attempt to evaluate the responses of the respondents by insights that were arrived at in the earlier chapters of the study. The focus will be briefly on the main topics that were handled from chapters 1-3 of the study.

The topics that will be looked into are; what is the meaning of the injunction to discern and test the spirits; the biblical and theological evidences in Chapter 2 with a few examples of cases; the historical evidence in Chapter 3 showing the way church leaders have handled the injunction to discern and test the spirits throughout history; and looking closely on the case of Marcion, Montanas, Anabaptist, and the Roman church.

The researcher needs also to mention that many of these cases were confirmed in the study he conducted. Not all cases were included, but he has managed to pick up these

few so as not repeat the work that was already done. For that will do disservice to the study.

#### **4.20.1. What is the meaning to discern and test the spirits?**

The meaning to discern and test the spirits is what was the crux of the matter in the study; attempting to see how the Charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality region are taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

It was found in the investigations conducted that the meaning is obscure to some church leaders, while the others are casually taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits. But there are few that have a clear understanding of the injunction to discern and test the spirits, who are providing very relevant and practical examples. Those who believe that discernment is with various levels and these levels go with the level of the person's spiritual maturity.

#### **4.20.2. The biblical and theological evidence to discern and test the spirits**

There are many cases that were confirmed by the findings of the researcher but the researcher has picked up these few cases to confirm the investigation of the study:

##### **4.20.2.1. The case of Balaam and Balak**

The case of Balaam and Balak was confirmed in the sense that the respondents have confirmed that some of the church leaders like fame and riches, selling their services and gifts like healing, miracles, prophecies, and even their time. This means that to get these services, the church members must pay a certain amount of money. To see the church leader, a member needs to pay a certain amount of money; the same is done with healing and prophecies. Balaam was after money, which is why he ended up trying to curse Israel even when God told him not to do that.

##### **4.20.2.2. The case of Saul burning the sacrifice**

The case of Saul not being willing to wait for Samuel and burned the sacrifice even when he knew that was wrong is what characterises some of the church leaders today. They have no reverence for the holy things of God. We see church leaders doing horrible things in social media and newspapers.

The spirit of Saul of not being willing to wait is what characterises many church leaders of today. They cannot wait for God to lead and guide them. They always do things as they wish, not listening to anyone not even the same God who called them. They end up piercing their hearts with many sorrows and shame.

##### **4.20.2.3. The case of Peter rebuking Simon the sorcerer**

The case of Peter and Simon the sorcerer is what is confirmed with regard to the findings of this study. Peter rebuked Simon because he wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. We have many church leaders today who want to buy the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who go all over the place looking for impartation, the gift of miracles, and

prophecies. These church leaders will not hesitate to go all over the continent to find someone who can help their church to grow fast, so that they will be rich and have fame.

#### **4.20.2.4 The case of Deuteronomy 13:1-2 and Deuteronomy 18:22**

In the book of Deuteronomy (18:22) God commands the nation of Israel that they must not fear any prophet who will say a thing and it must not come to pass. Many of the prophets today are saying the things that are not coming to pass. There are cases from social media and newspapers where the church leaders are faking prophecies and miracles to an extent they are pretending to raise a person from the dead while he was in fact not dead. This was the worst scenario in the recent cases of unfamiliar practices done by some church leaders.

One also needs to look at the commandment of Deuteronomy 13:1-3 when God says that even if what the prophet says does come to pass, the Israelites must not be deceived or enticed by the false prophet. God says even if the prophet says a thing and it comes to pass, and encourages the Israelites to follow another god, they must not follow that prophet or fear him.

The findings have confirmed this study, that when the people are following any person because they think he is performing miracles without any rationality, they are likely to be derailed. One of the respondents mentioned the fact that people need to check inside and see the spirits behind the miracles, the source of those miracles is what counts because it tells you the spirits operating in the person to do the miracles.

#### **4.20.3. The historical evidence**

There are evidences in the history of the church that were also confirmed by the findings. Though there are many cases, the researcher has picked up these few cases:

##### **4.20.3.1. The case of Marcion**

Marcion, in the early church, believed that the holy books of the scriptures must be composed of only a few books from the New Testament. He rejected any book from the Old Testament saying they are the history of the Jews. Marcion believed that there was a difference between the God of the Jews and that of Jesus Christ. According to Marcion, the God of the Jews was a cruel and evil God killing people while the one of Jesus was kind and merciful.

This is the confirmation that was confirmed by the study about the church leaders who will only take what they need from the Bible. One of the respondents mentioned that there are church leaders who will only take what they want from the Bible but reject anything that does not suit them or their church doctrine.

One of the respondent mentioned that some of the church leaders makes their doctrine first and then looks for the scriptures that will justify them instead of finding for their churches doctrine from the Bible doctrine. They look for good scriptures that will support their beliefs and interpretation of the Bible even if that is unbiblical.

#### **4.20.3.2. The case of Montanus**

The Montanists were characterised by the rejection of authorities. The problem was their hunger for power and authority. Hence they ended up attempting to destroy the authority and administration of the day with threats and violence. Their false prophecies and belief that God will bring his Kingdom in Papuza, Phrygia, and with Montanus as their saviour was all unscriptural.

This was confirmed in our study, we see in our days, church leaders with false prophecies of the end time messages, who exalt themselves. A classic example is of Macoba Church in the Eastern Cape Province. They claimed to be seven angels sent by God. They refused children's education and took the money for membership to live a communal life. But they ended up committing crimes to finance their unbiblical life style. They finally died cruelly exchanging gun fire with the police.

#### **4.20.3.3. The case of Anabaptists**

One other example is that of the Anabaptists who focused on one aspect of the scripture, namely baptism in water. To them, everyone was supposed to be baptised for the second time to prepare for the second coming of Christ. To them, anyone who was not baptised was regarded as a pagan. They finally confiscated a town and administration where they wanted every member to be baptised or face execution.

This was confirmed as a danger when the church leader focused only on one aspect of the scripture and left the rest. We find church leaders with one focus only today, for example, those who will focus on deliverance, prosperity, prophecy, money, healing, and miracles. The focus need to be on all areas, not only one even though it does not mean that the church leader will be gifted in all these areas.

#### **4.20.2.4. The case of the Roman church**

The case of the Roman church is one other example that cannot be overlooked in this instance. The Roman church was powerful and rich in the medieval period. But the church abused its powers and made many people go astray. The belief of purgatory and the selling of penances was the worst road that the church can ever take until Martin Luther and other reformers came into the picture to challenge these evil practices.

This is confirmed by many churches of today. Some of the church leaders, when they see things going well, the church grows fast and is becoming rich, they seem to forget that Christ is the head of the church. They introduce evil and unscriptural church doctrines that are contrary to the scriptures. They find new unbiblical doctrines that will dilute the Gospel and go according to the will of the people not God.

These are the points covered from the empirical research that are regarded to be essential even though there were others of the same nature. The findings are concluded with the points that are the outcomes that confirm the insight that were arrived at in the previous chapters.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 1, the study commenced with the research proposal, research questions and the meaning of injunction to discern and test the spirits. In Chapter 2, the study focused on the biblical content and the meaning of injunction to discern and test the spirits. This was done with the aim to explore and highlight the biblical content and meaning of injunction to discern and test the spirits and the focus was on both the Old Testament and New Testament, to look at how people obeyed or disobeyed the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

Chapter 3 focused on some of the insights that can be learned about discernment from church history with reference to the Charismatic churches and the aim was to highlight some of the insights that can be learned about discernment and testing of the spirits from church history. Chapter 4 worked on the empirical questions; interviewing the church leaders to find their response with regard to the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

In this chapter, the researcher aims to offer suggestions as well as some guidelines to the Charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality area and all who will be interested to study what the injunction to discern and test the spirits is, and the role it plays in the church leader's ministry and the church membership at large.

In this last chapter, the researcher will focus on the following headings in order to conclude the study and make some recommendations based on the responses from the participants. The researcher will focus on a few namely; the meaning to discern and test the spirits; the biblical and theological evidence to discern and test the spirits; the theological training of church leaders; church registration; theological training of church leaders; and the employment of church leaders.

## **5.2. THE MEANING OF INJUNCTION TO DISCERN AND TEST THE SPIRITS**

Kistemaker (1993:425) calls the discernment of the spirit the second gift in the communicative category that is linked to the preceding gift of prophecy. Paul says some believers have received this gift to distinguish spirits. The power and influence of the spirits can be discerned by their word, deed and appearance through the gift of discernment of the spirits. The devil communicates false information appearing as an angel of light according to 2 Corinthians (11:14).

Eighty percent of the respondents did well to answer and showed their understanding of the meaning of the word discernment of the spirits is, with 20% who had no understanding of what the word really means since it was a far-fetched idea. The meaning to discern and test the spirits has a deep meaning; far more than what many church leaders thought they knew about it.

One of the respondents mentioned that discernment of the spirits has various levels that cannot be perceived by everyone but depending on the level of the spiritual growth of each person individually. He mentioned that there is a shallow level, easily perceived by many. The deeper level perceived not by many. The very deep level that can be perceived by few and lastly the hidden level that can be perceived but only by very few people.

The recommendation is that the church leaders must take the injunction to discern and test the spirits very seriously; that all church leaders must strive to get into deeper levels of discernment so that they will be effective in their work of the ministry.

There are evil spirits that can hide very deep in the lives of the people and operate in the church without being seen, much like the evil spirit that was speaking in Peter rebuking Jesus not to speak about his imminent death on the cross. The evil spirits that were operating in Judas to sell Christ, is a classic example.

Kistemaker (1993:425) states that when the conduct of some people differs from the norms prescribed by the Bible, those who have the gift of discernment ought to take action to separate the truth from the lie. Church leaders need taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. This will happen when the church leader is conscious of the spirits that are operating in the church so that he knows when it is not the Holy Spirit.

### **5.3. THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE**

All the respondents believe that there is biblical evidence and biblical cases where the injunction to discern and testing the spirits was well-handled and also where it was not appropriately handled; the respondent quoted many cases but to mention the few. The case few cases the researcher will mention will start with those where discernment and testing the spirit was well-handled, followed by those where it was inappropriately handled.

#### **5.3.1. The case of Paul rebuking the little girl with the python spirit**

Many respondents mentioned the case of Paul in Silas going to the service at the time of prayer as the girl was shouting at them for a number of days saying they are the servants of the Highest God. Paul saw that the spirit praising them was an evil spirit, the spirit of python that has possessed the girl and Paul cast it out in Acts 16:16-18. This indicates that the church leader must not only be impressed by the person or people praising them, but they must look for the spirit inside the person praising them if is the spirit of God or not; if it is not the spirit of God, they must rebuke it and cast it out.

#### **5.3.2. The case of Peter rebuking Simon the sorcerer**

Eighty percent of the respondents mentioned the case of Peter rebuking Simon the sorcerer. Simon was in Samaria deceiving people young and old with his magic. They all believed in him. When Peter comes and baptises people, Simon also wanted the gift of the Holy Spirit and gave money to buy it from Peter, but Peter saw the evil heart of Simon and rebuked him. Peter saw the devil speaking in Simon and rebuked him. The researcher recommends to church leaders that they must not take any money to sell the gifts of God. Freely given, they must freely give.

Those church leaders who find themselves selling healing, prophecies, and miracles and material things to help the people of God will err and find themselves out of the will of God. There are ways that God take care of his people to survive by means of tithes and offering but selling the gifts for money is not one of them.

### **5.3.3. The case of Jesus rebuking Peter**

One of the respondents did well to mention the case of Jesus rebuking Peter. Jesus was telling about his death on the cross but Peter took him aside and advised him not to talk like that. Jesus saw the devil speaking inside Peter and he rebuked the devil hiding and speaking in Peter. Jesus saw that it was not Peter speaking. This is an indication that some of the people will come and tell the church leader how to speak, how to preach and pray, that he must change the way he dresses so that he must be in style and attract people but one must see when the devil speaks inside a person.

### **5.3.4. The case of Samuel rebuking Saul burning the sacrifice**

The disobedience of Saul was a serious challenge in his rule as the king of Israel. The core of this challenge was not taking the injunction to discern and test the spirits seriously. When he was supposed to wait for Samuel to come and burn the sacrifice during the time of war, he failed and took it upon himself to burn the sacrifice. This was a sin that led to the final downfall of Saul and his final rejection by God. Samuel was a seer and the discerner, he did well to rebuke Saul and his kind of behaviour of not discerning the holy things of God.

The researcher recommends that church leaders must be patient enough to wait for the things of God. Always give God a chance to do the things at his time and his way. Doing so will save us a lot of stress, pain and destruction. To wait for the growth of the church is one thing that many cannot wait for, and will look for various ways to speed up the process even by taking evil ways do it by deliberately pushing in demonic spirits into the church to achieve this goal.

There are also the cases where discernment and testing of the spirit was not well-handled. We find these types of cases mostly in the Old Testament.

### **5.3.5. The case of Adam and Eve**

One of the respondents mentioned the case of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve was well placed in the garden with all provision and protection but chose to listen to the lies of the devil. Eve could not see that it was the devil speaking inside the serpent.

She chose the lies of the devil instead of believing the truth of God. She wanted to be wiser than God and never die as she was told by the serpent. She only realised later that it was all lies from the devil when they were expelled from the garden and miseries that followed.

Many church leaders will do well not to listen to the lies of the devil. The devil still comes with fancy, rich-looking people promising the church leaders heaven and earth today. Promising that they will be rich, famous, do miracles and respected by all, but only to find that he only wanted entice, to deceive and betray them until they have lost the will of God.

### **5.3.6. The case of Balaam and Balak**

Many of the respondents remembered to mention the case of Balaam and Balak. Balak wanted Balaam the pagan prophet to curse Israel and put a lot of presents before him. When Balaam tried to go and curse Israel, he was stopped by his donkey that saw the angel of the Lord with a sword in the road.

The researcher recommends that church leaders will do well not to sell the truth because of money, presents or fame. The church leader must not allow anyone to buy them with treasures of this world but must stand for the truth all the time. They must avoid easy riches and know that promotion and prosperity come from God.

### **5.3.7. The case of Saul saving the king of Amalekites**

This is the case that was remembered by 100% of the respondents. The case that Saul was instructed to kill all the Amalekites but he spared for himself the fat cows, sheep and goats as well as Agag the king of the Amalekites. Saul had no discernment to know that this act was important to God as he wanted to take revenge to the Amalekites and that they must all be destroyed. The researcher finds that this is a classic case of disobedience of the person without discernment. The researcher recommends that the church leaders will do well to take any instruction of God seriously no matter how big or small, no matter how it makes sense or does not.

### **5.3.8. The case of King Jehoshaphat going to war with King Ahab**

One of the respondents mentioned the case of King Jehoshaphat and Ahab going to war, one of the classic examples. Jehoshaphat had no discernment to go to war with Ahab who was worshipping idols. But he decided to impress Ahab who had evil intentions to kill him in that war. Ahab had well-orchestrated that he must be killed in the war but Jehoshaphat was only saved by God. The researcher recommends that church leaders will do well to obey an injunction to discern and test the spirits even in small decisions because that may cause ones' life.

The researcher recommends that church leaders should have a good choice of friends. That they choose God fearing friends even if they are also church leaders because not all are God fearing. One will only realise that when he is in deep trouble without God.

## **5.4. THEOLOGICAL TRAINING OF CHURCH LEADERS**

The researcher noted the following pattern with the theological training of the church leaders. Thirty-three percent of the participants have no matric or have matric only. Thirty-three percent have matric and certificate or diploma while the other 20% have a degree in theology with the last remaining 13% with an honours degree and higher qualification up to masters' degree.

This investigation indicates that we have a large number of church leaders without matric or with matric only. And we have few church leaders with higher qualifications. The researcher noted that more of the church leaders are ending up with only certificates or

diplomas for which some do not even require matric to do, hence is this discrepancy even in our figures pertaining to the issue of church growth and membership.

The researcher recommends that church leaders will work on improving their qualifications so that they will be more effective in their work of the ministry. Church leaders should encourage the younger, up-coming leaders to complete matric first and go for higher qualifications before embarking on ministry work.

#### **5.5. CHURCH REGISTRATION**

All of the respondents have registered their churches. The researcher has found out that some of the church leaders have experienced difficulties when they were registering the churches that they lead even if they finally managed to register. With the advice of his supervisor the researcher has asked the church leader to furnish him with the proof of registrations and some of the church leaders did manage to email or send him letters of proof of registration that are safely kept to protect their identity.

The researcher recommends that all church leaders register the churches that they lead from the onset. This will assist them to run the church in an efficient and professional way, to be able to open a church bank account and other related matters. It is appropriate for the church to register so that it can access other services and opportunities like securing bank loans, sponsors, and donors for church building projects.

#### **5.8. MISSION AND VISION OF THE CHURCH**

All of the respondents responded that they have the vision and mission of the church in the churches that they lead. Some of the respondents said that the church leader was responsible for the writing of the vision and mission of the church that they lead. Others said now that they are part of a big church lead by the council and they found the mission and vision written already.

The researcher in his field work saw some of these mission and vision posters and big banners displayed in some of the churches. The researcher recommends that all churches must have a vision and mission displayed so that members will always read and remember them. The church without a mission and vision does not know where it is going and how to get there.

#### **5.7. THE STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE CHURCH**

All the respondents mentioned that they have the statement of faith in the churches that they lead. One respondent mentioned that the document helps the church and all members to remember what they believe in and because of it, it is not easy for the members to fall prey to false teachings. The researcher with the advice of his supervisor requested these documents and some of the church leaders were cooperative and sent the copies of their statement of faith through email and other social media means. They are presently with the researcher who promised not to publicise them so as to protect their identity.

The researcher recommends that all the churches must have the statement of faith that will be displayed for all members to read at any time they want to. This will curb the spread of false doctrines that are derailing many church members.

#### **5.8. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EXPERIENCE AND THE WORD**

All the respondents mentioned that they will not rely on experience only to do the work of the ministry. They mention that even though experience is a good thing, it cannot be the only thing to rely on. All the participants, when coming to the question of collaboration between experience and the word, agreed that there must be collaboration between the two that will enhance and harness their work of the ministry.

The researcher also wants to recommend that for the younger church leaders, it will be good to collaborate with the older church leaders. Not to stand alone but respect the experience of those who are older and more mature in the ministry work. This will save them time and many pains that they will avoid.

#### **5.11. EMPLOYMENT OF CHURCH LEADERS**

Thirteen percent of the church leaders who participated are employed, 0% are unemployed and 87% are full-time in the ministry. This means that a large number of the church leaders in the sample have enough time to do the ministry work. This has the potential to yield good results. In many cases, church leaders who are full-time in the ministry are likely to achieve more than those who are still employed due to the fact that they have more time to focus, pray, preach and manage the ministry work. But there are exceptional cases even though we cannot generalise on this matter.

The researcher recommends that all the church leaders must find ways of being effective in the ministry work whether being employed full-time or part-time. Church leaders will not be discouraged and lose focus just because they are unemployed but can find different ways to have an income even with a small church membership and God will multiply anything that comes into their hands.

#### **5.12. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, one must remember the powerful words of Goll (2017:185) about discernment where he encourages the children of God not only to discern and test the spirits but the discerners as well. Goll (2017:185) says: "The discerners do not operate by themselves, because they ally with their like-minded followers Christ. They appreciate the varied gifts that God has given to the members of his body. They can see how God's gifts are and graces are working together to make the church as the bride of the Christ, ready for the Bridegroom, Jesus".

The injunction to discern and test the spirit is not only the duty of a few well-known church leaders, but the duty of all. Not only of church leaders but of all church members, for all are faced with the attacks of evil spirits on daily basis. They have to make decisions with discernment and test the spirits on a daily basis. To err is not difficult because it is a very thin line between erring and achieving the perfect will of God. That is the reason we

sometimes find church leaders who have gone astray and are never able to come back to the path of righteousness.

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**ANNEXURE A**

**EMPIRICAL SECTION QUESTIONNAIRE**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS INTERVIEW.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and ability.

Questions

1 .GENDER

Please tick the correct answer

Male	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 .AGE

25-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56-65 years + more
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

Matric Only	Matric Certificate/Diploma + in Ministry	Degree in Theology	Honours degree in Theology or Higher
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PASTORING?

✓ Tick the correct box

1-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	31-40 Years	40-50 Years
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. ARE YOU THE FOUNDER OF THIS CHURCH?

✓ Tick the correct box

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

--	--

6. IS THIS THE FIRST CHURCH YOU LEAD?

✓ Tick the correct box

Yes	No

7. MARITAL STATUS

✓ Tick the correct box

Unmarried	Married	Divorced	Widowed

8. ARE YOU EMPLOYED?

✓ Tick the correct box

Employed	Unemployed	Self employed	Full time Ministry

9. DID YOU ATTEND ANY THEOLOGICAL TRAINING TO DO MINISTRY WORK?

✓ Tick the correct box

Yes	No

10. DO YOU REPORT TO ANY ONE IN THE WORK OF MINISTRY?

✓ Tick the correct box

Yes	No

11. WHAT IS YOUR TITTLE IF YOU REPORT TO ANYONE?

✓ Tick the correct box

Evangelist	Pastor	Prophet Prophetess	/	Apostle	Bishop

12. WHAT IS THE TITTLE OF THE PERSON YOU ARE REPORTING TO?

✓ Tick the correct box

Evangelist	Pastor	Prophet Prophetess	/	Bishop

13. HOW OLD IS THE CHURCH YOU LEAD NOW?

✓ Tick the correct box

5-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	31-40 Years

14. WHEN WAS THE CHURCH FOUNDER?

15. WHO WAS THE LEADER WHO STATED THE CHURCH?

16. ARE THERE OTHER JUNIOR PASTORS REPORTING TO YOU?

✓ Tick the correct box

Yes	No

17. WHAT IS THE SIZE OF THE CHURCH YOU ARE PASTORING NUMERICALLY

18. HOW MANY IF ARE JUNIOR PASTORS UNDER YOU?

19. MISSION AND VISION

Does the church have a vision and mission statement?

---

a) What are those things that distinguishes the church from other local churches?

---

b) What does your church have in common with other local churches?

---

20. CHURCH GOVERNANCE

a) Is there a church board in your church?

-----

b) Is the board mixed with males and females?

---

c) Is the local assembly independent or work with others in collaboration?

---

21. DISCERNMENT CASES IN THE BIBLE

a) Do you remember of any cases in the Bible where discernment was used?

---

---

b) Which case can you remember where discernment was well used in the Bible days?

---

---

c) Which case you can remember where discernment was not well used?

---

---

## 22. COMMUNIAL DISCERNMENT

a) Do you remember of any case where you had a problem in the community?

---

b) Did you meet as the local pastors in the community to pray for direction from God?

---

c) Can you briefly tell what the results were after that community and local pastors prayed?

---

## 23. DISCERNMENT IN CHOOSING PREACHERS TO COME AND PREACH

a) Are all people from outside allowed to preach in your church?

---

b) Are there church leaders you will have difficulty to invite to come and preach?

---

c) Why will you be not open to other preachers to come and preach you church?

---

d) Which factors determine your collaboration with other local pastors?

---

## 24. THE TEACHING FROM THE BIBLE

a) Is the Bible essential in your church?

---

b) Can people teach with other books excluding the Bible in the church that you lead?

---

c) Are the people allowed to teach in your church on the basis of dreams and visions?

---

## 25. MIRACLES, SIGNS AND WONDERS

a) Where all miracles, signs and wonders from God during Bible times?

---

b) All miracles, signs and wonders in our days are from God?

---

c) Should all pastors be attested by miracles signs and wonders to proof that they are called?

---

#### 26. FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

a) Where there false teachers in the early days of the church?

---

b) Are there false prophets and teachers in our days?

---

c) What are some of the things by which false teachers can be detected today?

---

#### 27. HOLY WATER

a) Do you use holy water in your church or in the church you lead?

---

b) If yes, why do you use holy water?

---

c) If your answer is no, please explain why you do not use holy water in the church that you lead?

---

#### 28. CHURCH REGISTRATION

a) Is your church already registered?

---

b) If no do you have some plans to do so?

---

c) What challenge you may face regarding registration?

---

29. CHURCH FINANCES

a) What is the main source of your church income?

---

b) What is your thinking about opening the church account in the full details of the church?

---

c) What is your thinking about opening the church account in your names and details?

---

30. FINANCIAL PROSPERITY OF CHURCH MEMBERS

a) Are there poor people in the church that you lead?

---

b) Are there rich people in the church that you lead?

---

c) Does the church that you lead have the programmes to lift those who are poor financially?

---

31. COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN NATIONAL PASTORS

a) Do you know any foreign national pastor in your community?

---

b) Have you ever worked together with them in some events?

---

c) What do you think about foreign national pastors starting churches in your community?

---

32. CHURCH CONSTITUTION

a) Do you have church constitution in the church that you lead?

---

b) If you have a constitution in your church what procedures do you follow to change it?

---

33. WOMEN LEADERSHIP

a) Do you have women in the top leadership of your church?

---

b) What do you think about women in the top leadership of your church?

---

c) Do you have women pastors in your church?

---

#### 34. STATEMENT OF FAITH

a) Who was responsible in making the statement of faith in the church that you lead?

---

b) What do you do to ensure that members know the statement of faith of the local church?

---

#### 35. CREED FOR THE CHURCH

a) Is there any creed that your church have adopted?

---

c) Why was it necessary that you adopt the creed that your church is using?

---

d) In which way can the creed that you adopted curb the unfamiliar practices in your church?

---

#### 36. TEACHING AND PRECHING

a) Normally how long are your sermons?

---

b) What do you do other than the normal way in sermons preaching?

---

c) How do members normally respond to your sermons while preaching?

✓ Tick the correct box

Making noise and standing	Seating and taking notes

#### 37. LEADERSHIP AND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

a) What do you think about giving theological training to lay preachers?

---

b) Will there be any benefits to give lay preachers some theological training, Explain

---

c) How do you use lay preachers with theological training?

---

---

d) What procedure do you follow to ordain new pastors?

---

### 38. EXPERIENCE AND THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

a) Do you think is a good thing to rely on experience only to do the ministry work?

---

b) What do you think about you relying on experience only when doing the work of the ministry?

---

c) Is there any collaboration between experience and the Word in your doing of the ministry work?

---

## ANNEXURE B

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### Introduction

I am Rev. B.T. Nhlapo, a Masters Degree in Theology student at the North- West University in the Vaal Campus. I am conducting research about the injunction to discern and test the spirits among the charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality region. My student number is 10756698.

I will highly appreciate if I can be allowed to conduct the research with you as the church leader as one of the requirements to complete this task. I require to interview you as church leader and survey the views, attitudes, perceptions and experiences of you as charismatic church leader through a questionnaire. This study will be beneficial to the churches and communities in Emfuleni municipality area as the topic is one that yields the information with regard to the injunction to discern and test the spirits.

- 1.1. Your participation in this study is expected to be voluntarily.
- 1.2. You will not be under any duress.
- 1.3. You will be free to leave the study at any time should you feel like doing so.
- 1.4. Your names and information will be protected under anonymity
- 1.5. There will be no money or incentives as these may influence the outcomes of the study.
- 1.6. You will not be involved in any danger.

Should you decide to participate in the study you do so voluntarily under no any duress. And your voluntary participation to make this study a success is highly appreciated. You are welcome to withdraw from the study at any point should you feel like doing so. It is important that you indicate if you are ready to participate in this study by indication in the box below.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. B.T. Nhlapo

---

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---

I would highly appreciate if you participate in the research. The purpose of the interview and the survey is to clarify my understanding as well as to gather information attitudes, perceptions and experiences regarding the injunction to discern and test the spirits among charismatic church leaders in Emfuleni municipality area.

The participation in this process is voluntarily and you are allowed to withdraw from participating at any stage of the process. The data of the study will be reported unanimously for research purpose only.

**Permission**

I hereby request for your permission to:

Transcribe our interview or that you complete my survey questionnaire. And that I anonymously report my contribution and the feedback to the survey in dissertation, articles and books.

By ticking:



In the relevant response.

Yes	
No	

Title, Initials and surname of participant

---

Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEXURE C

### LIST OF PARTICIPATED CHARISMATIC CHURCH LEADERS.

The Researcher will like to express his deepest gratitude to the following Charismatic church leaders who have participated in the questionnaire of this study, for their time, commitment and contributions:

<b>Church leader names</b>	<b>The name of the church</b>
1.Bishop K.J. Komako	Christian Revival Centre
2.Bishop S.M. Maduna	Emmanuel Fellowship Church
3.Bishop G.J. van der Linde	All About Him Ministries
4.Bishop M.I. Bulwane	Light of God Church
3.Bishop N.J. Malindi	Fire In Control Ministries
6.Bishop F.J. Xaba	Shikinah Community Church
7.Apostle Kgateane	Jubilee Harvest Church
8.Prophet K.O. Mwale	Jubelee Harvest International Ministries
9.Rev. T.R. Mofokeng	Apostolic Faith Mission Church - Sharpeville
10.Rev. L.H.G. Mothijoa	Springs of Life Ministries
11.Rev. T.M. Montisi	Jesus Christ the King Church
12.Pastor S. Ralephanyane	Koinonia Bible Church

13.Pastor M.J. Tlharipe	Fountain of Life Global Church
14.Mme Mamoruti G.N.Nthoroane	Apostolic Faith Mission Church – Tshepiso
15.Pastor A.S. Morabe	Apostolic Faith Mission Church– Sebokeng

