

“The Lord Told Me”

By Barrington H. Brennen, December 7, 2008

The phrase, “The Lord told me to tell you,” is perhaps one of the most overused, misused, and abused phrases in the Christian world. Other phrases such as “God gave me a vision for you . . .,” “I have a prophecy about you . . .,” or “I have a message from the Lord for you . . .,” are equally popular misused ones. These are a few of them used by many zealous pastors and often church members to control or mislead others. The truth is the persons using them are not deliberately misleading or trying to control. They honestly believe that their “visions” or “messages” are from the Lord. When in reality they are a result of a toxic faith and misguided understanding of how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of individuals.

THE LORD DID TELL ME TO DO IT

Let me hasten to say that God can reveal Himself through visions and dreams. He can give special messages through someone to give to another. However, His messages are always in keeping with Biblical truths. They do not conflict. They are not confusing, demeaning, or destructive. Isaiah 10:24 states simply: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Several years ago, I was told of a woman who was married four times. After a long life of self destruction and four divorces, she felt hopeless and emotionally weak. This was when, late one night, she walked into a church where people were singing beautiful hymns. The singers seemed so kind, caring, and spiritual. After an inspiring sermon by the pastor, an appeal was made and she gave her heart to Jesus to begin the journey of spiritual renewal.

It was really a new beginning for her until the pastor got “a vision from the Lord” to reveal to her. It was just one week after her conversion, while attending a church service that the pastor came to her and said: “The Lord gave me a vision that you are to marry that man,” pointing to a gentleman. She became friendly with this gentleman. She trusted the pastor. “Of course, the pastor is a man of God. Why doubt him?” she thought to herself. As a result of that “prophetic revelation” this dear lady, not realizing her own vulnerability, got married to “that man” within two months. This became her fifth marriage and his fourth. Common sense would dictate that preparation for marriage takes time. In addition, even though they were both Christians, it does not mean they were made for each other to become husband and wife. But who would disagree with the pastor. He got a “vision from the Lord.”

WHY DIDN'T GOD TELL THE WHOLE TRUTH?

The pastor did say he got a vision from the Lord. Sad to say, “the Lord” did not tell the pastor of the terrible, abusive past of the man. Was it really “the Lord” or rather the pastor’s own toxic faith misguiding his over imaginative thoughts? Within one week of the wedding ceremony, the marriage began to deteriorate. There was verbal, emotional, and sometimes physically abuse. It was painful. But how could they question “the Lord” when He gave the pastor the message to give them. So they sat there, in their marriage, boiling in pain, hate, and confusion. But two months into the marriage, the “Lord” could not stand it any longer. They were in too much pain. Then the pastor’s wife got a “vision from the Lord” to give to the husband. She said “the Lord to me to tell you to divorce your wife and to marry another woman.” What “vision” was from the Lord, the pastor’s or his wife’s? How could God give such conflicting instructions? I hasten to say that God does not give

such instructions. His messages are encouraging, clear, consistent, and non-conflicting. It seems as though the pastor and his wife were having the conflicts themselves. Each was on an ego trip for pastoral power and popularity. They used the scripture as a tool to gain prominence; and in reality they were making a mockery of Christianity.

TOO MANY

This story is only an example of what goes on everyday in our country behind the doors of many churches. It is an example of toxic leaders who have developed a toxic brand of Christianity that is destroying our nation, many marriages and families. It is playing right into the hand of power-crazed men who have been taught that they are by default leaders over women and not leaders with them.

BEYOND ACCOUNTABILITY

Many so-called spiritual leaders try to manipulate the Holy Spirit instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to use them. They act as though they are beyond accountability. Mary Alice Charnalagar in her book, "Twisted Scriptures," lists a few methods used by pastors or congregations to control their members: (1) They equate doubts and criticism of leadership as sin. (2) They teach people to obey even when it doesn't feel right. Obey without question. (3) They subtly redefine the meanings of words creating their own toxic theology. (4) They emphasize such ideas as "dying to self" in a non-scriptural manner. It is a sin to emotionally take care of your own needs.

AVOID THEM

Beware, friends, when someone tells you, "the Lord told me to tell you," or "the Lord gave me a vision about you." If what "the Lord" said is in conflict with your faith and scripture, then the Lord did not give that message. It is instead from another source that leads to toxic faith, cripples, confuses, and often leads many to become disillusioned with God. Beware of pastors who make you feel that their prayers for you will always be answered. If they are not answered, then it is your fault. This is a gross misrepresentation of God's sovereign will and love. To avoid toxic faith each one should develop his own relationship with God and study the Bible for herself. Watch out when you say, "The pastor says," or "the Bible says," and it is not really true and you have not searched it for yourself. These are signs that you might be developing toxic faith.

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