

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

Volume 10, Issue 9

September 2012

Spiritual Thieves

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Introduction

In the August 2011 issue of Present Truth Teaching Letter ([Identity Crises](#)) I discussed our identity before knowing the Lord and our identity after knowing the Lord and the conflict between our old identity and our new. In this issue of Present Truth I would like to discuss those who would steal our spiritual identity and cause us to fail to fulfill our calling in the Lord.

We know that in the natural there are those who desire to steal our identity in order to access our accounts or credit ratings in order to leverage a financial advantage from us. This is especially true as economic transactions become more and more electronically oriented. A similar thing is happening to us spiritually also. The spiritual thieves are abundant. There are those who want to hijack our gifts and callings; who want to compromise our freedom and who want to rob us of the money that God has given for our provision. These spiritual thieves are false teachers, false prophets, and false apostles who are preying on the body of believers.

The First Identity Thief

It was our adversary, our enemy, the Devil who was the first identity thief. He was not satisfied with who he was, where he was, or with what he was doing. He wanted to be god, so he set out to steal the position, place and function of God.

[Isaiah 14:13-14 NASB](#)

"But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. (14) 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Of course, his attempt to steal God's identity failed. However, part of his work in people is to create a dissatisfaction with who we are and what we are doing. This dissatisfaction expresses itself with a desire for position, power and prestige. The enemy appeals to our old nature by defining these from a worldly viewpoint as authority, the power to control and direct, and honor and loyalty. This deception becomes a ready made scheme to steal from us our place and

function in the Lord.

Spiritual Thievery

We know from the Scriptures that we, the people of God as living stones, are being built together into a temple, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:20-22 NASB

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, (21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

That means that in the Spiritual Temple that God is building every stone has its own place and every stone has its own function. These living stones are being fitted together by the Lord. The stones do not choose their own place and function but yield to the placement of the Lord.

When a man tells us that our place is “under” him, He is usurping the Lord and stealing from us the place and function that the Lord has for us. The head of every man is Christ [*I Cor. 11:3*]. Because of this, no man is “over” another. The Lord does not allow another man between us and Himself. He gave us the Holy Spirit so that we might be led by the Spirit, taught by the Spirit and receive revelation of the things of the Lord by the Spirit [*John 14:26; John 16:12-15*].

Those who desire to be “over” us go by many designations. Some call themselves apostles, some prophets, some call themselves shepherds and pastors. The latest group wants to call themselves “spiritual fathers”, They all have one thing in common. They want you to submit your life to them so that they can help you mature and find your ministry in God. Sounds good doesn't it. Yes, it does, except that it is a deception. Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us and He gave the five fold ministry to equip us [*Eph. 11-13*].

NOTE: *the five fold ministry equips and builds; they do not control and direct.*

Some might ask, “Do you believe that there are apostles and prophets; that there is a real five fold ministry. Yes, I do. I even believe that there are true spiritual fathers. I just do not believe that they operate by the worldly hierarchy authority structure as presented by the self appointed overseers. Jesus clearly forbade this type of authority among believers [*Luke 22:25-26*].

There is a fundamental difference between authority as the world understands it and the true authority of the Lord. Worldly authority controls, directs, punishes and operates from position. Spiritual authority operates from service with appeal, persuasion and confirmation through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The idea of submit and obey those over you comes from Hebrews 13:17. However, the Scriptures also say we should submit to one another [*I Peter 5:5*]. How do we apply this? Submission requires humility. One who is “over” you cannot demand obedience. Obedience can only be given by the leading of the Holy Spirit. (*We obey the Lord not a man.*) There are occasions when those “over” need to submit to those “under”. In a worldly hierarchy structure those “over” **NEVER** submit to those “under”. To even suggest such an idea would result in a reprimand about dishonoring the authority “over” you. Quite contrary to the Scriptures.

Spiritual Plunder

Spiritual thieves are seeking two types of spiritual plunder from us:

1. our identity in the Lord, our gifts and callings;
2. our liberty or freedom in the Lord.

Our **identity** in the Lord involves our **placement** and our **function** in His plans and purposes.

Our placement requires two things:

1. that we are secure in our identity,
2. that we are secure in our function.

Our **identity** must be defined in relation to Jesus Christ. No other identity is possible. Our **value** is derived from our identity. [This is important to remember because many times we confuse value with function which is not correct. We are all of equal value before the Lord but we all may have different functions, some of which have different levels of visibility.]

Spiritual thieves look for those who are insecure in their identity in the Lord or insecure in their function in the Lord or both. Then they seek to replace the Lord in these areas in the believers life. If the believer will come “under” them, then they will be a part of the “new thing” that God is doing and they will find a place of ministry as they commit to the “apostle's or prophet's or pastor's or shepherd's or spiritual father's” vision and work.

When this happens, they have stolen your identity and your function in the Lord. Your gifts, callings, and resources have become spiritual plunder which they will use to further their own ambitions, vision, or work. All in the name of the Lord, of course.

As this happens, they also steal our freedom in the Lord by replacing it with a yoke of bondage to themselves.

2 Peter 2:18-19 NASB

For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, (19) promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

Galatians 5:1 NASB I

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Our freedom is precious as it was bought by the shedding of Jesus' blood. For our sake, He gave Himself so that we might be free of bondage in every form. This includes the bondage of controlling authority of those who would lord it over us as “benefactors”. [Luke 22:25-26]

Natural Man's Fear

The condition of the natural man is such that we fear any intimacy with God. Because of this it is much easier for us if we have another person who will deal with God on our behalf instead of us

doing it ourselves. When the children of Israel saw the lightnings, thunder and darkness on Mount Sinai, they were afraid and instead of approaching themselves as God had said they preferred that Moses deal with God and then tell them what to do.

Deuteronomy 5:27 NASB

'Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do *it*.'

Spiritual thieves take advantage of this inherent flaw in our old natures. They tell us repeatedly how God speaks to them and shows them visions and dreams and that we should listen to them because they are the chosen “men of God”.

What is wrong with us? Do we not trust the Lord to lead us? Do we not trust the Holy Spirit to teach us? Do we not believe that God can cause us to mature in Him? Do we not believe that He has called us and given us a place and a function in His purposes? Why do we want to come “under” a man when we are already under the Lord? Why do we want a man between us and the Lord? Better yet, why does a man want to be “over” us? What does he gain from being “over” us?

We need to seriously consider our answers to these questions.

Don't Be Deceived

Part of the enemy's strategy will all of this is to confuse us about the truth by concentrating on the deception. In spite of the spiritual thieves, there is true leadership among the believers. The Lord has raised up elders to oversee the flock. He has given us the five fold ministry to equip and build the Body. He has given mentors and spiritual fathers as examples for us to emulate.

The confusion comes because we don't understand how the real thing operates. Because we think like the world, we can only comprehend leadership that operates like the world. However, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds [*Romans 12:2*]. We should no longer think like the world but we should think with a renewed mind—one that is spiritual and thinks in a manner that is consistent with spiritual truth. We can then understand how true spiritual authority operates and understand how to discern those who truly are chosen of the Lord as leaders.

Remember—a counterfeit only has value because there is a real thing. Thieves only steal what is valuable. Spiritual thieves only steal what is truly valuable. Don't let your inheritance be compromised. Don't be deceived.

For further study along these line you might want to read these article:

[Being the Church Series](#)

[From Without and Within](#) (Deception Series)

[The Purpose of the Five Fold Ministry](#)

[Fitted Together](#) (Leadership Development Series)

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