

DISCERNING THE WINDS

by Bill Scheidler

I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS REGARDING “WINDS”

- A. A wind is caused by an unequal distribution of heat in the atmosphere.
- B. The direction from which a current comes determines its name.
- C. When two currents of air of different directions meet, a spiral motion sometimes results.

II. THE PURPOSE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF WINDS

- A. Winds bring the clouds which bring the rains (I Kgs. 18:44f). Rains are essential for germinating the harvest and ripening the harvest.
- B. Winds were an aid to the farmer in winnowing the grain (Ps. 1:4; 38:5; Is. 17:13). In this way they helped the farmer to separate the wheat from the chaff.
- C. Winds were essential for ancient sea travel (Acts 28:13; Jam. 3:4). Without the winds the only movement would have been with hard work and sweat.

III. THE FOUR WINDS OR VARIOUS TYPES OF WIND (REV. 7:1)

Note: All of these definitions are seen in relation to the lands of the Bible. They may be reversed for this hemisphere.

- A. The West Wind – cool, brings refreshing and showers (Luke 12:54-56). The most common.

Then He also said to the multitudes, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is.

Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?

- B. The South Wind – warm and dry. Good weather unless it lasts too long and brings scorching heat (Luke 12:55). Frequent.
- C. The North Wind – strong, continuous wind that drives away rains. A disagreeable wind that often causes headaches and fever.
- D. The East Wind – A scorching wind from the desert, hot, gusty, laden with sand and dust and occurs most frequently in May and October. Causes high temperatures quickly, vegetation to wither, destructive and yet seldom lasts for more than three days at a time (Gen. 41:6; Job 1:19; Jer. 13:24). It is dangerous for ships at sea (Ps. 48:7; Acts 27:14).

All of these winds can be brought by the Lord for the fulfillment of His purpose (Ps. 78:26).

He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He brought in the south wind.

IV. SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION OF WINDS

A. The Spirit of God moves as the wind (The Breath of God).

1. Moving in a spiritual or non-visible realm (John 3:8, I Cor. 2:14).
2. Moving and operating at the Lord's command (Gal. 4:6).
3. Purging and cleansing the earth (Job. 37:21).
4. Moving as He wills (I Cor. 12:11).
5. Guiding and impelling the church (Acts 9:31).

B. Doctrinal Emphases are seen as winds (Eph. 4:14-15).

...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ...

1. In balance they are refreshing and necessary for movement in the church.
2. In extreme they can be destructive and damaging (Jam. 1:6).

V. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF WINDS

There are three main types of flow; all can be positive or negative depending upon intensity and control.

	POSITIVE FLOWS	NATURAL / SPIRITUAL RESULTS	NEGATIVE FLOWS	NATURAL / SPIRITUAL RESULTS
WIND	Winds Breezes Zephyr	Refreshing, Cooling Gentle moving Delicate touching	Gale Cyclone Tornado Blast	Violent Destructive Devastating Upheaval
WATER	Currents Rivers Streams Flow	Advancement Progression Movement Continuity	Whirlpool Eddy Flood Tsunami	Introversion Dizziness Loss of Direction Drowning
RAIN	Rain Showers	Enlivening Growth Harvest	Storm Hurricane Deluge	Commotion Turbulence Loss of harvest

A. Common Characteristics of the Positive Flows

1. In control
2. Channeled
3. Blessing
4. Benefit
5. Desirable

B. Common Characteristics of the Negative Flows

1. Out of control
2. No guidelines
3. Cursing
4. Destruction
5. Unpleasant

VI. GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WINDS

A. God is in control of the winds (Rev. 7:1).

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

B. Jesus is supreme over the elements, stilling the storm (Mt. 8:26; Mark 4:37; Luke 8:23) and walking on the waves (Mt. 14:24; Mark 6:47).

VII. DISCERNING WINDS OF DOCTRINE

A. The Need for Discernment in the Last Days

1. Matthew 24:3-5, 11, 23-26; Mark 13:5-6

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." Matthew 24:3-5

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. Matthew 24:11

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it. Matthew 24:23-26

- a. Deception
- b. False prophets
- c. False christs (anointed ones)
- d. Deceptive signs and wonders

2. I Timothy 4:1-2

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from what we believe; they will follow lying spirits and teachings that come from demons. These teachers are hypocrites and liars. They pretend to be religious, but their consciences are dead. –NLT

- a. Departure from the faith
- b. Deceiving or lying spirits
- c. Doctrines that come from demons
- d. Hypocrites and liars
- e. Seared conscience

3. II Timothy 3:1, 13-17

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come...But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. II Timothy 3:1, 13-17

- a. Perilous times
- b. Form of godliness
- c. Evil men
- d. Imposters
- e. Deception
- f. Worse and worse

4. II Peter 2:1-3

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction is on the way.

II Peter 2:3, NLT

- a. False prophets

- b. False teachers
- c. Destructive heresies
- d. Destructive ways
- e. Deceptive words
- f. Greedy exploiters

5. II Thessalonians 2:1-12

- a. Falling away
- b. Lying signs and wonders
- c. Unrighteous deception
- d. Strong delusion

B. The Need for the Winds

1. As a test to approve that which is good (I Cor. 11:19).

For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

2. As a test to see if we truly love the truth (II Th. 2:10-12).

3. As a test to help us exercise and develop our spiritual senses (Heb. 5:14).

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

C. Signals of Turbulent Winds

1. Watch out for the word “new” especially when associated with “revelation” (Eccl. 1:9-10). Paul preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). He warned the Galatians about those who would add to the basic doctrine that he had taught (Gal. 1:6-10).

2. Watch out for anything that requires “private interpretation” (II Pet. 1:20, II Cor. 11:1-4).

I hope you will be patient with me as I keep on talking like a fool. Please bear with me. I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. For I promised you as a pure bride to one husband, Christ. But I fear that somehow you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to Christ, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent. You seem to believe whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach about a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

II Corinthians 11:1-4, NLT

3. Watch out for those who major on the minors (II Cor. 13:1).

This will be the third time I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”

4. Watch for extremes or truth out of balance (Mt. 7:13-14).

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Often times the narrow way or the right path is the narrow line between two extremes.

5. Watch out for anything that promises “instant maturity” (Phil. 1:6; 3:12-16).

...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ... Philippians 1:6

6. Watch out not to judge a truth primarily on the basis of external signs that may follow (II Th. 2:9).

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders...

7. Watch out for teachings that elevate emotional experiences above the principles of God’s Word (II Pet. 1:16-21).

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

8. Watch out for spiritual language used to justify carnal desires (I Th. 2:4-5; I Tim. 6:3-10; Jam. 4:1-4).

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness-- God is witness. I Thessalonians 2:4-5

9. Watch out for teaching that promotes health, wealth, success and happiness with no mention of cost, pain, persecution, and even personal loss (II Tim. 1:8; 3:12; 4:5; Heb. 11:32-39).

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

II Timothy 3:12

10. Watch out for teachings that will not work in every culture as easily as they do in America (I Cor. 7:17c; Tit. 1:5).

And so I ordain in all the churches. I Corinthians 7:17c

11. Watch out for doctrines that sidestep confession, repentance, restitution and forsaking sin and release you from personal responsibility for your deeds (Acts 26:19-20).

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

12. Watch out for doctrines that diminish the power of the cross and the work of repentance in your life (I Cor. 2:2; Gal. 1:6-10).

13. Watch out for doctrines that are not willing to be questioned or tested (I Th. 5:21; I John 4:1; Acts 17:11).

Test all things; hold fast what is good. I Thessalonians 5:21

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

14. Watch out for doctrines that lead to spiritual pride or exclusivism (Mt. 24:26-27).

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it. Matthew 24:23-26

15. Watch out for teachings that promote individuals and a dependence on individuals above Christ (John 3:30-32).

He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth, but he has come from heaven. He tells what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them!

–NLT

16. Watch out when the vessel does not confirm the message (Mt. 7:15-20).

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor

can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

- A. In all these guidelines we want to remember that God uses winds to bring positive growth, change and movement.
- B. Most of the winds have an element of truth and contain something that God is really wanting the church to hear.
- C. We are to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (I Th. 5:21).
- D. We can ensure that we will not be blown off course or deceived by these winds:
 - 1. Cultivate your personal relationship with the Lord (Eph. 1:15-23).

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- 2. Become a lover of the truth (II Th. 2:9-12).

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- 3. Practice a daily obedience to God's voice (John 7:17).

If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.