

Discernment: Some signs of the Good Spirit and the Bad Spirit

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Signs of the Good Spirit

1. There is a real sense of our own worth.
2. There is a renewed self-confidence.
3. Hope comes alive; we believe Jesus is with us, no matter what.
4. There is a genuine feeling of movement: — 'It doesn't have to be like this. I want to do something about it, and I can do something about it'.
5. Something lifts from us; we feel lighter, liberated. 'I should' changes to 'I want to'.
6. We grow in compassion and sensitivity to the needs of others.
7. There is a questioning that is accompanied by clarity and conviction.
8. We are led to bring our concerns into our relationship with Jesus, and focus on the relationship rather than the issue. We tell him (even repeatedly) how the issue affects us.
9. 'It is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false' (St Ignatius). None of us has a monopoly on the truth.
10. We are led to let go of our hurts, and are able to pray, 'Jesus, give me the attitude to this person that you want me to have'.
11. Awareness of sin is always marked with hope and leads us back into the relationship with Jesus and others.
12. The way of the Good Spirit is to lead us more deeply into relationships.

Where we focus our attention colors all the other areas of our life. If we focus on grace, on what is life-giving, the grace will spread.

Signs of the Bad Spirit

1. There is a loss of the sense of our own worth.
2. We are down on ourselves and think and even speak of ourselves in ways we would never dream of speaking about someone else.
3. Hope is blighted and fades away; the lights go out.
4. There is a feeling of being stuck or trapped, of having nowhere to go or going round in circles, of being down a big, black hole.
5. There is a pervasive sense of heaviness; we feel burdened or maybe oppressed by a relentless sense of duty.
6. We degenerate into cynicism - we cannot see any good in anyone - or self-pity.
7. There is a questioning that creates anxiety and ends in confusion.
8. We find ourselves constantly mulling over incidents or giving all our attention to resolving some issue, and end up more fragmented and de-energized than when we started.
9. We are easily led into negative interactions with others that quickly become mutual recriminations, and an 'I'm right, you're wrong' attitude.
10. Some people carry in their hearts the corpses of past relationships, addicted to hurt as a confirmation of identity' (J O'Donohue, Anam Car).
11. When we think of our sins and failings, we feel bad about ourselves, and stay there.
12. The way of the Bad Spirit is to lead us away from relationships.

If we focus on negativity, the negativity will spread.