

# Questions About How to Decipher Voices of the Holy Spirit, Satan or Own Thoughts

By Pastor Ed Anderson

How do you decipher what is the Holy Spirit, Satan or your own thoughts? Especially after you have prayed and asked God for help and guidance.

## Answer:

That's one of the most important spiritual questions a believer can ask.

**How do you discern whether a thought is from the Holy Spirit, from your own mind, or from Satan?** The Bible gives us solid principles to help us sort through spiritual impressions, especially when we're sincerely seeking God's will in prayer.

### 1. Test the Source: Who Does It Glorify?

- **Holy Spirit:** Always glorifies **Jesus**, never self. Promotes humility, faith, and alignment with God's Word.
- **Your Own Thoughts:** May be logical, emotional, or habitual. Often focused on self-interest, comfort, or fear.
- **Satan/Demonic:** Promotes pride, fear, confusion, condemnation, and rebellion. Often sounds accusatory or urgent in a fearful way.

**"He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you."**

— *John 16:14*

### 2. Does It Align with Scripture?

The Holy Spirit never contradicts the Bible. Every prompting should be **measured against God's Word**.

- The **Holy Spirit** leads in truth and righteousness (John 16:13).
- Satan can appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), but his goal is to **twist Scripture**, just like in the wilderness temptations (Matthew 4).

*Example:*

If you feel prompted to lie “just to protect someone’s feelings,” that’s not the Holy Spirit—it violates God’s clear commands.

### 3. Does It Produce the Fruit of the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit’s voice brings **peace**, even when calling you to something difficult. It will **not** pressure you into **panic, anxiety, or fear**.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...”

— *Galatians 5:22–23*

*Ask:* Does this thought or voice lead to peace or panic? Humility or arrogance? Holiness or compromise?

### 4. Does It Convict or Condemn?

- The Holy Spirit convicts with hope and the call to change.
- Satan condemns, paralyzes, and accuses you without a way forward.

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

— *Romans 8:1*

### 5. Does It Require Waiting, Patience, or Humility?

The Holy Spirit often leads with **quiet persistence**, not loud pressure.

“You will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”

— *Isaiah 30:21*

If a thought is pushing you to **rush** or act in **fear**, be cautious. God’s Spirit doesn’t panic.

### 6. Have You Prayed and Waited for Confirmation?

God doesn’t mind confirming His will.

- Seek counsel from mature, Spirit-filled believers.
- Open the Word and pray for a confirming verse.

- Ask for wisdom—God promises to give it (James 1:5).

**Summary Table**

Question	Holy Spirit	Satan / Demonic	Self
Glorifies who?	Jesus and truth	Self, sin, rebellion, pride	Self or logic
Produces what?	Peace, conviction, hope	Condemnation, fear, confusion	Doubt, comfort-seeking
Aligns with Scripture?	Always	Twists it or ignores it	May or may not
Fruits?	Gal. 5:22–23 (love, peace, patience...)	Chaos, deception, condemnation	Varies (logic, fear, emotion)
Urgency type?	Calm persistence	Pressure, fear, rush	Impulsive or self-justifying
After praying and waiting?	Consistency and biblical confirmation	Distraction, confusion, guilt	Indecision or rationalization

**God is not trying to hide His will from you.**

If your heart is surrendered, and you're seeking Him in faith and Scripture, **you can trust the Spirit to lead you**, even if you don't feel 100% certain.

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”**

— *Proverbs 3:5–6*

**What about thoughts to do harm or do evil?**

**1) First truth to hold: A thought alone is not the same as sin**

- **Temptation** is not sin; **consenting** to and acting on it is. James 1:14–15 shows the progression: *desire conceives* → *sin is born* → *death*.
- Jesus was tempted (the devil put thoughts before Him) but did not sin. You can be tempted and still be blameless before God if you refuse and repent.

**2) Immediate, practical steps when a harmful thought appears**

1. **Refuse it immediately.** Don't "entertain" the image or idea. Say aloud (or in your heart): *"No. I refuse this."*
2. **Command it to go — in Jesus' name.** Use Jesus' authority: *"Satan, I rebuke you; depart in the name of Jesus."* (Acts 16:18; Matt. 16:23 — Jesus used direct rebuke with spiritual opposition.)
3. **Shift your mind to truth** — Psalm verses, Philippians 4:8, or a particular promise that counters the lie. Work fast: thoughts are like a train — don't get on it.
4. **Use a short Scripture or prayer:** e.g., "God, I refuse this. Lead me in Your thoughts. Give me strength." (Phil. 4:13)
5. **Do something physical** — stand, change location, read a Bible verse, call a trusted friend, go for a walk. Breaking the pattern matters.

### 3) Discernment: Where might the thought come from?

- **Your own sinful desires** — if you habitually struggle in some area, the mind will produce tempting images. (James 1:14)
- **Satan** — often brings accusations, lies, and vivid temptations to get you to fall or feel condemned. He may use shame or urgency.
- **Intrusive thoughts** / OCD / anxiety / mental health — these are unwanted, repetitive and distressing thoughts that don't match the person's values. People with intrusive thoughts often feel horrified by them; that's a sign they're not consenting.
- **Spiritual oppression** — sometimes there's stronger spiritual resistance; prayer, rebuke, and community help are needed.

Don't automatically spiritualize every thought. If the thought is violent, persistent, or accompanied by compulsion, it may be a mental-health issue that needs professional care as well as pastoral care.

### 4) Longer-term practices to protect your mind and heart

- **Daily Scripture and worship** — fill your mind on purpose. Philippians 4:8 is a practical antidote.
- **Memorize short verses** to use when attacked (e.g., Psalm 23, 51:10, 139:23–24, Phil. 4:8).
- **Confession and accountability** — be honest with a trusted brother/sister or pastor. Temptation loses power when exposed. (James 5:16)
- **Fast and pray** in seasons of heavy assault (Matt. 17:21; prayer + fasting often breaks stronger footholds).

- **Practical safeguards:** avoid triggers (certain websites, isolation, alcohol), set content filters if needed.
- **Worship and service** — serving others shifts focus from self and builds spiritual strength.

#### 5) If thoughts are violent, persistent, or you feel you might act on them

- **Get help immediately.** Tell a trusted leader or loved one and see a Christian counselor or a medical professional. If there is any imminent danger to yourself or others, call emergency services or a crisis line right away.
- **Both spiritual and medical help can be right** — spiritual freedom and psychiatric care are not mutually exclusive. God can use medicine, therapy, and community to heal.

#### 6) How to pray when these thoughts come (short prayer you can use)

“Lord Jesus, I reject this thought. In the name of Jesus I rebuke it. Holy Spirit, fill my mind with Your truth. Help me to refuse and run. Forgive any foothold I’ve given, and give me strength to do what is right. Amen.”

You can also say: “*Get behind me, Satan.*”— a short, biblical rebuke Jesus used.

#### 7) Scriptural encouragement

- **You are not alone** — Jesus was tempted; we are not special for being tempted. (Heb. 4:15)
- **God supplies a way out** if you seek Him. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- **You will be judged for consent and actions, not involuntary thoughts.** God’s heart is merciful toward those who repent and fight sin.

#### 8) Practical next steps I recommend for you (or anyone reading)

1. Start using a 1–2 sentence rebuke + Scripture when the thought arises.
2. Tell a trusted Christian friend/pastor: “I need accountability when these thoughts come.”
3. If intrusive or violent thoughts persist daily, **make an appointment with a Christian counselor** or your physician to check for OCD, depression, or other conditions.
4. Keep a small list of 3–5 Scriptures or short prayers on your phone for quick access.

5. Join a small-group or pastoral care loop so you aren't fighting alone.

You're not alone in this. God loves you, and He gives power to resist. If you're in immediate danger or the thoughts are escalating, please tell someone now or contact emergency help.