

# Discernment or Deception

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Speaker: **Nathaniel Bronner**

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Nathaniel Bronner: What could you do in life if you kept your focus on Jesus?

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And now for 5816, Discernment or Deception Part Five. What is God Saying to You About Christmas?

Nathaniel Bronner: Welcome to Brothers of the Word because brother, you need the word.

And today, I am still in the midst of the series and I actually wanted to get see Elijah to preach today because this is the Christmas season and I felt he would do just a better job at preaching a good happy Christmas message. I was going to do that but I heard God said, "No, there is something I want you to say today." I've learned and I've seen sometimes through so many messages that I didn't think were that powerful and one person would come up and said, "Pastor, you just don't know how would you see it impacted me.

So, there may be something said today that one person will need and it's just like when Jesus went to the Pool of Bethesda and there were three levels of sick folk. He went and healed one man and walked away. So, sometimes there is a message that God will have for just one person and God perhaps once said, "One person to hear this today and it influences and impacts their life for the day. We're in a series called Discernment or Deception, trying to know the voice of God. Today, in particular in this season, and normally we don't talk about seasons because people listened to the online word of brothersoftheword.com or airjesus.com. They go and they stream our sermons year-round, and it's no telling what time of the year they will listen to our sermons.

So, we do our best not to date or even seasonalize the sermons in any way. So, no matter when people listen to it, it's always relevant. But we arrived at Christmas right now and even the title of a subtitle of today's message, it relates to that. So, this is a Christmas period and, in the series, Discernment or Deception.

God just had me to ask you this question, “What is God saying to you about Christmas?” And you know, during this season, it just perhaps some of the most confusing and most clutter(ph) time of the year. I was in a restaurant this past week, and as I was walking out, the hostess said, “Merry Christmas.” And I said, “Happy Holiday.” She just threw up and I don’t what to say.

So, sometimes people don’t even -- Christmas has become such a conglomerate of stuff that folk don’t even know what to say, what to do, what to focus on. Sometimes even just to get a discernment between trying to hear the voice of God or whether this is the voice of the world, He just ask a simple question. What is God saying to you about Christmas? And if you look at the first verse in the New Testament, Matthew 1:1. Mathew 1:1 says, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Then if you go to the last book of the Bible, that first verse, the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his servants, things which much shortly come to pass and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant, John.

So, the first verse of the New Testament, the first verse of the last book of the New Testament and the very last verse of the Bible, Revelation 22:21, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.” So, the new testament opens with the birth of Jesus, goes to the last book which deals with the revelation of Jesus, and the very line in the bible deals with the grace of Jesus.

So, the New Testament is all about Jesus, but what is God saying to you about Christmas? Is it about Jesus or is it about some another stuff in your world? Because we have just become so distracted. There was a story of Yogi Berra and Hank Aaron in baseball, and this is before Hank Aaron moved to Atlanta with the Atlanta Braves. It was when he was with the Milwaukee Braves and it was during the world series. Yogi Berra was at that time, a catcher, and Hank Aaron was a hitter and it was in the world series.

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Yogi Berra was with the New York Yankees and Hank Aaron with the Milwaukee Braves. When Hank Aaron got up to bat, Yogi Berra whispered over to him as he was there at the play getting his back. He said, “You know, you’re supposed to always hold the log on the bat up so you can read it,” because Yogi knew if he

could get the batter distracted and think about anything else other than him bat, he could probably throw his swing off and he'd missed a strike out or hit a wild ball.

So, Hank didn't even look at the bat and when he hit, he hit a home run. As he was running around the bases, he ran the first, the second, the third and he came into home plate. As he ran by Yogi Berra, he looked over him and he said, "I didn't come here to read."

So, you have to ask the question about Christmas, why did it come here and what is God is saying to you about Christmas? We can get so distracted and so much of a hype about Christmas that we eventually get away from. The last message I remembered from last year, I spoke about Noel, and how No and El met God and how they virtually know God in any of the Christmas music. I look at the top 50 Christmas songs and 48 out 50, the name of Jesus has been stripped. And yet when you look at the bible, it opens up. This is the genealogy of our Lord, Jesus Christ. They closed this is up, the grace of Jesus be with you. It closed it with the last chapter, the revelation of Jesus Christ. But if you look at 48 out of the 50 top Christmas songs, Jesus is not in there. Sometimes, they'll have some other stuff, but that other stuff could refer to somebody else, because you never know what folk are talking about if the name is not there. But when you look at the Bible, the name of Jesus is all truth, but if you look at our (00:06:56) they'd even pull Christmas out and now they just have Happy Holidays. And the lady at the restaurant, she just had to catch us up because her management had told her, "Don't tell people Merry Christmas, tell them Happy Holidays." You could be worse than anybody or nobody with Happy Holidays.

So, what is God saying to you about Christmas? That's one question. The other question is, "Have the (00:07:24) God anything about Christmas? See, most of us through life, we don't truly seek our divine direction, we just flow with everybody else. I had to stop by Walmart to get something and when in Walmart, the line (00:07:37) what in the world? But I couldn't understand what was wrong. I think I was on the phone with Pastor Jackson(ph) Walmart just ripped(ph). He said, "Do you know it's Black Friday?" I said, "No, I think I came in to have some toothpaste. I don't know what it was. But whatever it was, I want in there because of Black Friday but I got caught up in the crowd

and I can pretty much guarantee you none of the folk in that store had Jesus on their mind.

So, the world has given us so many distractions away from the main thing that often the name itself is now stripped out of the music, it stripped out of signage. It's even becoming stripped out of our greeting to one another. So, that's what God wanted, "What is God saying to you just about Christmas?" And see when you can get God clearly on one thing, you can get him clearly on another thing. So, here it is, the biggest single holiday of the year in America and most people have totally lost track of what Christmas even is. Even though they don't know yet it's Jesus's birthday but everything that is done is so far away from Jesus.

Now, we'll have service here at 8 o'clock on Christmas. A lot of churches have had to cancel Christmas service because the folk won't show up. They just won't show up. They're spending too much time opening gifts and the skit that the young people did today, it's actually was an excellent dramatization that often by December 26, all of the excitement of the gifts have worn off. You have two things that happened. Number one, the excitement of the gifts wore off and number two, disappointment set in because they didn't get what they wanted, or they didn't get all of what they wanted because kids now will watch television and they'll see all these games and toys and things that come on TV, and if the parents can't afford it all and don't get it all, now they're mad they only got two out of the four things they wanted. And we moved into a mode of give me, give me, give me, give me, give me instead of the mode of I am going to be a gift to someone else.

My youngest son, George, I want you to put up his text. Now, this is an actual text that he did send me. It was interesting of what George said in this. George had talked about how he wanted something for Christmas and we've talked about it.

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Then, George texted me later on. I'm going to read it. He said, "I just want to buy other people stuff this year. I've reached a point at least temporarily." Now, he did put that in there. He said, "I've reached the point" because he's only 13, but he said, "I've reached the point at least temporarily where there is no physical item that I want, but others out there do so rather than me get something I don't want. I rather buy stuff for my friends to see

them happy.” That was the text that he sent me. How many of us just have the wisdom of a 13-year-old? And we have moved so far away from the true purpose of Christmas.

What is God saying to you about Christmas? And really you need to just ask, you know, and there’s a reason. You will say, Pastor, Christmas is only a short time of waiting. It’s too late for me.” No, it’s not too late. He wouldn’t have me preaching if it was too late. What is God saying to you about Christmas? I want you to just take 10 seconds right now and just bow your head and ask God, “Lord, what shall I do about Christmas?” right now. Now, some of you heard something. Now, the drawback to what some of you heard is this, you don’t want to do it.

I’ve had a couple of answers within just a past week of where I dealt with people who God spoke to, and they didn’t do it. In both cases, they regret it that they didn’t do it. In one case, a person told me that God had told them something and they didn’t do it and, yet, they saw down the road how all if they only done this. Because the thing God told them to do, you couldn’t see the reason for right then but it took about three years later and the reason was crystal clear, and that would have been such huge benefit. I’d say, “Why didn’t you do it?” “I was just too busy. I had other stuff to do.” Let me interpret that. That’s the King James version. Let me give you the NIV version. I had other stuff I wanted to do other than what God told me to do. That’s the clear plain everyday English. So many of us, we have other stuff we want to do other than what God told us to do.

I’ve had the other instance with another -- Actually, it was a former employee. And the employee, we hired the person and when the manager interviewed them, they turned the job down. And they told me that I walked through the building and they introduced me to him and said, “When I shook your hand, something changed, and I knew this was where I was supposed to be.” And then instantly, they changed their mind. Something convicted them about the spirit and they knew that was where they were supposed to be. Well, they worked for us about three months, and then another company made them a big lucrative offer with a lot more money. They submitted the offer and they said they submitted their letter of termination and they wanted to see if we were going to counter. The manager asked me, “Mr. Bronner, should I counter?” I said, “No, do not counter that offer. Let them go.” So, they left.

I had an exit meeting with them in the past week and they said, “Mr. Bronner, you know, the company did offer me that big money and a big job and a big increase?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well.” And see, this is the part. So, it was called the backend. You see, often when God tells us something, we only can see the frame. There’s always a backend to the thing. He said, “Well. The company where I’m going, three things have happened. Number one, it started closing down plants. Number two, they’ve laid off almost 30 people at the plant where I’m going. And number three, the very manager who hired me, who called me and offered me the job, he quit.” I said, “That ain’t a good sign. He said, “No, that ain’t a good sign.”

As I met with him, what I didn’t tell him was this. I said, “We recently had a meeting and we had a listing of all of the salary ranges of every person within the company. There were about five people who were not in range who have just been there. Their salary was out of range with what the market created or the market demanded.” I said, “And we elevated every one of those positions to where every person within Bronner Brothers is now put in proper corporate salary range.” The position that he left, we increased over \$20,000.00 a year. If you just listened, it was the backend. A lot of times we make decision, God has whispered something. He said, “When I shook your hand, I knew this was where I was supposed to be.” But we get lured away by the stuff of the world a lot of time, not even Rio, and by the time we get there, be ready. This is not where I should have been. How many of us has said, “Oh, I wish I had listened to what God told me.”

We have dealt with counseling sessions with married couples, and I don’t have a woman who just tell me, “The Lord spoke to me right before I get ready to walk down and told me not to marry that man.” And we looked at the frontend.

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We don’t know God sees the frontend, the back end, the up, the bottom, the sides. He sees it all. So, when he speaks something to us, we often will listen only to what we want to do and we will not do what God told. What is God telling you about Christmas? What is he saying to you? And for those of you who did ask within those 10 seconds, and He spoke something to you, then the question becomes, “Will you do what he says to? Because there’s

always a backend that only God can see. In Matthew, Chapter 14, the 22nd verse, now this is a set of scriptures, preaches of just preach (00:15:44). And it's basically about when Jesus came walking over the water, the wind and the wave, and they saw him coming. They thought it was a ghost, and Peter said, "Lord, beat me to come out and walk with you."

This is the part I just want to talk about for just a second. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost they see and then cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it is you," Peter replied. "Tell me come to you on the water." "Come", he said. Then, Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out immediately, "Lord, save me". Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and called him, "You of little faith." He said, "Why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then, those who were in the boat, worshipped him and saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

I want to ask you the question, when God told me the entitle this, "What is God saying to you about Christmas? What could you do in life if you kept your focus on Jesus?" Now see, when Peter stepped out of the boat, he was looking at Jesus, and it's interesting I was reading the end of it, but I had to look at the King of James version and it said the same thing in both. It said, "He saw the wind." You can't even see wind. It says, "Peter saw the wind." You cannot see wind. You can see the effects of the wind, but you can't see wind. Air is clear unless it's smoking, you can't see wind. It says, "Peter saw the wind," and he was afraid and started to sink.

There's a whole lot of stuff surrounding Christmas, this wind. It blows and you see all of the effects of the stuff but none of it are very little of it involves Jesus. If you kept your focus on Jesus, you could do the impossible. You could do what you think you cannot do. You can walk in places that you have no concept of but you got to stay focused. It is so difficult to stay focus on Jesus when all of the stuff is blowing all around you. When you go to the newspaper or you look on TV and they got a Black Friday sale with a 65-inch TV at 199, it's hot! So now, instead of you spending time in prayer, you at 3 o'clock in the morning in line, so you can

get one of those two TVs they have on sale. They literally have folks sleeping on the sidewalk.

Now see, I'm a businessman. That's a real good marketing. You got two TVs that you got folks sleeping on the sidewalk rushing in and give you that money. That's good business. That's good marketing. It's good for the company, but it's terrible for the customer. How many folks do you know would sleep on the sidewalk to get into a church service? I can guarantee you come Christmas morning, there's not going to be anybody lined up outside. I was before the doors open. Supposed we would focus on Jesus as much as we focused on the wind, as much as we focused on the effects of all the stuff of the world. What could we do if we spent that time just with God? What could we do if we spent that time in prayer? What could we do if we spent that time in study? What could we do if we spent that time doing what Jesus told us to do? How would that change our lives?

What is God saying to you about Christmas? Now, I hear him saying he wants three people at the end of service just to come up and tell what God has said to them about Christmas. It's only going to be three. So, if you got something that you need to say, you need to pop up real quick when I ask because it would not be four, it's only going to be three. So, if God has said something to you about Christmas, I want you to be able to share that. But what could we do if we focused on stuff of Christ instead of stuff of the wind? And if we can imagine this and if we can do this, it will change our lives.

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2 Corinthians 4:18, and we've heard this many times. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen for what is seen is temporary or temporal, but what is unseen is eternal.

How many of you have a Christmas gift that you still use and treasure from last Christmas? Just raise your hand. Four people? How many of you can't quite even remember what you got last Christmas? Whole lot more hands. It doesn't stick, it's temporal. So, these are things that are temporary. And I remember even when I was talking with George and George says, "I want to get stuff for my friends." He said, "One of the things I want to do," he said, "I want to get him some Twizzlers." I said, "Twizzlers?" So, we went out to the store to get some Twizzlers,

those little spiral candies. And I was there with him and he got the pack of Twizzlers. I said, "George," I said, "I want you to think about this is what you're giving your friends. This is one of the things you want to get them, some candy." I said, "Now, think about this gift." I said, "Will this take them up or down?" I was trying to get him to understand that giving sweets and is not healthy for the body and all of that. But George is a heavy-duty thinker. So, I said, "George, will this take your friends up or down?" And George thought about it for about 10 seconds and he said, "It will take them up temporarily."

I couldn't argue with that. I said, "This is the way a lot of our stuff is." I have to really think real hard when I asked George a question because his mind is just deeper and sharper than I think. He said, "It will take them up temporarily." And this is the way so much of the stuff of the wind and the world, it takes us up but it's only temporarily. And within almost an hour it's gone. Sometimes a day, sometimes a week and the excitement has worn off and all of this stuff is now gone and now we are left with the consequences of the destruction of the wind. Now, we're left with the debt and the bills. And now we're left with all this other stuff. Now, if you've eaten all of these sweets, now you're left with the toothache and the stomachache and all of this. So, it takes you up temporarily. Things of the world, they are temporal but things of Christ, they are eternal. What is God saying to you about Christmas?

We got about 10 minutes left. I want three people that God spoke to, to stand up and come down front. You look around real quick and make sure it's not four. One. All right, there's another one, two. One more, one more. Only three people, one more. Come on down. All right. Just go ahead and just tell him what God said to you.

Female 1: It was two things. One, "Be here eight o'clock." That was first.

Nathaniel Bronner: All right.

Female 1: I had to think about that one. Well, okay, Lord. The second one was, "Take care of them children."

Nathaniel Bronner: Okay. All right.

Female 2: When God spoke to me, it was very simple. He simply said, "You should praise me on Christmas." That was it.

Nathaniel Bronner: Amen, amen.

Female 3: You know what, I'll say that God didn't really speak to me right then, but he had spoken to me previously within the past week or so. And one thing and I'll tell quickly the story if I can. So, my grandfather died about five years ago and his wife, who's not my grandmother, lives in Birmingham. She's there by herself, she's in her 70s, and she has relatives in Michigan. And I said to myself, "How much of this responsibility do I want to take on?" Because that's a big responsibility. She lives in Birmingham, I'm in Atlanta, they're in Michigan. And you know sometimes when we think about things like that, I said to myself, "You know what, I'm not really going to take on that responsibility fully because it really hurts." Sometimes when you get emotionally involved you know you going to have to be there 100% and it takes a lot and you have to commit. So, I said, "You know what, if I can't commit, I'm just not going to commit." And God spoke to me and he said, "Why are you doing this and why are you not doing this?" He's like, "You got to get passed the emotional pain and do what you know you need to do and just go ahead and I'm going to take care of the rest of that. You know you got to grow."

And so, I took my kids and I said, "We're going to go to Birmingham and we're going to take care of her and we're going to clean her house, we're going to buy her grocery." I'm going to do what I can do and leave the rest up to God and let him do the rest. And so that way, I feel good that I've done what God has told me to do, and so it made her feel really good. It was so funny because she said that she had been feeling lonely. She had been needing someone. She didn't think anyone really cared about her and that she was so ecstatic that we were there and she had never said any of this stuff to me. So, that's one thing that God say, in the Christmas spirit, give what we can give and do for others because it makes me feel better doing for others and when others do for me.

And one last thing. There was this young lady at Crystals I used to go through every morning and she would give such great customer service. It just kind of touched me. I was watching her, she's very proficient and customer service is my thing, I love that customer service.

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And I said, "You know what, I'm going to bless her because it's going to make me feel good to bless her." So, I'm like I hope she's there the last time I go through the drive-through. She wasn't there. So, I got out and I went in and I had my card with my old gift in it and stuff like that and I asked where the young lady, I didn't know her name. And then the lady said, "She's not here today because she had to go to the emergency room because something happened with her son." And she said, "But I'll be sure to give this to her." And I was thinking, well, you know what, good thing I really did what the Lord asked me to do because this is going to bless her because she's missing a day at work and it's going to bless her even further. And the other thing was, I said to her, "I really enjoy her customer service and her promptness." And the manager said, "Well, I'm her manager and thank you for telling me that because I've been prompting her to do that and she said other people says that she's really abrasive." I'm like, "No, she's firm." And I get it. She's trying to do her business so that's going to encourage her even more. So, two things that helped.

Nathaniel Bronner: Amen, amen. So, those were just three people who responded about what God spoke to them, but everything was outside of the traditional, what we normally do and think about Christmas. So, each of you has to answer that one question for yourself, what is God saying to you about Christmas. That's number one, then you got to do it. First thing would be, be here at eight o'clock on Christmas day. That goes right along with the second thing that was praise him on Christmas day. So, we'll be here for those who listen, for those who want to come at eight o'clock a.m. on Christmas day. It's not traditional and most people are not thinking, "I got to get up early in the morning. I'm off that." I don't understand all of that. Most of the things that God tells us to do, to be honest about it, we just don't want to do them. Because it's a way from the flesh, it's a way from the natural of what we want to do and it is usually always to help someone else at a sacrifice we think to us because we don't see the backend.

You know, they've done studies even where they'd given people money and they told them to do two things. One group they said, "Take this money and spend it on yourself." The other group they

said, "Take this money and spend it on others." Which group do you think had the greatest satisfaction? You know, wasn't even close. It wasn't even close. The group who did for others instead of focusing on themselves. So, ask yourself that question. If you didn't hear anything within those 10 seconds, just go and pray tonight, "Lord, what are you saying to me about Christmas?" That's number one. Biggest thing is, "Lord, help me to do what you tell me to do because I cannot see the backend."

Thank you for joining us today at Brothers of the Word. All of us go through Christmas seasons and all of us go through very similar struggles of trying to deal with the things of the world and the things of Christ, and they are not the same. You have to make a decision literally every single season about which you shall focus on and whether you'll get caught up in the wind or whether you'll be caught up in the spirit. Thank you for joining us today at Brothers of the Word, because brother, you need the word. Amen, amen, amen.

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