

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

How we discern what comes from God

Moses, speaking to the people, says that one day God will send another prophet like him. This prophet will speak God's words with God's full authority, such that anyone who refuses to listen will be held accountable by God. The people are also warned against listening to false prophets. A true prophet's words will prove to be true.



Bible notes



In the middle of a section outlining various laws to do with boundary markers and sacrifices, the compiler of Deuteronomy inserts this word from God about sending a prophet like Moses. It is almost as if God and Moses knew that the people would not be able to follow all this guidance without a person present with the authority to speak for God. It's what the people asked for when the Law was given on the mountain. God honoured this promise with a string of prophets – starting with Samuel – many of whose words we have in the text of the Old Testament. But the final fulfilment of this word came in Jesus as the crowd in John's Gospel noted in 6:14, 7:40. God always sends word in the form of a person.

First impressions

- What is this and what is it supposed to do?
- How do you know what is truth?
- How do we know what comes from God?



A gathering prayer

Lord, help us to hear your word, and to speak it. Help us to know your truth, and to show it. Help us to feel your love, and to share it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pray



Write a list of people whose authority you respect, and pray for them. If the list includes people you know, write a card or text of encouragement.

CREATE

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series features an 'alethiometer', a kind of compass for answering questions. Make your own 'truth compass' by cutting out a card circle and marking it into quarters. Think of four things that could help you decide whether someone was speaking with God's authority. Make a symbol or picture for each of these factors and draw one in each quarter. Look at your compass whenever you are wondering whether something comes from God.

IMAGINE



Research how compasses work and are used. If possible, find one to experiment with. Read John 16:13 – 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth'. Perhaps the Spirit is like the magnetism that works a compass. Close your eyes, picture a spinning compass and imagine the Spirit slowly settling it in the direction of God's truth.

REFLECT

Find three news stories and think about what God's prophet is speaking into each situation.