

You can't always believe what you want

A dialog about a false prayer request

There are an astonishing number of false prophets with web sites on the Internet. Some are laughably goofy while others tug at my heart because their authors are so close to the truth of Jesus, Lordship. We who write in response to email or comments in our visitors book frequently encounter offers to exchange links with sites whose proprietors are in need of a word of truth or encouragement. Others we need only thank for taking the time to visit and browse through our papers.

However, not everyone who writes to Christian organizations on the web means well. Our team has encountered a wide variety of charlatans as well as wonderful Christian brothers and sisters all over the world. To some of you the following exchange may seem naive on my part but one must remember that Paul instructed us that, "Love...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...". Those of us who respond to prayer requests we receive via email prefer to err on the side of love. None the less some caution is necessary because as with all ministries, our battle is not against flesh and blood: spiritual warfare is underway.

The dialog below began as a prayer request sent in to a Christian web publication. A friend of mine sent it to me because we often exchange prayer requests, so I responded and thus follows what I believe to be an enlightening Spirit led exchange.

-----Original message:-----

Hi Ted,

I just received this e-mail late Sunday evening as I was about to retire (oh I guess it is actually 1 am Monday).

KSC

Prayer request forwarded:

EMERGENCY PRAYER REQUEST FROM A CHILD

Date: Mon., 01:03:04

To: LOVED ONES FRIENDS AND PRAYER WARRIORS

This is a Prayer request sent to me by Daniel; he is 11, lost his dad two months ago and his mom is dying of Cancer...He is a Wonderful child...I am asking that all of you PLEASE RESPOND to HIS PRAYER

REQUEST as SOON AS POSSIBLE...As HIS MOM doesn't have much time left...SHOW HIM GOD'S CHILDREN LOVE HIM AND THEY CARE....IN GOD'S GREAT LOVE ALWAYS...

Please pass this on.

GB.

OK here is the letter:

Date: Monday

From: Hoos hell@aol.com

To: GOD'S LOVING CHILDREN

hi my name is daniel i am 11 years old and i am a boy i jsut lost my dady to a car accident he was killed and my mom is so hurt

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because he is dead my mom misses him a lot you know mom is sick too she is goona die from canser soon the docter says she might be okay for two more monts can you please please do my mom a favor for her huh please say a prayer to god so god will know my mom loves him and ask he to help her so she does not hurt so much please and if god can fix her it be even more beter you see me too need mom a lot i don't have no one else to take care of me you know and i think my mom be worry about me what will happen when she is dead to me but if you say to god a big prayer to god maybe he will help mom be betetr okay now please do it for my mom okay i love you if you pray to god for her my mom okay bye, your friend daniel and i love you for saying a prayer for mom too okay thank you

Please send all responses to HOOS HELL@AOL.COM...the Child's name is Daniel.

-----End forwarded message -----

This is my first response to my friend KSC about the prayer request. I'm dyslexic so on the natural I noticed something out of place. For an eleven year old making a lot of spelling errors, how did he manage to get "accident" right. I would have spelled it with an "x" or two and at least one "s". Then my gift of discernment kicked in and I knew I should check out the email address of the "11" year old boy. I hadn,t noticed that the address was a little weird. The PBC web team writes a lot of email and most of the time I just click on "reply" and don,t even notice the address. This time I checked it out through several search engines and made these discoveries and sent them back to my friend KSC.

From: twise@mediacity.com
To: KSC.
Date: Tuesday, September 1998 12:25 PM
Subject: Re: child's request for prayer

Dear KSC,

I hate to tell you this but I did a search on Alta Vista for the email address said to be the boy,s. I looked up "hell@aol.com" . This is what I found. These postings came off of news group/bulletin boards. Places where anyone can post anything they want.. As you can see, it doesn't look like "Daniel" is an 11 year old boy.

The postings are from three different bulletin board type sites with the same return email address as Daniel's.

The first was posted on an ocean lovers very beautiful page. It looked like an ecology minded group.

-----Begin Postings-----

<Name: Mephistopheles>
Email : Hell@aol.com
Date: 4/18/98
Time: 1:17:23 PM

Hello boys and girls..... my name is Satan. I love little kids, especially theyre candy-sweet souls. I also love the ocean. Especially its candy-sweet soul.

-----Next-----

The next site he signed his name with a witchcraft symbols.

Hello

I am just kindof wondering where all you people live, think of this as a poll. If everyone would be kind enough to just post a message with their state and city I would be happy.

:I myself live in

: HUEYTOWN. ALABAMA.

: If you do not want everyone to know where you live just e-mail it to me : at thine hell@aol.com.

: Thanks

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: Å W;îê Ê. Å

-----Next-----

This was posted on a heavy metal music site:

From: HellFire (hell@aol.com)
Date: Sun 13:45:43 PDT
Band: Greenhouse
Subject: Rawks!

You guys RAWK Hell Fire's world, man! I want to know what you wear on stage. Do you dress up in leather? Or satin? Or chainmail? Or rubber?

HellFire (hell@aol.com)

-----end of his posted stuff-----

There may be more but I think this is enough to get the idea that Daniel is not what he claims to be. I'm open to being wrong. In fact I would prefer to be wrong. I hope you won't be offended by this KSC, but this guy is a fraud. But, if he is then we have all the more reason to pray for him because it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

PS: I also did a RealName search, results: The RealName "Hoos hell@aol.com" is not currently a subscribed RealName.

Ted

Dear Ted,

You always amaze me..... how you found that out is beyond me. I get so many things, I try and be faithful to pass on to others so the prayer comes from many places and people. I am so glad there are the "Teds" who check things out. When I saw that e-mail return address, I went, "whew, what,s that about?" but thought maybe it was someone's name abbrev. or something.

Again and again I see why we need each other in the body.. one does this, another for that.... each part doing it's part. Thanks for sharing this with me. I will pass it on to the List and the ones who sent in it, to pray.

To be quite honest, what you found reminds me of a pedophile seeking kids and connections to kids.... makes my heart very sad. We need to pray for this.

Thank you again. You are a blessing!

KSC

To: KSC

Thank you for the encouragement. Keep praying for me to be faithful in the use of my spiritual gifts. I have been gifted with "discernment" and you have acknowledge that I have a spiritual gift. If this is true then you must be gifted too. Jesus treats us all alike. Should I pray for you to find and use all of your gifts? Mercy might be one of them. You are always asking for prayer for some poor soul in difficult circumstances. Paul wrote this about spiritual gifts:

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." (1 Cor 12:7-12 KJV).

I really do need prayer for the use of my gift because the word translated "discerning of spirits" is, "diakrisis". It means the act of judgment, to discern or distinguish. It is passing judgment by means of the Holy Spirit. You can see why I covet all the prayer I can get. I always hope I'm wrong when it concerns something that tugs on one's heart like the story of the boy did.

I really can't explain how it happens. Something just seems clear to me. Nothing lights up, I don't feel any different. In fact it always strikes me as being supernaturally ordinary. Then as soon as I point out what I see to my brothers and sisters, it seems apparent to them as well. That's my confirmation. The rest of the Body can see the truth, too. If they didn't, then I would be wrong. It happens when I read the Bible. I will read something Jesus said about an issue that causes me to wonder why I didn't see the truth of it before He pointed it out. It is certainly obvious after He points it out.

Yours in Christ,

Ted Wise

To: Ted,

What do you think of this?

KSC.

Forwarded Original Message:

To: KSC.

The little boy's e-mail address was hoos hell@aol.com Unbeknownst to most people, AOL let's you have blank spaces in an e-mail address. AOL addresses can be up to 10 characters long with blank spaces counting as part of the 10. You can omit the space and send to hooshell@aol.com and the message will still go through.

I was concerned about the legitimacy of the message, but unfortunately can't check it out since I'm not on AOL anymore. Perhaps one of our AOL subscriber's can check to see if hoos hell has a profile on AOL.

M.G.

-----End of Original-----

To: KSC,

Some of the postings were recent and I think one was a year old, so I don't think I have made a mistake with the email address search. I tested the email address and got bounced with this come-back.

----- The following addresses had permanent fatal errors -----

<"hoos hell"@aol.com>

----- Transcript of session follows -----

... while talking to air-za04.mail.aol.com.:

RCPT To:<"hoos hell"@aol.com>

550 MAILBOX NOT FOUND

550 <"hoos hell"@aol.com>... User unknown

Let's keep praying for whoever and what ever is going on. That way we will be sure to have it covered.

Thanks,

Ted

To: Ted,

Thanks for the confirmation. I had concerns, as well. I think I am really seeing a need to fine-tune my ear as to how many prayer requests I forward. While I do not want this to stop the forwarding, as I don't think that is wise, I think I need to hear even clearer who and what to send.

I don't feel bad about this one, but I do feel I sent it in haste. I did not pause to listen to the Lord. Oftentimes I forward to whom I feel the Lord leading me to, not sending it to some, sending it to others.... I do that with each request. But I again see the need to pause and listen more. I, too, had a feeling about that one, but dismissed it.

I pray we each can fine-tune the discernment the Lord gives us, to include sincere prayer- to seek the mind of the Lord on matters that we would too simply dismiss. Help us, Lord.

Thank you,

KSC

To: KSC,

You wrote, "Thanks for the confirmation. I had concerns, as well. I think I am really seeing a need to fine-tune my ear as to how many prayer requests I forward.". To that I say, "Amen". Use the Body, I'm sure I'm not the only one with discernment. I'm sure the Lord has someone near you with the same gift. If not, I will be happy to check anything you want. But first you would do well to find and encourage a local member of the Body. Let's get folks using their gifts. We need them for this work.

Ted

I thought that was the end of this exchange but this was forwarded to me after my friend KSC emailed the person who sent the original prayer request. KSC is a faithful member of the Body of Christ. I can always send KSC a request for prayer and be confident that lots of people will pray for me. This is a fine example of someone not dropping the ball.

-----Forwarded Original Message-----

Hi, KSC,

I think I owe you and the Lord an apology. When I received this forwarded request I had an immediate check in my spirit over it. I really don't know why - the email address was only part of it. I think it was also my experience of working on the telephone with hurting kids and occasionally encountering adults who, for reasons unknown, impersonate hurting kids. But really I think it was the Lord.

But I agree with you, this needs prayer too! And I also think we need to be asking the Lord to screen out what we should not be taking on in prayer, and that we should keep our spiritual ears open as we read and consider all the many prayer requests which come our way. Don't feel too responsible for passing this one on - it could have been any of us falling for it. Anyway, I'm sorry I didn't respond earlier, but thank you for the confirmation I now have that I was hearing correctly.

Blessings,

S.R.

-----End Forwarded message-----

Please notice the outcome of this dialog, "...thank you for the confirmation I now have that I was hearing correctly." Rather than a defensive argument there is humility and a confirmation that perhaps there is a friend of KSC's that has the gift of discernment. These are good Christians to know, even though fellowship is limited by the Internet. Pray for all the Christians involved in web communication. We are bound to be opposed by our common enemy. Cyber space is another place where we wrestle not against our fellow humans but spiritual powers in unseen realms

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Ted Wise (9/9/98)

twise@mediacity.com

Bible verses and quoted Kings,

When in context read,
Can mean different things,

"...And all the people answered
and said, "That is a good idea."
(1 Ki 18:24).