

Discern the Time

Can You Hear the Call to be Positioned for Purpose?

By Sarah Holloway

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“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
Revelation 2&3

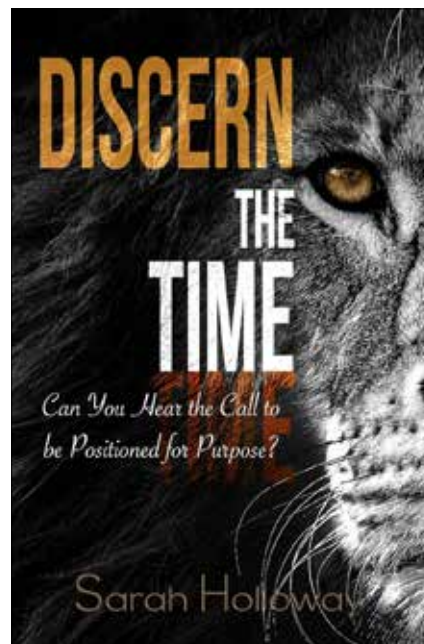
If Sarah Holloway, author of *Discern the Time* had met the Apostle John towards the end of his life when he was exiled on the Island of Patmos, I don't think there would have been very much disagreement. It was whilst exiled on Patmos that the Apostle John wrote to the seven churches in Asia, ending each letter with “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches”. This is a book encouraging us to stop and consider what is happening in our world, what God is saying and what our part might be in the 21st Century.

Discern the Time is a collection of prophetic words that Sarah Holloway has gathered over a period of seven years. In September 2022 she felt led to publish them with a fresh sense of urgency to encourage, build up and help Christians not only discern the time we are in but understand and fulfill the purpose for which God has called us.

Sarah is a multi-award-winning documentary film director, speaker, dancer, choreographer, teacher and coach. In her book she openly and deeply shares many of her own experiences, and demonstrates a passion about the necessity for more discernment in our lives as Christians.

Early on in this review I think it's worth mentioning that *Discern the Time* is not specifically written for the audience of Christian business leaders or the context of business. Whilst I felt disappointed, I continued to read

as invited, to think about experiencing the book as a journey and going on an adventure together. Reflection pages at the end of each chapter encourage



us to stop and to journal reflections, capture Scriptures that may have had an impact or to write a prayer. These were the perfect opportunities to apply the encouragement and challenges in the content of my business life.

Early on, occupying a page on its own, we read Romans 12 v2 (ESV):

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

This is a helpful reminder. As Christians in business, there is always something to do, a meeting to get to, a deadline to meet, an inbox to deal with, problems to solve, decisions to be made, to name

a few and I know for certain, that despite committing my working day to God in prayer, that ‘renewal of my mind’ seldom shows up at the top of my ‘Things to Do List’.

There are 19 chapters in the book, most of which are built around a particular prophetic word that Sarah has received since 2018 although there are some references to prophetic visions and words going as far back as 2015. But it's not all about Sarah. Her motivation for writing the book is to encourage us to “aspire to leave an eternal legacy to the glory of God” (p.24) and “to stir a response ... that will increase our love for God” (p.32).

The book follows a path starting with Chapter One – *Discern the Times* – encouraging us to stop and reflect on what has gone before, noticing the patterns emerging and what lessons we've been learning. Chapter Two – *A New Dispensation* – helps us look forward before Chapter Three – *The Time* – which focuses us on our own situation and time with the helpful analogy of a farmer, preparing the ground, sowing, reaping or harvesting. Chapter Four – *Crossroads* – recognises that we are surrounded by many voices, as if we have several sat-navs talking to us at one time. I think we all know that feeling, even the frustration of one sat-nav talking to us!

The next few chapters draw on the story of Noah, truly listening to God, building the Ark for a purpose and preparing himself and his family. The challenges in these chapters are encouraging us to think about what our ark is, what is the

purpose of it, what is the design of it, are we spiritually ready to build it and what hope will it bring to others.

Chapter 9 reminds us that we are not alone before taking us to Chapter 10 when we join Moses in the journey to the promised land and all the trials and joys that they encountered along the way. Sarah shares her filmmaker experience on the importance of being able to zoom in and out, to see the bigger picture and the detail and what is happening in the camera view, as well as 'off camera' in the background.

In Chapter 11 we're well on a journey and join the story of Joseph who ultimately fulfills his God-given purpose of saving the Israelites and maybe others from the famine in Egypt after years of trials and blessings. Sarah challenges us to remove the slave mentality of Egypt and writes that "it's time for the Spirit-led leaders to arise". If we wait till we're ready, we'll never be ready - balancing this with a reminder that we were never meant to do this alone; we need one another.

Chapter 12 is a meaty chapter reminding us that the devil is always at work to divide and separate so we are told to seek out commonality rather than difference: together we are stronger. We are introduced to Testudo, a tortoise-like formation of shields commonly used by Roman soldiers during battles, where they would link together to protect each other. We're spurred on with the story of Deborah who accompanied Barak to defeat the Canaanites and Gideon who was accompanied by an angel when he tore down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole. There is also a beautiful metaphor of redwood trees which are one of the tallest trees on the planet but have roots that connect and entwine with the roots of other trees as the redwood roots are only a few feet deep - "the secret of their strength is in their connection".

The remaining chapters encourage us to be watchful, to be faithful stewards, and that times of challenge, feast and famine can equip us to help others. Chapter 14 is devoted to money matters and seeks to challenge us on whether earning, tithing or giving are limiting our discernment and obedience to scripture. We read about Jonah and his fear, frustration, anger and resentment towards God because of his love for the Ninevites even with their sinful ways.

In Chapter 19, entitled 'He Who Has Ears', Sarah asks what might be distracting us. In moments of struggle how we can ground ourselves by testing our motives and actions against the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - found in Galatians 5:22-23. Finally, Sarah shares her own challenge that the more she learns of God, the less she knows, and this is followed by a final challenge to us to open our spiritual eyes and ears and perhaps unlearn some things we thought we knew - what might God be calling us to let go of to make way for the new?

Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.

1 Corinthians 3: 18-19 (NIV)

There are four things that provide the content and impetus for this book:

- a series of visions and prophetic words received by the author
- recent world events, including the COVID-19 pandemic
- the author's own story of how God has challenged and blessed her
- many, many passages of scripture interpreted and applied for encouragement and challenge in the 21st Century

Should we desire to push 'the renewal of your mind' further up the 'Things to Do List' and increase our spiritual intelligence in searching for or affirming our purpose as a Christians in business. Discern the Time is a helpful tool. It is packed with content to trigger our own thoughts and feelings and I personally enjoyed using the journaling pages to capture specific passages of scripture, insights and prayers, once I got over my early conditioning that 'writing on books' was a bad thing!

In the early stages of reading I found the book disjointed and at various points throughout I struggled to see the connection or the underlying message. I confess some of that may be due to the fact that I don't have the same charismatic evangelical perspective of the writer. To stick with it, I decided to approach it as a series of vignettes and where appropriate join them together like a jigsaw. It was only on completion and in preparation for writing this review that I detected links between some of the chapters. Perhaps a short summary of each chapter and introduction at the beginning of the next would have facilitated the flow more easily.

If you are seeking to find your purpose as a Christian in the business world, I'm not sure it's the first book you'd pick up, either because of the title or the picture of a rather fierce lion on the cover. Both are helpfully and interestingly explained further in the book.

Should you desire to know more and grow more, and be up for some challenge and heavy lifting, I'd recommend this book as a helpful tool to open your ears and hear what the Spirit is saying. It will, as the author intended build you up and help you not only discern the time we are in but understand or affirm the purpose for which God has called you. 📖



Marjory Mair is a Leadership & Team Coach. Since 2002 she has been running Marjory Mair Associates, enabling leaders and teams to flourish across not-for-profit organisations and SMEs. Based in Oxfordshire, she is a board member for Christian Business Leaders and a governor for an independent Christian school. More locally she enjoys a great night out on the town each month as a street pastor.