



7. Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Worksheet 7.3: Discernment of Spirits

'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: to another discerning of spirits..... 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He will.' 1 Cor 12:7

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. (1 John 4:1, NASB)

This gift is an essential one for every believer to understand and operate in. Jesus told us to be *'wise as serpents and harmless as doves.'* (Matthew 10:16) This gift of discerning of spirits has become critically important as we approach the end of this age in which deception will rife.

1. Discernment of Spirits - Definition

This is a revelatory gift, often working together with words of wisdom and knowledge. It is supernatural knowledge or insight given by the Holy Spirit that reveals what spirit power is operating in or behind a person or situation. The Holy Spirit uses this gift to reveal to us the true source of something.

It is not the same as natural discernment with the mind or senses which depends solely upon the person's feelings and interpretation of the situation.

It is a straightforward gift with no fluff or unnecessary detail.

2. Purpose

- ✓ It can reveal essential information about the activity of the Holy Spirit and or angels.
- ✓ It can reveal the nature and activity of demonic spirits.
- ✓ It can show the location of evil spirits inhabiting a person's body and how they are operating. It is often used in healing.
- ✓ It shows you how to administer deliverance and release for those who are bound by spiritual oppression.
- ✓ It can reveal the geographical location and activity of evil spirits (territorial spirits or prevailing spirits in an area)
- ✓ It can help you discern the true motives of a person's words and actions.
- ✓ It can guide you in appointment of leaders or placing people in positions of influence.
- ✓ It can give you understanding of what is happening in the spirit realm around your life and ministry.
- ✓ Identify whether a 'revelation' is from God or not.
- ✓ It can protect the integrity of what God is doing.
- ✓ It also protects the majority of the flock from internal or external danger.

3. Bible Examples

- Numbers 22:21-39: Balaam saw the angel with the sword.
- 1 Sam 16: 8-10: When Jesse's sons passed by Samuel, he discerned they were not God's choice for king. Samuel had spiritual information about their nature, essence, and person as they simply passed by him.
- 2 Kings 6: 8-16: Elisha's servant' eyes opened to the spirit realm and angelic activity
- Matt 16:23: Jesus discerned in demonic source of Peter's words
- Luke 2:25-27: Simeon discerned the timing and activity of the Holy Spirit
- Luke 10:17-19: Jesus 'saw' satan fall like lightning.
- Luke 13:10-13 Jesus discerned the demonic source of the sickness
- John 1:43-51: Jesus discerned the heart of Nathaniel was good.
- Acts 8:18-23: Peter discerned the motives of Simon the sorcerer
- Acts 16:16-17: Paul discerned the spirit of divination operating in the servant girl

4. Activity: Can you think of any examples in your life when you have experienced the gift of discerning of spirits?

5. Positioning Yourself correctly to flow in this gift

- ✓ Be full of love. Our main response must beFather how can I help this person?
- ✓ We are not to be critical, condemning or judging. Sometimes we are shown things that are not nice but we must be led of the Holy Spirit – why do You show me this? What do you want me to do with this?
- ✓ Don't talk to others about people.
- ✓ Check that you don't have judgement issues in your own heart, as this will cause you to operate out of judgement, offense or a bitter spirit.
- ✓ It's very important to work with and ask the Holy Spirit what He wants you to do with what you discern. Many times it is for intercession and you don't need to tell the person

or minister to them. Sometimes it is for your guidance, for example if you discern a wrong spirit in someone you thought would be good for leadership but the Lord shows you their hidden agenda is not good. Other times, He will lead you to minister to people or into situations.

6. Stirring up and developing the gift

a. Understand and Use Your Senses

*'But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who **by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**' Hebrews 5: 14*

- Natural Senses
 - We all have five natural senses: sight-taste-touch-smell-hearing
 - These senses develop as we grow and can be exercised and trained to be sharper
- Spiritual Senses
 - We are made in the image of God who has spiritual senses
 - These senses are energized and quickened by the Holy Spirit
 - These senses can be developed or trained by practice

b. Developing Sensitivity

*'But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their **senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**' Hebrews 5: 14*

- Cherish and nurture your relationship with God through worship, prayer and communion.
- Prioritise study of the Word.
- Ask for it! And believe you have received it.
- Pray Ephesians 1: 18-19 over yourself consistently. 'Flood the eyes of my heart with light so that I can know and understand the immeasurable, unlimited and surpassing greatness of Your power'.
- Practice identifying spiritual impressions of 'green', 'amber' or 'red'.
- Identify the first impressions you have as you meet people, enter a room, participate in meetings.
- Put a specific name to what you feel, or to the impression you felt.
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Learn to distinguish what comes from your spirit, and what comes from your soul, which may be rooted in insecurity and distrust of people

Bible Study



1. Read John 1: 45-49 – Jesus and Nathaniel.
 - a. What was Nathaniel's initial attitude to hearing about Jesus of Nazareth? (vs 46)

 - b. What did Jesus discern about the heart and motive of Nathaniel? (vs 47)

 - c. How did Nathaniel respond? What was the 'fruit' of the gifts of the spirit? (vs49)



2. Read Acts 16: 16-19.
 - a. Briefly describe the situation.

 - b. What was she saying about Pal and his team? (vs 17). Was this true?

 - c. If what the slave girl was saying was true, why was it a problem to Paul?

d. Why do you think Paul waited for 'many days' before he cast out the spirit?

e. What was the type of spirit that Paul identified in the slave girl?

f. What lessons does the Holy Spirit show you from this account of the operation of this gift?

3. Choose 2 or 3 other biblical examples of the operation of discernment of spirits. Read the bible accounts prayerfully. Write down the lessons the Holy Spirit shows you about operating and developing this gift in your life.