

LXXXII. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF DISCERNMENT: 1 Corinthians 12:10

INTRODUCTION. Brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and visitors,

Discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ (doctrine for today's sermon) [repeat doctrine].

The word discernment, put simply, is the ability to tell the difference between truth and error. Or as Charles Spurgeon allegedly said, "[Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right](#)" (no primary source found, but often attributed to Spurgeon).

It is abundantly apparent to all that the Discernment is most needed in our day.

- I) Charismania has influenced the church.
- II) The entertainment industry has influenced the church.
- III) Pelagianism has influenced the church.
- IV) Prosperity or Word of Faith theology has influenced the church.
- V) Poverty theology has influenced the church.
- VI) Pietism has influenced the church.
- VII) Feminism has influenced the church.
- VIII) Dispensationalism has influenced the church.
- IX) Zionism has influenced the church.

We are a people who desperately need to use Christian Discernment, so that we can tell the difference between truth and error, and also between right and almost right.

That brings us right to our text of Scripture for today, which deals with what is most often called "the spiritual gift of discernment."

CON(TEXT). **1 Corinthians 12:10** "to another the ability to distinguish between spirits,"

DOCTRINE. Discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ.

OUTLINE.

QUESTION 1. What is meant by the words "the ability to distinguish between"?

QUESTION 2. What is meant by the word "spirits"?

QUESTION 3. What does the functioning of this gift look like?

QUESTION 4. Why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today?

QUESTION 1. What is meant by the words “the ability to distinguish between”?

1 Corinthians 12:10 “to another the ability to distinguish between (“diakrisis”) spirits,”

ANSWER. It is simply one word in the Greek and it means to distinguish or judge or discern. To discern between truth and error, right and wrong, light and dark, faithful and hypocritical, right and almost right, the Spirit of God and unclean spirits or the spirit of a man or the spirit of this world.

- **Hebrews 5:14** “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”
 - **BOYS AND GIRLS** can you tell the difference between right and wrong, truth and error? What about the difference between right and almost right?

QUESTION 2. What is meant by the word “spirits” in 1 Corinthians 12:10?

1 Corinthians 12:10 “to another the ability to distinguish between spirits,” (“pneuma”)

Now, we need to do a little bit of a word study here, because there are at least six different ways God uses the word spirit in the Biblical languages (Greek and Hebrew). The word “spirit” in the Greek and the Hebrew is kind of like the word “run” in English.

BOYS AND GIRLS what does the word “run” mean?

- (i) The word “run” can mean **To move quickly on foot.**
“I run every morning before work.” (The basic physical action of jogging or sprinting.)
- (ii) The word “run” can mean **To manage or operate something.**
“She runs a successful small business.” Or: “Who’s running the meeting today?” (Being in charge or making something function.)
- (iii) The word “run” can mean **A sequence or series of something.**
“The team had a long run of wins.” Or: “We’re on a lucky streak—a run of good luck.” (A continuous stretch or streak of events.)
- (iv) The word “run” can mean **To flow or move in a liquid way.**
“The river runs through the valley.” Or: “Your nose is running because you have a cold.” (Liquid moving or leaking.)

(v) The word "run" can mean **A tear or snag in fabric.**

"Oh no, I have a run in my stockings!" (A long rip or ladder in clothing.)

(vi) The word "run" can mean **To be a candidate in an election.**

"He's going to run for president next year." (To compete or stand for office.)

So, just as the word "run" in English can mean multiple different things, so the word "spirit" in the Biblical languages can mean multiple different things.

I. Sometimes the word "spirit" is used for **the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12:3-4, 7-9, 11, 13).

- **DEFINITION.** This use of the word means the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit.
- **1 Corinthians 2:10** "These things (glorious promises of the gospel) God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."
- **1 Corinthians 12:3** "Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit."

II. Other times the word "spirit" is used for **unclean spirits** (Acts 5:16; Ephesians 2:2).

- **DEFINITION.** This use of the word means *Satan and demons*.
- (Satan) **Ephesians 2:1-2** "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins, in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience..."
- (Demons) **Acts 5:16** "The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed."

III. Sometimes the word "spirit" is used for **the spirit of man** (1 Corinthians 2:11, 5:5, 14:14-16).

- **DEFINITION.** This use of the word means what we call *the human soul*.
- **1 Corinthians 2:11** "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."
- **1 Corinthians 5:5** "You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

- **1 Corinthians 14:14-16** "14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. 16 Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?"

IV. Other times the word "spirit" is used for **the spirit of the world** (1 Corinthians 2:12).

- **DEFINITION.** This use of the word means *the influence of those opposed to Christ*.
 - **1 Corinthians 2:12** "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God."

V. Sometimes the word "spirit" is used for **a spirit of gentleness, a spirit of faith, etc** (1 Corinthians 4:21; 2 Corinthians 4:13).

- **DEFINITION.** This use of the word means a *disposition or temperament* of gentleness, faith, etc.
 - **1 Corinthians 4:21** "What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?"
 - **2 Corinthians 4:13** "We have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written..."

This is the only one of the five I have mentioned that Paul surely does not have in mind in 1 Corinthians 12:10. There is no need to distinguish between this kind of disposition and anything else.

VI. Still other times the word "spirit" is used for **a principle of life within a man** (2 Timothy 1:7; Ezekiel 36:26).

- **DEFINITION.** This use of the word means the principle of life within a man—once dead in Adam, but, as a Christian, now alive in Christ.
 - **Ezekiel 36:26** "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you..."
 - **2 Timothy 1:7** "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

QUESTION 2 (repeated). What is meant by the word "spirits" in 1 Corinthians 12:10?

ANSWER. By the word "spirits" in 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul surely means being able to distinguish between The Holy Spirit on the one hand and unclean spirits or the spirit of man or the spirit of the world on the other.

To clarify, think about it this way: *When someone says they are being used by the Holy Spirit, is it true or are they operating by an unclean spirit? Is it the Holy Spirit or is it the spirit of the man, so that he is just speaking on his own authority, in and of himself? Is it the Holy Spirit or is it according to the spirit of the world, which is opposed to Christ?*

BOYS AND GIRLS...

POOLE: "'To another discerning of spirits;' a power wherein God, for the further authority and credit of his gospel in the primitive times, communicated to some men something of his own prerogative to discern men's inward thoughts and hearts, and to make up a judgment of their truth and sincerity, or contrariwise of their falsehood and hypocrisy." — **Poole, Matthew. English Annotations on the Holy Bible . E4 Group. Kindle Edition.**

QUESTION 3. What does the functioning of this gift look like?

JOHN GILL: "To another discerning of spirits; by which gift such that were possessed of it could, in some measure, discern the hearts of men, their thoughts, purposes, and designs, their secret dissimulation and hypocrisy; as Peter, by this gift, discerned the dissimulation and lying of Ananias and Sapphira; and by it they could also tell whether a man that made a profession of religion had the truth of grace in him, or not; so Peter knew hereby that Simon Magus was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, notwithstanding his specious pretences to faith and holiness, whereby he imposed upon Philip the evangelist, who might not have this gift of discerning spirits; by which also they could distinguish the Spirit of God from the lying spirits in men." — **Gill, John. Gill's Bible Commentary . OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.**

AI) Consider Peter discerning the Annanias was lying.

Acts 5:1-6 "1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." 5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him."

AII) Consider Peter discerning that Simon the Magician was in the

gall of bitterness, even though Philip had baptized him.

Acts 8:18-23 "18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

AIII) Consider Paul rebuking the slave girl in Philippi.

Acts 16:16-18 "16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. 17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." 18 And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour."

TRANSITION. Though the spiritual gift of discerning between spirits is extraordinary, miraculous, and most likely ceased in the first century once the canon of Scripture was finished, Christians still need to exercise discernment regularly.

QUESTION 4. Why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today?

A.I) You need the Holy Spirit to be able to exercise discernment (1 Corinthians 2:14).

1 Corinthians 2:14 "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually *discerned*."

Why are so many professed Christians caught up in such heterodoxical or outright heretical teachings in our day? Because many of them are not converted to Christ, therefore they do not have the Spirit, and they are totally unable to spiritually discern.

WARNING / AWAKENING
Come to Christ for salvation!

A.II) Christians are commanded to exercise discernment in order to please the Lord (Ephesians 5:10-13).

Ephesians 5:10-13 "10 Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible..."

BOYS AND GIRLS... We are saved not by our pleasing of the Lord, but we are saved by the Lord by sheer grace so that we would then live pleasingly to the Lord.

A.III) Christians should pray to abound in discernment so that they may glorify and praise God (Philippians 1:9-11).

Philippians 1:9-11 "9 It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all *discernment*, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

A.IV) Christians should labor to grow in their ability to exercise discernment (Hebrews 5:14).

Hebrews 5:14 "Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

A.V) Christians must exercise discernment because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

BOYS AND GIRLS...

1 John 4:1-6 "1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

1 Thessalonians 5:21 "Test everything; hold fast what is good."

A.VI) Christians must exercise discernment so that they may not be confirmed to this world, but conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2).

Romans 12:2 "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."

CONCLUSION.

Discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ.

He who purchased us with His precious blood is owed all ascribed glory and honor and praise. Let us praise Him now together with our lips and then leave this place, ready to use discernment, to go out and praise Him with our lives!

TEXT WORK

1 Corinthians 12:10c

allos diakrisis
to another the ability to distinguish

adj

discerning

(judging)

pneuma

between spirits

disputing

C.F. Romans 14:1 ; Hebrews 5:14

"pass judgment"

"discern good and evil."

One who either is truly moved by God's spirit or falsely boasts that he is.

1. The Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10; 12:3-4, 7-9, 11, 13)

2. Unclean spirits (Acts 5:14; Ephesians 2:2)

3. The spirit of a man (1 Corinthians 2:11, 5:5, 14:14-16)

4. The spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2:12)

5. A spirit of gentleness, faith, etc. (1 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 4:13)

HELPS

- **12:1-11** Wickliff, John, "Of Spiritual Gifts," *Writings of the Reverend and Learned John Wickliff*, vol. 1 in the set, *The British Reformers*, pp. 215-218.
- **12:5-11** John Owen Vol. 4 pg. 453
- **12:6** Nettleton, Asahel, notes for a sermon, *Sermons*, pp. 466-467.
- **12:13** Boston, Thomas, "Of Union with Christ," *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*, i.544-556.
 - Boston, Thomas, "How the Sacraments Become Effectual Means of Salvation," *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*, ii.460-465.
- **12:27-28** Baxter, Richard, "Christ, & Not the Pope, Universal Head of the Church," *The Morning Exercises*, v.672-689.
- **12:28** Spurgeon, C.H., "Helps," #777, MTP 13.589-600.

PURITAN QUOTES ON DISCERNMENT

Thomas Watson (1620–1686)

- "Christ's sheep are *discerning*. He has given them a spirit of discerning, and they are able by their wisdom to distinguish between truth and error. They will not hear the voice of a stranger."
— *The Good Shepherd, Use 2; context: believers must obey Christ's voice in preaching while rejecting heterodox "strangers" who poison the church.*

John Owen (1616–1683)

- "The natural man by the natural light of reason can discern natural things. The spiritual man by a spiritual light received from Jesus Christ discerns spiritual things."
— *Discourse on the Holy Spirit; context: explaining 1 Corinthians 2:14 – unregenerate minds cannot receive or judge spiritual truths.*
- "There is an especial work of the Spirit of God on the minds of men, communicating spiritual wisdom, light, and understanding unto them, necessary unto their discerning and apprehending aright the mind of God in his word, and the understanding of the mysteries of heavenly truth contained therein."
— *Discourse on the Holy Spirit; context: the Spirit opens the "eye" of the understanding, which is otherwise blind to spiritual things.*

- "The unregenerate understanding is darkened and cannot judge things properly... Spiritual things, or the mysteries of the gospel, without the Holy Spirit first creating within the soul a new light by which they can see and receive those things, cannot bring salvation."
— *Discourse on the Holy Spirit; context: without the Spirit's illuminating work, no true discernment is possible, and the gospel remains foolishness.*

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)

- "My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others. And here I would observe, that we are to take the Scriptures as our guide in such cases. This is the great and standing rule which God has given to his church... and it is an infallible and sufficient rule."
— *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God; introduction – discernment is Scripture-guided testing of spirits/operations.*
- "Spiritual discernment is the process of testing and judging operations or influences attributed to the Spirit of God to determine if they are truly from Him or from false sources... It involves using Scripture as the infallible guide to distinguish the true Spirit from counterfeits."
— *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God; summary of the treatise's purpose.*
- "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world... This made it very necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, distinguishing and clear marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of the true from the false without danger of being imposed upon."
— *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God; opening exposition of 1 John 4:1 – the abundance of false prophets demands discernment.*
- "There are many gone out into the world who are the ministers of the devil, who transform themselves into the prophets of God, in whom the spirit of the devil is transformed into an angel of light; therefore try the spirits by these rules... that you may be able to distinguish the true spirit from the false, under such a crafty disguise."
— *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God; context: Satan counterfeits the Spirit's work, so Scripture-based discernment protects the church.*

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Section 1: The Doctrine & Definition of Discernment (Introduction)

1. The pastor states the sermon's main doctrine twice at the beginning: "Discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ and glorifies God." In your own words, explain why this is the central point. Why does the sermon repeat it?
2. The sermon defines discernment as the ability "to tell the difference" between truth and error, right and wrong, and especially "right and almost right" (quoting Spurgeon). Using the multiple-choice test analogy for children, why does the pastor say discernment becomes harder as we mature? Give a modern example from your own life where you had to choose between "right" and "almost right."
3. The pastor lists eight major influences that have swept through the professed church because of a lack of discernment (charismania, entertainment, Pelagianism/semi-Pelagianism, prosperity & poverty theology, pietism, feminism, dispensationalism, and Zionism). Pick **two** of these and explain, in your own words, how the sermon says each one distorts biblical Christianity. Why does the absence of discernment make these errors especially dangerous today?

Section 2: Understanding the Spiritual Gift in 1 Corinthians 12:10

4. The sermon breaks the phrase "the ability to distinguish between spirits" into two parts.
 - a) What does the Greek word *diakrisis* ("ability to distinguish between") mean?
 - b) Why does the pastor say this gift is **not** simply "the gift of discernment" as many modern teachers describe it?
5. The word "spirits" (*pneuma*) is used in at least six different ways in Scripture. List the six uses the pastor identifies. Then explain, according to the sermon, what Paul specifically means by "discerning spirits" in 1 Corinthians 12:10.
6. The pastor argues that this gift was a miraculous, supernatural ability given especially to the early church before the New Testament was complete. Do you agree with his conclusion that it has most likely ceased today? Why or why not? Support your answer with the sermon's reasoning.

Section 3: What the Gift Looked Like in Practice (Acts Examples)

7. The sermon gives three examples from Acts of the gift in action:
 - Acts 5:1–6 (Ananias)
 - Acts 8:18–23 (Simon the magician)
 - Acts 16:16–18 (the slave girl with a spirit of divination)For each example, describe: (a) What exactly did the apostle discern? (b) How was it different from ordinary human insight? (c) What was the result?
8. Why does the pastor say these three stories prove that the gift was about distinguishing the source (Holy Spirit vs. unclean spirit vs. spirit of man vs. spirit of the world) rather than just telling right from wrong?

Section 4: Why & How All Christians Must Exercise Discernment Today

9. The sermon lists six key reasons/commands for every Christian to exercise discernment, tied to specific verses. Match each verse below to its main point:
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 →
 - Ephesians 5:10–13 →
 - Philippians 1:9–11 →
 - Hebrews 5:14 →
 - 1 John 4:1–6 →
 - Romans 12:2 →Then choose **one** verse and explain in your own words how it shows discernment is not optional for believers.
10. The pastor emphasizes that unbelievers “cannot spiritually discern” because they lack the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14). How does this explain why large false churches or movements (e.g., the Mormon church, as mentioned) can grow so quickly? What hope does the sermon offer for someone who realizes they have been following error?
11. Hebrews 5:14 says powers of discernment are “trained by constant practice.” What practical steps does the sermon suggest for growing in discernment? How do prayer and labor work together (see Philippians 1:9–11 and Hebrews 5:14)?
12. Ephesians 5:10 commands us to “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” so we “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness” and even expose them. The pastor uses the COVID-vaccine example as a modern case study. Discuss:
 - a) Why does lack of discernment lead people (even pastors) to participate in things they would never intentionally choose?

- b) What is one current cultural or church issue where you think Christians especially need this kind of discernment today?
13. 1 John 4:1 tells us to “test the spirits” because “many false prophets have gone out into the world.” According to the sermon, what is the simple test John gives? How does this verse apply to evaluating teachers, books, podcasts, or social-media influencers today?
14. Romans 12:2 says we discern God’s will by being “transformed by the renewal of your mind” rather than being “conformed to this world.” What does the sermon say is the ultimate goal of discernment? How does this connect back to the opening doctrine?

Personal Application & Group Discussion Questions

15. Looking back over the entire sermon, what is **one** area in your own life (family, church, politics, entertainment, theology, etc.) where you now realize you need to grow in discernment? What specific action will you take this week?
16. The pastor closes by saying discernment is needed “to live a life that pleases Christ and glorifies God.” Spend a few minutes praying Philippians 1:9–11 together as a group. Then share: How has this sermon changed the way you view the Christian life?

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Well, brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and visitors, discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ and glorifies God. Discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ and glorifies God. That is the doctrine for our sermon today. That is what we really need to comprehend. Discernment, boys and girls, look up here at me. The word discernment, where we get the idea that we discern something or use discernment, that word simply means, children and adults, to tell the difference. It means to be able to distinguish. And when it is used in a Christian context, it is talking about being able to tell the difference between truth and error, what is right and what is wrong. That is the whole idea with the word discernment. Or as Charles Haddon Spurgeon allegedly put it, discernment is not just being able to tell the difference between truth and error or right and wrong. Spurgeon apparently is attributed as having said that discernment is being able to tell the difference between right and almost right. So sometimes just truth and lie is easy, but a lot of times the way the enemy works is through false teachers. Especially it is not just truth and error, right and wrong, and it is so polarized, but it is right and

almost right. And true discernment is able to tell the difference between those. And this is abundantly apparent that all Christians, especially in our day, need to exercise discernment. It is apparent if you just think about it and you look around. If you know the landscape of professed Christianity, especially in the West, you know that discernment is most needed.

Think of how charismania has so influenced the professed church. Discernment goes out the window and what feels good or what seems right just gets swept up into it.

Entertainment has influenced the church, particularly the entertainment industry. It is really interesting if you look back in the history of the church in the United States of America especially and you started getting more and more entertainment, just secular normal entertainment produced and pushed out especially to the youth. And you can see a correlation between more accessible entertainment and the church starting to shift toward that and the creation of things like youth groups and then the invention of like let us turn our worship music into the same type thing as a rock concert and let us start preaching concerning the felt needs of Christians rather than what God says they really need to hear. So you can see the rise in entertainment and how easy it is to get entertainment even in our culture. And the church just says we have got to compete with MTV back in the 1980s and the 1990s and it is still going on today. The entertainment industry has influenced the church and many Christians are just swept up into it. Pastors are swept into it because there is no discernment. What is right? What is wrong?

Pelagianism has influenced the church. And we would probably call it semi-Pelagianism today. You might more easily call it Arminianism, but just man-centered theology that has influenced the church today far and wide. So much so that even the Southern Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptists, the biggest denomination in the world, the biggest Protestant denomination in the world, and it was founded by Calvinists. It was founded and even in the late 1700s just the Baptists in general that were in the United States of America, it is like ninety-something percent of the Baptists in the United States were Calvinists. And now today if you know anything about the Southern Baptist Convention, there are some Calvinists in there but most of them are Arminians and not just Arminians like they are fire-breathing Arminians who hate Calvinism and hate Calvinists. Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism has influenced the church.

Prosperity theology or word of faith theology has influenced the church. And it does it because there is no discernment what is right, what is wrong. Poverty theology has also influenced other parts of the church sometimes in response to prosperity theology, word of faith theology. If God loves you, you are definitely not going to get sick. You are definitely going to be rich. That is prosperity theology.

But then the knee-jerk reaction comes through guys like Francis Chan and David Platt, and they pushed heavily into what I classify as poverty theology. Even though they themselves are not in poverty, but they push this idea that if you really want to be a faithful Christian, you are going to be poor. Like, well, that is wrong,

too. And so people fall into that.

And because there is no discernment, especially in our day right now, pietism has influenced the church. I do not mean piety. Piety is an old school word for just holiness, devotion to the Lord. But pietism is the kind of thinking and ideology that is basically retreatist from the culture and we just all of the Christian life is just inward personal devotion to Christ. And so it basically chops up the Christian life and it does not care anything hardly about the physical. It is just basically gnosticism. It is the physical is bad. And so the caricature in our day is fat pastors who will rail against drinking alcohol and they go through the buffet at the church function four times. It is because it is all about spiritual inward devotion, but it is like divorced from physical and it is usually retreatist from having anything to do with the civil government, those who are elected and who we should elect and the laws we should pass because it is like we just, the quote what they say is we just preach the gospel. It is like, yeah, we should preach the gospel and the law and be faithful to Christ in all spheres of life, but pietism has severely influenced the church. Why? Because there is no discernment.

Feminism has influenced the church. There are so many things that are believed and are like default positions of Christians in our day that many of us have realized the last ten years or so. It is like things that I just thought how I just operated. That is not how our spiritual forefathers operated at all. Why did they not? Oh, they were not influenced by these three waves of feminism that we have had come through western society since the 1800s. Feminism has so influenced the church and churches like ours it has. But the church overall, it has so influenced that now the PCUSA, the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, which started fine, Presbyterians are our brothers. We disagree about a few things with covenant theology, but Presbyterians are Calvinist. They are regulative principle. Most of them started out like they are exclusively singing the Psalms. Presbyterians are our boys. We love the Presbyterians, but now like the PCUSA and most of the Presbyterians in America, the big mainline ones, they are like not only ordaining women pastors, but they have women pastors who are lesbians. It is like it just keeps going. That is the end of it. But it is on the same spectrum as many other feminist truths that influence people's lives. It is just a varying of degree. But you can see it really obviously how badly feminism has influenced the church. Many churches are not led by the elders, but they are led by the wives of the elders who are in control of their husbands who are effeminate men. Feminism has so influenced the church. Why? Because there is no discernment.

Dispensationalism has also influenced the western church. Dispensationalism is an eschatological view, a view of the end times that did not exist till the 1830s. And it rejects covenant theology. It does not understand God's covenants. In it tries to say that the church and the physical descendants of Abraham called Israel still are two different peoples and God has two different plans and therefore dispensationalism has so influenced the church that it often just bleeds into Zionism.

Zionism has also influenced the church. Zionism is the people of Israel, the

physical descendants of Abraham, they say, still have a right and a claim to Palestine, to that land. It is like, dude, nobody believed that throughout church history. They these people have a right. No, Christ took that from them because they rejected him and they killed him. And then they persecuted the early church. And so Christ judged the apostate Jews who rejected him in 70 AD when he raised up Titus to destroy Jerusalem and to level the temple. Christ decisively judged them. They do not have any right to that land. But Zionism has so influenced the church that many professed Christians are just behind like whatever Israel does, they have a right to that, they have a right to that. And it is just insane. Why? Because there is no discernment.

We are a people who desperately need to use Christian discernment so that we can tell the difference between truth and error and also so we can tell the difference between right and almost right. That brings us right to our text of scripture for today which deals with what is most frequently or most often called the spiritual gift of discernment. The spiritual gift of discernment. Now look in your Bible at 1 Corinthians 12:10 to that middle part of verse 10. He is in this list of spiritual gifts. And as we work our way through 1 Corinthians, we are taking them now one at a time because they are so misunderstood in our day. We need to take our time. He says to another the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another the ability to distinguish between spirits. Now in the Greek it is three words. The "to another" is a word. The "ability to distinguish between" that is just one word. And then "spirits" is just one word. The Greek word pneuma. So it is just three words: to another discerning spirits. That is what the gift is. The gift of discerning spirits. So we need to properly understand what that means. And then more broadly how you and I, even if you do not have that spiritual gift, how all Christians are commanded and must use and grow in our ability to use discernment. We desperately need it. And again, I will remind you of our doctrine for this sermon. Discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ and glorifies God. Now, typically we work our way through texts of scripture and I just give you statements of truth that we learn from it. But as we are trying to learn what Paul is meaning here, what God is meaning through Paul, our outline will just be four questions. I am going to ask and answer four questions. First, what is meant by the words "the ability to distinguish between"? Like what does that mean? Second, what is meant by the word "spirits"? Third, what does the functioning of this gift look like? And then fourth, why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today? So, really just going to try to understand what the gift is that he is talking about and then at the end I am going to ask and answer something that applies to every one of us whether or not you have the gift. Why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today? So, first let us just try to understand the spiritual gift.

Question one, what is meant by the words "the ability to distinguish between"? Look at it again in 1 Corinthians 12:10. To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. The ability to distinguish between is just a Greek word

diakrisis. It just means to judge or distinguish or discern. It is a very simple word to tell the difference between two things. To be able to judge between the two, to distinguish or discern. That is why it is most often called the gift of discernment. It means to discern between truth and error, right and wrong, light and dark, faithful and hypocritical, right and almost right. To discern between the spirit of God and unclean spirits or the spirit of a man or the spirit of this world. The words used in Hebrews 5:14, listen to this. Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Distinguishing good from evil. So boys and girls, can you tell the difference between right and wrong? Sometimes, sometimes not. Right. Something even harder. Boys and girls, can you tell? Look at me. Can you tell the difference between something that is right and almost right? Right. Wrong. That is kind of easier, right? Light, dark. What about right and almost right? That is a lot harder, is it not? As you get older and you take more and more tests, boys and girls, you will realize that some tests when you are younger are maybe multiple choice questions. And one choice is, if you have paid attention to what you have studied, you go, "Well, that one is right." And sometimes you might not know which one is right, but you can look at all of them and be like, "Well, those are definitely wrong." So, it has got to be, I think it is that one. So, there is right and then there is like four really wrong answers. As I was teaching our hunting class and our co-op this last season, I had AI generate for me multiple choice questions. I put in my notes of what I taught them and said, "Write me a multiple choice test for seven to nine year old boys, something like that." And I was like, "No, no, no. I meant seven to nine year old homeschool boys because it started off as like the bar was really low. It was like one right answer and then four answers that were like those are really wrong. Made it really easy. But children, as you get older, multiple choice questions that you will take, it will be one right answer and then four answers that are like 99 percent right and just a little bit off. And the tests get much harder because you cannot just look at all the answers and be like, well, those are obviously wrong, so it has got to be that one. It gets to where it is like, I do not know. I think four out of these five answers could be the right one. And it gets harder and harder and harder. But children, it is going to be like that in the multiple choice questions or tests that you take. And children, it is also going to be like that in your life. When you are younger, the things that you are dealing with are a lot easier, right? Wrong. You are learning those basic things. As you get older, your parents can let you know. It is like it gets even harder because the decisions we have to make are between right and almost right. It is not always just right and wrong and so obvious and clear. It gets harder. And that is what is meant by this word diakrisis. It means the ability to tell the difference between right and wrong, but even more specifically between right and almost right. Boys and girls, we need Christians to be able to tell the difference between right and almost right so that we can all live for the glory of God and know what is true, what is right, and what is good. So there is what that word means, just that ability to distinguish. And if Paul just said this is a spiritual gift of, you know, discerning, we would say, "Yeah, we

should just call this a spiritual gift of discernment." But the problem with understanding what he means is that he adds that other word. And it is not just the spiritual gift of discernment like many people, especially in our day, teach. He says it is discerning spirits plural pneuma but in the plural. What does that mean? What is this spiritual gift? So we have to ask what is meant by the word "spirits" in 1 Corinthians 12:10. And I would remind you that we are taking a little bit longer to just understand the basic meaning of the words and it is going to take us longer to get to application in this sermon. But you need to know like sometimes the words are just so apparent and I can just state it and explain it in two minutes. We are like, "Yes, I understand objectively what he is saying." Now, how do we make use of that for God's glory and our good? But sometimes it is we have got to take a little bit longer to properly understand and make sure that we understand what he is saying because if we rush into it and do not properly understand what God is saying, we cannot possibly apply it. You cannot take an error and use it for anything good. So we have to have the truth and then use that truth for personal application for God's glory.

So what is meant—question two for the sermon—what is meant by the word "spirits" in 1 Corinthians 12:10? Again it is just the word pneuma. Now we need to do a little bit of a word study here because there are at least six different ways God uses the word spirit in the biblical languages Greek and Hebrew six different ways at least there might be more as I studied this whole this week I am looking all through the scriptures and every time this word spirit is used and I noticed six different ways this word is used. The word adults, you need to properly understand this. There are a lot of words used in the Bible that are used in different ways and different contexts. Baptism or baptize is one of those words. It is used in like seven different ways. Every time the word baptize or baptism is used, it is not always talking about believers baptism. Sometimes it is talking about suffering. Sometimes it is talking about judgment. Sometimes it is talking about being filled by and empowered by God, the Holy Spirit. So, you cannot just read a word and be like, I know what that means. Just like, boys and girls, look up here at me. The word spirit in the Bible is used in at least six different ways. Just like, think with me, just like the word run in the English language, boys and girls, if I use the word run and I ask you, what does run mean? How would you answer that? Suppose that you say, using your legs to move really fast. I am like, no, dummy. That is not what it means. It means running for a political office. Like I am running for president. I am going to run for president. I am not talking about your legs. You would be like, well, oh yeah, that is a different way to use the word run. To run can mean to move quickly on your feet. It can mean to manage or operate something. You say, what does run mean? Well, maybe it means to run for political office. No, no, no, no. It means to run a business. Like, oh, I did not know you meant it in that way. Another one, it could mean a sequence or a series of something. What does run mean? It means to run a business. Obviously, you just said that. No, that is not what it means. To run means like we are on a run of wins. We are on a lucky streak, a run

of good luck, things like that. A continuous stretch or streak of things that happen. The word run can mean to flow or move in a liquid. The river is running. It can mean a tear or a snag in a piece of fabric. Oh no, I have a run in my stockings. That kind of stuff can be used like I already said to be a candidate in an election. The word run, just as one example, can be used in a lot of different ways. So you cannot just read the word run and automatically put in whatever definition. You have to understand the context and you have to see what is the author meaning to say. So it is with the word spirit. It is actually the example I could have used in the English language is the word spirit for a lot of different reasons because we use the word spirit for a lot of different ways too like spirits like alcohol. We use the word spirit in a lot of different ways, but especially in Greek and Hebrew, that word is used. So just as the word run in English can mean multiple different things, so the word spirit in the biblical languages can mean different things. So we need to understand what those things are and then ask what is how is Paul using it here in 1 Corinthians 12:10. So buckle up for these few definitions. Sometimes the word spirit is used for the Holy Spirit and that is the most frequent use of the word *pneuma* in the Greek New Testament especially and it is usually joined by the word *hagios* which means holy the Holy Spirit but not always. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is being referred to by the word *pneuma*, this same word that we find in 1 Corinthians 12:10. But *hagios*, holy, is not included with it. But the context shows you it is talking about God, the Holy Spirit. So sometimes the word spirit is used for the Holy Spirit. I think that is the easiest one for us to grasp and understand. And so many times people read their Bibles in my estimation and read the word spirit and they are like, "It is talking about the Holy Spirit." Like, "No, no, it is not there." The context matters. In 1 Corinthians 2:10, these things, these glorious promises of the gospel, God has revealed to us through the spirit. Through the spirit. For the spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. So there is one example of God through a biblical author not saying Holy Spirit, just saying spirit. He is talking about God, the Holy Spirit. Okay? So sometimes that is how the word is used. Other times the word *pneuma* is used. The word spirit is used for unclean spirits. Meaning demons or Satan himself. So, not talking about God, the Holy Spirit, but unclean spirits. Ephesians 2:1 and 2, Paul uses that word spirit, and he is talking about Satan himself. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. It is talking about Satan. Then in Acts 5:16, the word is conjoined with unclean. So we read of the people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits. They were all healed. He is talking about demons. So sometimes it is the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is unclean spirits. But sometimes the word spirit is used for the spirit of man, the spirit of a human being. What we would call the soul. Well, we would call it just the soul, your spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:11, who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person? He is talking about humans. There he is talking about man. Sometimes that word is used just to talk about man. He uses it again multiple times in 1 Corinthians 14

talking about praying in my spirit in my soul but I would also pray with my mind. Not only sing I not only sing with my mouth I also sing with my spirit. So he is talking about the spirit of man or the soul of man. Other times the word spirit is used for the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world. Most of these are actually in 1 Corinthians as well. So Paul even uses the word spirit a ton of different ways just in this letter. He talks about the spirit of the world in 1 Corinthians 2:12. Listen. Now we have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given us by God. This use of the word spirit means the influence of those who are opposed to Christ. The spirit of this world, it is talking about this world in its opposition because of sin to Christ. So that is what the spirit of the world is. And sometimes the word spirit is used in this way, a spirit of gentleness or a spirit of faith etc. This use of the word spirit means a disposition or temperament of gentleness and of faith. It is not talking about that person has, you know, an unembodied spirit that is in them of faith or something like that. It is a disposition or a temperament of gentleness or faith. Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 4:21. What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? He is not talking about his spirit. He is not talking about a demon. He is not talking about God, the Holy Spirit. He is not talking about the spirit of the world. He is talking about a disposition or temperament of gentleness, but uses that same word, a spirit of gentleness. And then he also uses it the spirit of faith in 2 Corinthians 4:13. Now still other times the word spirit is used for a principle of life within a man. So the use of this word means the principle of life within a man once dead in Adam but as a Christian now alive in Christ. Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. A new principle of life. I think it is the same way Paul uses it in 2 Timothy 1:7. God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. There are at least these six different ways that the word spirit is used. So, what is Paul talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:10 by the word spirits? He surely means being able to distinguish between something that is of God the Holy Spirit or something that is of one of those other spirits. That is the ability to distinguish between spirits. Is this from God the Holy Spirit or is it of an unclean spirit, demonic spirit? Or is it just from this person? It is them in and of themselves from the spirit of man, not from the spirit of God. It is just them in their own power in their flesh. Or is it according to the spirit of the world that is actually opposed to Christ? Being able to distinguish between the work of God, the Holy Spirit, and any of the others. That is surely what the apostle Paul means here. Then it is a spiritual gift that was especially given in the early church to be able to distinguish is this person from God? Is this person telling the truth?

So to clarify, when someone says they are being used by the Holy Spirit, is it true or are they operating by an unclean spirit? Is it the Holy Spirit or is it the spirit of the man? So that he is just speaking on his own authority in and of himself. Is it the Holy Spirit or is it according to the spirit of the world which is opposed to Christ? I think that is what he means by to another the ability to distinguish between spirits. It is not just generally talking about what many in our day call the

gift of discernment. I do not think there is a spiritual gift of discernment in the sense that it is often described today. And it took me a while to get there. The more I studied what he is saying and the more I read commentaries, especially throughout church history, like my original thought going into even this week, the spiritual gift of discernment, it is like I think I have an idea what that is. Then the more I studied was like, "Nope, I did not. I just thought it was probably just being able to discern right from wrong." All of that. It is like, "But what do you do?" The ability to distinguish or discern between spirits. I think it is pretty clear what he is saying. Matthew Poole said to another discerning of spirits a power wherein God for the further authority and credit of his gospel in the primitive times communicated to some men something of his own prerogative to discern men's inward thoughts and hearts and to make up a judgment of their truth and sincerity or falsehood and hypocrisy. What Paul is saying and pretty much all other commentators that I have read from church history are saying this was a supernatural, marvelous gift that enabled especially the apostles in the building the foundation of the church to be able to look at someone and discern what kind of spirit they are operating according to. It is a miraculous, a supernatural thing. And especially in those primitive times because the scriptures were not complete yet. The scriptures were not finished being written and delivered yet. And so, how are they going to discern truth from error if we do not have the New Testament yet? And this is why their argument is that God gave this gift, especially to the early church. Because today we can judge someone by the fruit and we can examine them by what God says in his word and we have all the scriptures. What did they do in the early church when the scriptures were not completed yet? And the argument from most in church history which I find most compelling is that the ability to discern between spirits is that now let me further I think prove it to you. What does the functioning of this gift look like? If that is what he means in 1 Corinthians 12:10, which I think he does, do we see any example of that? Being able to discern between spirits. Yeah, we do. We see it at least three different places in the book of Acts. I want you to turn with me there. Go to Acts chapter 5 verses 1 through 6.

So, here is the next question in our sermon. Not only what does this ability to distinguish between mean? We have got that. What does spirits mean? We have got that. Now, ***what does the functioning of this gift look like?*** Acts 5:1 through 6. One use of this gift in the early church was Peter being able to discern that Ananias was lying. Have you ever read Acts 5 and be like, "How did Peter know that?" And we usually just, I think, put in some there. It is like, "Well, somebody must have let it slip or something like that." But Peter just looks at him and goes, "Bro, why are you lying?" And we go, "How did you know that he was lying?" Well, read it. Acts 5:1 through 6. But a man named Ananias, this is in the early church, with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property and with his wife's knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie

to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? There is a So the whole point is not that he sold it and kept back some, but that he lied about it and said, "I sold it for this much money and I gave it all to the church." When in fact, he had sold it for whatever percent more and just kept back some, but lied about it and acted like, "Look how generous I am." Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man, but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. Was Peter there able to discern between spirits? Yep. He is able to do something that you and I cannot do. Someone brings an offering and I cannot go, "Hey man, why did you lie to God?" and go, "What?" But Peter could. Go to Acts 8:18 through 23, a few pages to the right. Acts 8:18 through 23. What does the functioning of this gift look like? Well, first of all, we can see it in Acts 5:1 through 6, but we can also see it in Acts 8:18 through 23.

Peter is able in this scene, Peter is able to discern that Simon was in the gall of bitterness even though Philip had previously baptized him. So, Philip baptizes this guy and then when Peter comes along, he is able to see into his soul, see spiritually and see what is going on there. Acts 8:18 through 23. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them, the apostles, money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Yikes. Have you ever read that and thought, "Wow, that was really extreme." I mean, you I think if you are honest, and I am honest, we would read that and be like, "I have said stupid stuff like that before, too. I have said or I have had dumb thoughts when I was a new believer, especially." But Simon, he could be a new believer, we could say. And he is like, "Hey man, if I give you some money, can you give me that gift? That looks awesome." And a new believer, he is still a new believer, professed believer at this time. And I would think some of the response is, "Hey, we do not do that here. No, no, no, no, no. That is not how it works." But he does not get that. He gets rebuked. He is like, "Yeah, you are an unbeliever. You are in the gall of bitterness. How I see you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. This is another example I think and what many through church history have pointed to and be like look at that. Look at Peter's ability to discern that he did not just make a mistake but this guy is not truly a believer but he is professed to be one and he is trying to get in and buy power in order to make himself look great. Peter discerns that. Now go to Acts 16

to the right a few more pages. Acts 16:16 through 18.

So we have got Peter discerning that Ananias was lying. We have got Peter discerning that Simon the magician was in the gall of bitterness even though Philip had baptized him. Now we have got in Acts 16, Paul rebuking this slave girl in Philippi. Acts 16:16 through 18. This is Luke writing and Luke is obviously with Paul at this time in his missionary journeys. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the most high God who proclaimed to you the way of salvation." Is any of that wrong? That is exactly right. Look at it again. This is what she was saying. These men are servants, slaves of the most high God. True. Who proclaimed to you the way of salvation. Super true. It is exactly what they were doing. What is wrong with that? 18. Then she kept doing and this she kept doing for many days. Paul having become greatly annoyed turned and said to the spirit, demonic spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.

How does Paul know this is not just an annoying teenager? He turns around and rebukes her. Everything she is saying, true, true, true. She is not lying about them. Paul, it seems, is able to spiritually discern that she has a demonic spirit. And she is not saying this from God, the Holy Spirit. She is saying this under the influence of a demonic spirit so that it would seem that people would listen to her who were also listening to Paul and then eventually she can get in there and lead them astray. So Paul rebukes her and the unclean spirit is cast out. What does the functioning of this gift in 1 Corinthians 12:10 look like? I think it looks like those three instances. Being able to discern between spirits was something that God especially used in the early church to expose the hypocrites and to protect the church from the false teachers. Now though the spiritual gift of discerning between spirits is extraordinary, miraculous and I think most likely ceased in the first century once the canon of scripture was finished. Christians still need to exercise discernment today. Though I do not think you are going to be gifted to be able to see into someone's soul in that same sense that Peter and Paul were able to. The whole issue of discernment to be able to discern between right and wrong is still something that you and I should not avoid but actually go headlong into.

So my last question and for our growth not only in understanding but in application is ***why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today?*** Why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today? And I am going to point you to a few different things and I want to ask you to turn with me to these verses. I know we do not normally do that and I just want you looking at whatever verse that is our principal text of scripture but for this I want to ask you if you would to turn with me. So first go to 1 Corinthians 2:14. 1 Corinthians 2:14. Why and how do Christians need to exercise discernment today? The first answer as you turn there.

First answer is you need the Holy Spirit to be able to exercise discernment. You need God, the Holy Spirit to be able to exercise discernment. 1 Corinthians 2:14,

the natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God. By the natural person, he means the unregenerate man who does not have the Holy Spirit. Who is still in Adam but not yet in Christ and not yet filled by God the Holy Spirit. The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. You need the Holy Spirit to be able to exercise Christian discernment. He is not saying that an unbeliever cannot understand propositional statements of truth about certain things, but he is saying they are foolishness to him. He does not love them. He does not embrace them. He does not understand how to apply them. He does not understand how they should be used. And so, it does him no good. They are folly to him. He is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Brothers and sisters, you need the work of God, the Holy Spirit in your life. You have to be a Christian. If you are actually going to be able to exercise discernment and not just walk in error, walk in foolishness, walk in darkness for your own glory and not for God's glory.

Why are so many professed Christians caught up in such heterodox or outright heretical teachings in our day? Why are the biggest churches in the United States of America filled with people who are just totally gone astray into at best heterodoxy and most of them just outright heresy. Why? Because many of them are not converted to Christ. So they cannot discern. They do not have God the Holy Spirit. They do not have the spirit. They are totally unable to spiritually discern. So they are really easily led astray. Why? Why is the Mormon church so influential? It is not really a church. It is a false church with a false Christ and a false God, false view of salvation. Everything about the Mormon church is false. Why is it so big? Because it is filled with unregenerate people who have no ability to spiritually discern. So, they are easily duped. The sad thing for me as a pastor is the fact that these false churches grow, grow, grow so big. And they do it because these false teachers are able to attract people with the things that their human sinful nature already wants. You do not need somebody to be born again to want to go to your church. You just got to give them what their flesh already wants and wrap it in Jesus language and actually make them think that they are serving God by when they are actually just indulging their flesh. That is why so many professed Christians are caught up in these heterodox or outright heretical teachings in our day because many of them are not converted to Christ. So they cannot spiritually discern. You need to know that if you are not trusting in Christ alone for salvation, if you are not clinging to Christ, you have no ability to spiritually discern truth from error, right from almost right, and you are going to be a mess. You are going to fall for anything that seems right. And every step you take is closer to the pit. So turn from your sin. Embrace the Lord Jesus Christ who lived without sin. He went to a cross to die in our place for our sins and who arose from the dead. Come to Christ. Go to Christ in faith. Become a Christian and he will give you God the Holy Spirit and you will be able to spiritually discern and live a life for God's glory. So you need the Holy Spirit to be able to exercise discernment.

And so I would also use that to encourage you Christians. If you have been able

to see truth from error, some of you have been caught up in not outright heretical movements, but heterodox movements that are just off and you have been delivered from those lies. You should praise God for that. That you were able to escape and that God the Holy Spirit worked in you so that you were able to spiritually discern and you are not still caught up in those lies that were neatly wrapped around with Christ. But when you got under the veneer, you got under the wrapping paper, you saw this is not true. This is not right. If that has been you and you have escaped from that, praise the Lord for working in you, giving you discernment. Second, Christians are commanded to exercise discernment in order to please the Lord.

Go with me to Ephesians 5:10 through 13. So just a few pages to the right after 2 Corinthians and Galatians. Ephesians chapter 5 verses 10 through 13. So, you need the spirit to be able to exercise discernment. And I just want you to see discernment is not, well, I do not have the gift. It is like, nope, does not matter. You are commanded to exercise discernment, to be careful, to make sure you are trying to tell the difference between right and wrong, right and almost right. All of that. Ephesians 5:10 through 13. Here is a verse that you should just memorize. Just verse 10 at least. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. He is not talking to pastors. He is not talking to those with a certain spiritual gift. All Christians try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. That is really what wisdom looks like. In the exercise of wisdom, it is in every situation, in all of my life, in every way that I structure my time, every way I use my money, every way I use my thoughts, how I love my family, what I do in my vocation, how I am looking forward to the future, everything. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. And the way that you do that is not by having a supernatural miraculous spiritual gift that you can see into the spiritual realm like God is leading me this way. The way you do that is by examining and applying God's perfect word, the Holy Scriptures. But see that it is a command. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Why does that matter? Well, look, take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do, unbelievers do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. And the implication is so that in properly exercising discernment, you are going to make sure I will take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. And the implication drawing from all that is if you do not use discernment, exercise discernment in your Christian life, you will unknowingly take part in the unfruitful works of darkness and all the while thinking I am following Jesus.

This is the in my opinion this is what especially I will just talk about pastors because I am a pastor I can pick on other pastors pastors who not only encouraged but almost commanded their congregants to get the COVID vaccine. No discernment. And what did they do? I mean, if you have not looked at the results of that that people who got the COVID vaccine and boosters and all that kind of stuff, if you have not seen the increase in blood clots and heart attacks, and if you have not actually looked into the fact that they produced the COVID

vaccines on the backs of murdered babies, like if you do not exercise discernment, what you are doing, what many pastors sadly did in the whole COVID craze is not only themselves take part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but they encourage their congregants to do it as well. Why? If you do not exercise discernment, you will unknowingly even I do not think any I am not saying any pastors were like, you know what, I love that we murder babies so that I could be healthier. I do not think they said, I love myocarditis and I want that and I want other people to have it. No, but it is a lack of discernment that led to that and even participating, having fellowship, having part in the unfruitful works of darkness. Not only do we need to take no part, but he says he should actually go the other way and expose the unfruitful works of darkness. Not only exercise discernment so you can stay away from taking part, but expose it, shine light on it. And if you are going to do that, you have to try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Boys and girls, look up here at me. Here is a very important truth that you need to understand early on. And if you do not understand it, you are going to be so confused about the Christian life. Here is the truth. You and I are not saved from our sin by living a life that pleases God. That is not how God saves us. It is not if you do well enough, obey well enough, are moral enough, then God is going to forgive you. That is not how God saves us. God saves us by his sheer grace. It is a gift. You cannot earn it. God gives it to you freely through Jesus Christ. Because Jesus obeyed like you should. And so, it is all a gift. So you do not become a Christian by living a life pleasing to the Lord. Do you understand that? But after you become a Christian because God has saved you by grace, you then are to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Not to earn God's love, but to respond to God's love and mercy. There are adults, you hear me and it, you hear me talking to the children and you are probably like, "Yeah, it is pretty simple." You have no idea how many adult professed Christians in our culture do not understand that simple truth. Even the reformed ones, the Calvinist ones, they hear you say things like, "You are to labor to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord." They would be like, "Well, none of us can really please the Lord. Only Jesus can please the Lord. We are not justified through our works. Warning, warning, warning. You are saying we are saved through our works." It is like, "No, I am saying exactly what God says in his word. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord so that you may do it." Not to save yourself but because God has saved you. So adults do not fall for that silliness of only Jesus can please the Lord. It is like yeah in the justification sense but not as God sanctifies us because Paul also says in Philippians to walk live your life in a way that is pleasing in the sight of God. But Christians, if you are going to please the Lord, you have to use discernment.

Now, go to Philippians 1:9 through 11. So, you might just have to go like one page to the right. Philippians 1:9 through 11. So, not only do we need the spirit in order to discern, so you have to be a Christian. Not only are we commanded to exercise discernment in order to please the Lord, but *Christians should pray to abound in discernment so that they may glorify and praise God.* Christians to abound in discernment so that they may glorify and praise God. Look at

Philippians 1:9 through 11. It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment. So your love abounding more and more with knowledge and discernment. Why? Why do we need discernment? So that you may approve what is excellent. And so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. So believers, pray and ask God to help you abound not only in love but knowledge and discernment. And the result is so that you may approve what is excellent and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Should pray. Pray and ask for discernment.

Now go to Hebrews 5:14. Have to go quite a bit to the right now. Hebrews 5:14. The truth that you should glean here is *you should labor to grow in your ability to exercise discernment*. And these are two things you are going to find all throughout in the Christian disciplines or virtues. Pray for it and labor to get it at the same time. Those are never opposed to each other. Like saying, "Well, if I am trying to grow in it, then I am not trusting that God is just going to give it because I prayed for it." No, do not do that. Pray for it and labor to get it at the same time. So pray for God to cause growth in seeds that you plant, but you got to plant the seeds and you got to water the seeds, right? It is not either or, it is both. So, so it is with discernment. It is pray that God would help you abound in it and also labor to grow in your ability to exercise discernment. Hebrews 5:14, "Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." Powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish or discern good from evil. That is what we should all want. That is what a mature Christian looks like. Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. So Christian, labor diligently as you study the word, as you pray, as you examine and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Make sure that you are laboring to grow in your ability.

Now go to 1 John 4:1 through 6. 1 John 4:1 through 6 to the right again. *Christians we have to exercise discernment because many false prophets have gone out into the world*. We have to exercise discernment or in this sense he says test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. And I do not think he is talking specifically to someone with that first century gift, but he is saying, "Do not believe every spirit." This is generally to all the Christians there, not just with those who have a supernatural gift. 1 John 4:1 through 6. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. That is why you need discernment. There are many false teachers. By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them. For he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They

are from the world. Those who reject Christ. Therefore, they speak from the world and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. Meaning the apostles. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Christians must exercise discernment because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And now in conclusion, go to Romans 12:2. Back to the left. Romans 12:2. Christians, here is our last point. *Christians must exercise discernment so that they may not be conformed to this world but conformed to the image of Christ.* We must exercise discernment so that we may not be conformed to this world but conformed to the image of Christ. Romans 12:2, "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." The way you discern what the will of God is the revealed will of God in the scriptures. Test. Do not be conformed to this world, but by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Beloved, discernment is most needed in the Christian life in order to live a life that pleases Christ. He who purchased us with his precious blood is owed all ascribed glory and honor and praise. Let us praise him now together with our lips and then leave this place ready to use discernment as we go out and praise him with our lives.

Pray with me. Our Father, we thank you for your word. Help us to understand it and help us to rightly apply it. We ask you to help us abound more and more in discernment for your glory in Christ's name. Amen.