

# **Developing Spiritual Discernment**

In a world filled with confusion and mixed messages, spiritual discernment is more important than ever. The ability to recognize what is right and what is wrong, to separate truth from deception, is a critical skill for every believer. But how do we develop this discernment? And why do so many Christians struggle with it?

## **What is Spiritual Discernment?**

Spiritual discernment is the ability to judge matters according to God's perspective rather than merely human understanding. Hebrews 4:12 tells us: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The word of God doesn't just affect your spirit—it affects your entire being, including your physical body. It cuts through deception and reveals truth. It exposes our true motives and intentions, not just our actions.

## **Why Do Christians Lack Discernment?**

Many believers today lack discernment because they've become dull of hearing. Hebrews 5:11-14 explains this problem: "...you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food."

The writer continues: "Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of practice have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Discernment comes through practice—through consistently applying God's word to everyday situations and choices.

## **How Can I Tell If I'm Lacking Discernment?**

- There are several warning signs that indicate a lack of spiritual discernment:

- You've lost your peace and joy
- You find yourself carrying worries and anxieties
- Your words reveal wrong thinking (like saying "I'm trying to figure this out" instead of seeking revelation)
- You judge only by outward appearances
- You're easily deceived about your own motives
- You can't recognize when you're drifting spiritually

When Jesus said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me," He was addressing people who didn't even realize their condition. They were self-deceived, like the Pharisee who thanked God he wasn't like other men while being blind to his own sin.

## How Do I Develop Spiritual Discernment?

Developing discernment requires several key practices:

- **Become skilled in the word of righteousness.** Study Scripture not just for information but for transformation. Learn to recognize what's right and what's wrong according to God's standards.
- **Practice self-examination.** 1 Corinthians 11:28 instructs us to "examine himself" before taking communion. This principle applies to all areas of life. Ask yourself: "What are my true motives? Why am I doing what I'm doing?"
- **Judge all things in your own life.** 1 Corinthians 2:15 says, "But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one." This doesn't mean judging other people, but rather evaluating everything in your own life according to God's word.
- **Recognize when you're drifting.** Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's conviction. When you begin to drift into doubt or unbelief, recognize it immediately and run back to fellowship with God.
- **Pray for increased discernment.** In Philippians 1:9-10, Paul prays "that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent."

## Why Is Discernment So Important Today?

Jesus warned that the last days would be like the days of Noah, when people were eating, drinking, and carrying on with life as usual, completely unaware of the coming judgment. They lacked discernment.

Even the animals in Noah's day had more discernment than the humans! They sensed trouble coming and knew where to find safety. They could sense where God's presence was and gathered at the ark.

Today, many Christians are equally undiscerning. They can't recognize good from evil, can't discern which spirits are operating, and don't notice when they or others are drifting spiritually. This leaves them vulnerable to deception and destruction.

## **Life Application**

This week, commit to developing greater spiritual discernment by:

- Examining your peace level. When you find yourself anxious or worried, recognize that you've taken back your problems from God. Immediately cast those cares back on Him and reclaim His peace.
- Listening to your own words. What's coming out of your mouth reveals what's in your heart. When you catch yourself saying things that don't align with faith, stop and correct your thinking.
- Evaluating your entertainment choices. Ask yourself: "Is what I'm watching, reading, or listening to dulling my spiritual senses or sharpening them?"
- Practicing discernment in your daily decisions. Before making choices, ask: "Is this excellent? Does this align with God's word? What are my true motives?"

Ask yourself these questions:

- Where in my life have I been spiritually dull or undiscerning?
- What relationships, activities, or habits might be dulling my spiritual senses?
- How quickly do I recognize when I've lost my peace and joy?
- Am I truly living by faith, or am I trying to "figure things out" in my own strength?

Remember, love gives you light. As your love for God and others abounds more and more, your discernment will naturally increase. Choose today to sharpen your spiritual senses through the word of God and practice discerning between good and evil.

## Quotes

1. I'm locked in for all eternity.
2. I've got my eternity seatbelt on.
3. When you're hanging onto your life, you're hanging onto you—and all your problems.
4. F.A.I.T.H. = Forsaking All, I Take Him.
5. Worries and cares go to Him; peace and joy come to me.
6. If you take your life back, you've let go of His life.
7. We should be very, very discerning. Recognize when you and those around you are drifting.
8. The Word of God gives me discernment.
9. No joy and peace = No faith (or not in faith) = In sin.
10. The direction of my tongue is the direction of where I'm going.
11. I'm not trying to figure out the Bible—I'm looking to receive revelation.
12. You've got to see your motives. Know the "why" behind what you're doing.
13. You take the Word and discern *you*.
14. The Word of God will help me get it right. It'll make me skillful at dealing with what's wrong.
15. Be skillful at using and applying the Word to your life.
16. The only way you can see faith is if you live by it.
17. Animals can sense the divine presence of God.

18. Discern both good and bad—not just the bad.
19. Judgmental people are foolish people.
20. You've got to discern right away when you've stuck your foot into something demonic.
21. Demons are attached to disobedience.
22. A spiritual man judges everything he does. He discerns his motives and intentions.
23. I need to be a discerning person.
24. You become who you hang out with.
25. Love makes you discerning. Selfishness makes you blind and dumb.

## **Verses**

1. Hebrews 4:12
2. Proverbs
3. Hebrews 5:11
4. John 6
5. Luke 10
6. Romans 2
7. 1 Corinthians 2:14
8. 1 Corinthians 11:28-30
9. 1 Corinthians 12:10
10. Matthew 16:1-4
11. Philippians 1:9-11

## **Summary**

Spiritual discernment is the ability to judge matters according to God's perspective rather than human understanding. Many Christians lack this crucial skill because they've become dull of hearing, consuming only spiritual milk instead of solid food. Signs of lacking discernment include lost peace, constant worry, judging by appearances, and being easily deceived about one's own motives. To develop discernment, believers must become skilled in the word of righteousness, practice self-examination, evaluate everything according to Scripture, recognize spiritual drift, and pray specifically for increased discernment. In these challenging times, developing sharp spiritual discernment is essential for navigating deception and staying aligned with God's truth.