

Ministry 401

Lesson Nine

Spiritual Discernment

This lesson belongs to: _____

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Spiritual Discernment

Key Verse: *“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 (NKJV)*

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help the disciple understand and cultivate spiritual discernment.

1. General discernment must not be confused with _____ discernment or a _____ spirit or the _____ of the discerning of spirits mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:10.
 - a. “General discernment” is natural human discernment.
 - b. A “critical spirit” looks to always find fault.
 - c. “Spiritual discernment” is spiritually illuminated discernment.
 - d. The “manifestation of the discerning of spirits” is an instantaneous revelation of the Holy Spirit to an individual regarding the source of spiritual activity—whether holy, human, or demonic.

2. What is general discernment?
 - a. General discernment is gained over time through _____, _____, and _____.
 - 1) Luke 12:54–56 (NKJV) *“Then He also said to the multitudes, ‘Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. ⁵⁵ And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. ⁵⁶ Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?’”*
 - b. General discernment is gained through mental and emotional processing information obtained through the five physical _____.
 - 1) The five physical senses are sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.
 - 2) Job 12:11 (NKJV) *“Does not the ear test words and the mouth taste its food?”*
 - c. General discernment is the ability to distinguish between _____ but _____ things.
 - d. Discernment is the ability to find the _____ of an issue or problem.
 - e. “Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.” – Charles H. Spurgeon

3. General discernment involves more than a _____ opinion; it also includes the use of “gut” _____.
 - a. Gut instinct alone is not enough to _____ discernment.
 - b. Robert Heller said, “Never ignore a gut feeling, but never believe that it is enough.”

4. General discernment can be _____ when it depends upon fallen human _____.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 (NKJV) *“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are*

mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

5. Spiritual discernment involves the ability to recognize and distinguish the spiritual _____, _____, and _____ behind human and spiritual activity. Spiritual discernment moves beyond what is perceived by the five physical senses, rationality, and “gut” instinct to the confirming witness of the _____ with our human _____.
- a. 1 Corinthians 2:12–15 (NKJV) *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. ¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.”*
- b. Romans 8:16 (NKJV) *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”*
6. Spiritual discernment involves the training of spiritual senses through _____.
- a. Just as there are five physical senses, there are five corresponding spiritual senses that are alive and operating in the life of a believer to help them discern spiritual things.
- 1) Sight (Matthew 16:3; Luke 12:56; 2 Corinthians 4:18)
 - 2) Hearing (1 Corinthians 14:7-11)
 - 3) Taste (Psalm 34:8; 119:103; Hebrews 6:4, 5)
 - 4) Touch (2 Corinthians 6:17)
 - 5) Smell (2 Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 4:18)
- b. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: The lie of the Serpent from the beginning is that we can know (discern) good and evil apart from God and His Word (Genesis 3:5). The moment we move outside of faith and obedience to the revealed word of God in a quest to determine what is good and evil in our own opinion, we become blind and deceived.
- c. Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV) *“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.”*
- d. Obedience to the word of God brings spiritual maturity whereby the spiritual senses are trained to discern good and evil.
7. Spiritual discernment involves a process of _____.
- a. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (NKJV) *“Test all things; hold fast what is good.”*
- b. “Testing” means to examine and scrutinize a thing to prove whether it is true or false, real or counterfeit, clean or unclean, holy or profane, pure or impure, flesh or spirit, order or disorder, edification or confusion, humility or pride, love or hate, righteous or wicked, genuine or fake, right or wrong, good or evil, godly or ungodly, just or unjust, legitimate or illegitimate, fear of God or fear of man, and the glory of God or the glory of man.
8. Spiritual discernment is necessary to distinguish:
- a. The _____ of Scripture.
- 1) Acts 17:11 (NKJV) *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”*
- b. Hidden _____ and _____.
- 1) Luke 6:7–11 (NKJV) *“So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. ⁸ But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, “Arise and stand here.” And he arose and stood. ⁹ Then Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?” ¹⁰ And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. ¹¹ But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”*

- c. The _____ of preaching, teaching, and prophecy.
1) 1 Corinthians 14:29 (NKJV) *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”*
- d. _____ and _____.
1) Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV) *“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.”*
- e. _____ and _____.
1) Matthew 10:16–18 (NKJV) *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸ You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.”*
2) 1 John 4:1–3 (NKJV) *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because 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 of God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”*
3) 1 John 4:6 (NKJV) *“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*
- f. _____ and _____.
1) 1 Chronicles 12:32 (NKJV) *“of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command;”*
2) Luke 19:41–44 (NKJV) *“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*
- g. _____ from _____.
1) 1 Corinthians 12:3 (NKJV) *“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”*
- h. A person’s true _____ and _____.
1) Matthew 7:15–20 (NKJV) *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”*
2) Revelation 2:2 (NKJV) *“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;”*
- i. The _____ from the _____.
1) Ezekiel 44:23 (NKJV) *“And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”*
- j. The _____ from the _____.
9. Discernment involves the concept of a _____ trial.
a. Luke 23:14 (NKJV) [Pilate] *“said to them, ‘You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him;”*
b. The Greek word normally translated as “discernment” is translated as “examined” in Luke 23:14. This Greek word is *anakrino* (Strong’s #350) that means to investigate, interrogate, examine, enquire into, scrutinize, sift, question in a forensic sense of a judge to hold an investigation.

10. The “Judge” in the courtroom of spiritual discernment is the _____.
- 1 Corinthians 4:3–4 (NKJV) *“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.”*
11. In spiritual discernment, we must go to the courtroom of the Spirit to examine spiritual things by the standard of the _____ of God as confirmed by the _____ of God.
- Acts 17:11 (NKJV) *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”*
 - 1 John 2:27 (NKJV) *“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”*
 - The “anointing” refers to the Holy Spirit who is our Guide into all the Truth. (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13)
12. The Word of God is like a sharp two-edged _____ that accurately divides in all matters of discernment.
- Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) *“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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*
 - The Word of God divides between the human soul, spirit, and flesh body.
 - The Word of God discerns the thoughts and motives of the human heart.
 - Luke 2:35 (NKJV) *“(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”*
 - Even the most spiritual person can be easily deceived by others and by their own heart. The Word of God is the only sure means to test and discern what is of God and what is not.
13. Spiritual discernment is a reward given to those who _____ and _____ it as precious hidden treasure.
- Proverbs 2:3–5 (NKJV) *“Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, ⁴ If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”*
14. Spiritual discernment is possible through access to the _____ of Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 2:16 (NKJV) *“For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”*
 - We are not to be conformed to this world’s way of thinking. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that our thinking is conformed to the mind of Christ (Romans 12:2).
15. CAUTION: We are responsible to exercise spiritual discernment within our own _____ of responsibility. However, we are neither qualified nor authorized to make _____ judgments about the eternal status of a person’s soul, heart, or works.
- Romans 14:10–13 (NKJV) *“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written: ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ ¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.”*
 - 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV) *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.”*