

THE POWER OF DISCERNMENT

Small Group Study Guide

Objective: To help participants recognize how thoughts become agreements, test what they hear against Scripture and God's character, and practice discerning and responding to thoughts, voices, opportunities, and spiritual impressions through faith, obedience, love, and the Word.

1. KEY SCRIPTURE SECTIONS

Proverbs 23:7: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

Mark 7:20–23: And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

1 Corinthians 12:10: To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

2 Corinthians 10:4–5: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Romans 12:2: And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1 John 4:18: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

2. LESSON POINTS & SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Discernment Starts With Thinking — Thoughts can be examined, measured, accepted, or rejected. What we repeatedly entertain shapes our inner life and eventually our conduct (Prov. 23:7; 4:23).

Discussion: What recurring thought deserves to be examined rather than automatically believed?

2. Thoughts Become Agreements — An internal conversation can turn a passing thought into a conclusion. Bring imaginations and thoughts under Christ's authority rather than cooperating with fear or false interpretations (Mark 7:20–23; 2 Cor. 10:4–5).

Discussion: How can we distinguish a passing thought from a thought we have begun to agree with?

3. The Heart Will Eventually Speak — Words reveal what has been gaining authority in the heart. Discernment therefore includes listening to our speech and deliberately agreeing with God's Word (Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:34).

Discussion: What does your recent language reveal about what you have been agreeing with?

4. The Enemy Is Fishing for Your Thoughts — The enemy may present symptoms, memories, fears, temptations, or discouraging reports, but presentation is not possession. Pressure increases vulnerability, so question the thought before it controls you (Jas. 1:14–15; Ps. 42:5).

Discussion: When are you most vulnerable to accepting fearful interpretations?

5. Jesus Had Nothing in Him for the Enemy to Claim — Jesus was tempted, yet temptation found no agreement in Him. His response was, “It is written.” Our goal is to become so grounded in truth that false thoughts find no lasting agreement (John 14:30; Heb. 4:15).

Discussion: What does it look like practically to answer a tempting thought with Scripture?

6. Transform Your Thoughts Through the Word — Renewal replaces destructive patterns with biblical truth. Test thoughts for truth, purity, faith, and consistency with Scripture (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8).

Discussion: What false thought could you replace this week with a specific biblical truth?

7. Hear Thoughts Through God’s Love — Fear distorts discernment; God’s love clarifies. His correction leads toward restoration, truth, freedom, and obedience—not hopelessness or bondage (1 John 4:18; Rom. 8:15).

Discussion: How does fear cause us to misinterpret God’s silence, correction, or delay?

8. Stay in Love’s Discovery Mode — Remain teachable and prayerful. Ask what God is revealing, then test spiritual words and impressions by Scripture and the Spirit rather than assuming you already know (1 Cor. 2:9–10; 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20–21).

Discussion: What helps you remain teachable while still testing what you hear?

9. Stay in Love’s Demonstration Mode — God’s love is demonstrated through Christ. The Spirit leads toward grace, truth, restoration, freedom, holiness, and life—not a distorted view of Jesus (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9; 2 Cor. 3:17).

Discussion: Does this voice or message reveal Jesus accurately? Why or why not?

10. Stay in Love’s Discipline Mode — Grace trains us. God’s correction is formative, not rejecting; conviction provides a path toward repentance and obedience, while accusation offers condemnation without restoration (Titus 2:11–12; Heb. 12:6; Phil. 1:6).

Discussion: How can you tell the difference between conviction that leads to change and accusation that leads to shame?

11. Stay in Love’s Dominion Mode — Through Christ, we need not be mastered by every thought, emotion, temptation, or pressure. Dominion flows from submission to God and resistance to the enemy (Rom. 5:17; Jas. 4:7).

Discussion: What would “reigning in life” look like in one area where you currently feel controlled?

12. Apply the Discernment Test — Test what you hear: Does it agree with Scripture? Does it reveal Jesus? What fruit does it produce? Does it lead to obedience? Does it agree with God’s love? Does it produce peace rather than confusion? (Isa. 8:20; John 16:13–14; Matt. 7:20; John 14:15; 1 Cor. 14:33).

Discussion: Which of these tests do you most need to use consistently?

13. Activate the Power of Discernment — Practice for five days: write one recurring thought, identify its emotion, ask where it leads, compare it with Scripture, replace it with truth, and take one obedient action.

Discussion: What recurring thought will you test and replace this week?

3. FIVE-DAY DISCERNMENT CHALLENGE

Each day: (1) Write one recurring thought. (2) Identify the emotion attached to it. (3) Ask where it is leading you. (4) Compare it with Scripture. (5) Replace it with biblical truth. (6) Take one obedient action. Do not merely reject the lie—receive and practice the truth.

FINAL DECLARATION: “I hear the voice of my Shepherd. I reject agreement with fear. I bring every thought under the obedience of Christ. I renew my mind with the Word of God. I hear through the love of God, walk in truth, and reign in life through Jesus Christ.”