

Lesson 5 - Diagnosing Demonic Deception

In Lesson 5, we move beyond merely treating spiritual symptoms to actually diagnosing the root causes of demonic deception in our lives. Drawing from passages like Hebrews 5:11-14, we're challenged to mature from spiritual milk to solid food—developing our powers of discernment through constant practice. The journey requires both preparation and activation: we must adopt a biblical-supernatural worldview that acknowledges the reality of spiritual warfare, trust the spiritual equipment God has given us (the fruit of the Spirit, the armor of God, and the gifts of the Spirit), and train ourselves to distinguish good from evil. Just as a nurse practitioner learns to diagnose rather than simply treat symptoms, we're called to develop diagnostic skills in the spiritual realm. This means asking upward questions to God for wisdom, outward questions about observable situations, and inward questions about our own spiritual readiness. The teaching emphasizes that every believer, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can learn to identify demonic doorways—whether through unforgiveness, sexual immorality, occult practices, or generational sin—and develop strategies for spiritual freedom. We're reminded that maturity comes when preparation meets activation, when knowledge of Scripture combines with Spirit-led practice in real-life situations.

Key Points:

- The difference between treating spiritual symptoms and diagnosing spiritual causes requires both preparation and activation
- All preparation without activation leads to spiritual deadness, while activation without preparation leads to spiritual problems and casualties

- Four stages of preparation: adopt a biblical/supernatural worldview, trust your spiritual equipment (fruit of the Spirit, armor of God, gifts of the Spirit), train your powers of discernment, and learn to test the spiritual environment
- Four stages of activation: detail the presenting symptoms, discover the underlying sources, diagnose any potential strongholds, and develop the best strategies
- Christians can have demonic strongholds but cannot be enslaved by demons because the Holy Spirit dwells within them
- Spiritual maturity comes from bringing together biblical knowledge and practical application through constant practice
- Common doorways to demonic oppression include unbelief, sexual immorality, unforgiveness, anger, drugs, occult practices, and fear
- Four stages of demonic oppression: enticement, entanglement, entrapment (stronghold), and enslavement
- Believers must address spirit, soul, and body when helping others with spiritual struggles

Scripture Reference:

- 2 Timothy 2:15 - Being approved workers who rightly handle the word of truth
- Hebrews 5:11-14 - Training powers of discernment through constant practice to distinguish good from evil
- James 2:17 - Faith without works is dead
- Colossians 2:8 - Warning against empty philosophies and spiritual powers of the world
- Ephesians 4:13-14 - Growing to maturity in Christ, no longer tossed by every wind of teaching

- Galatians 5:22-23 - The fruit of the Spirit
- Ephesians 6:14-17 - The armor of God
- 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 - The gifts of the Spirit
- James 1:22-25 - Being doers of the word, not hearers only
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 - Test everything, hold fast to what is good
- 2 Peter 1:5-8 - Supplementing faith with virtue, knowledge, and other qualities

Discussion Questions:

How can we distinguish between treating spiritual symptoms in our lives versus diagnosing the root causes of our struggles, and what practical steps can we take to move toward deeper diagnosis?

In what ways has Western culture's emphasis on scientific rationalism caused Christians to place supernatural realities like angels, demons, and miracles into the 'fantasy' category rather than accepting them as biblical reality?

What does it look like practically to 'train your powers of discernment' through constant practice, and how can we create space in our daily routines to develop this spiritual skill?

How do we balance the preparation of studying Scripture and theology with the activation of putting our faith into practice, avoiding both spiritual deadness and spiritual casualties?

When facing a situation where you sense demonic influence or oppression, how can you determine whether you're experiencing genuine spiritual discernment or simply your own anxiety or past trauma?

What are some 'doorways' to demonic oppression in your own life or culture that Christians might unknowingly leave open, and how can these be identified and closed?

How can we learn to distinguish between struggles that require spiritual warfare, those that need professional counseling, and those that have physical or medical causes?

In what ways might unforgiveness, bitterness, or anger create spiritual strongholds in our lives, and what does genuine repentance and freedom from these look like?

How do we 'earn the right' to ask probing spiritual questions of others while still honoring them and avoiding judgment, especially when we suspect deeper spiritual issues?

What does it mean that our identity is found in Christ rather than in wounds, labels, or words spoken over us by others, and how do we help people break free from false identities?