

The Power Of A Discerning Spirit

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Scripture: Psalm 119:66

A. Introduction: Do you have trouble discerning between good and evil? Are you unsure if you are hearing God's voice or your own? The reason we find it difficult to understand the Father's will is because we lack spiritual discernment, the ability to see beyond our circumstances. This is why King David prayed, "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments" (Ps. 119:66). This petition must echo in our lives as well.

II. Discernment is essential to:

- **Understand God's will.** The Father clearly communicates His purposes for our lives, but we must be able to hear His guidance regarding every decision we make.
- **Distinguish truth from error.** The two are often mixed, so a discerning spirit is essential to separate them. This is especially important for parents who are sending children to college. Without a discerning spirit, young people can become spiritually confused for the rest of their lives.
- **Avoid being deceived by sin.** Many things that are pleasurable are only so for a moment. This is why we must ask, "What are the consequences of this action?" before we make choices. For example, a certain song may make us feel good, but its message may have a negative impact on us spiritually.
- **Differentiate between good and best.** As followers of Jesus Christ, we are expected to be more than "good enough." We should always give Him our very best. Also, a discerning spirit will keep us from making quick decisions we'll later regret because we didn't wait for God's best.
- **Distinguish between legalism and liberty.** Simply put, legalism is the pressure of personal preferences we impose as moral mandates from God. For example, if someone insists Scripture be interpreted a certain way, a discerning spirit will prompt us to seek God's wisdom concerning the matter.
- **Recognize when God is speaking.** God created each of us with a plan and a purpose for our lives, so He will always give us clear directions and guidance. We have to be able to look past what we see, hear, and feel to comprehend how God views a certain issue.
- **Receive Godly counsel.** When looking for counsel, it is essential to seek out individuals who give advice based on the Word of God, not just his or her feelings. We should always ask how God sees the situations we find ourselves in and what He would have us do.

III. What is the source of spiritual discernment?

- **The Holy Spirit.** Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He met with His disciples and promised them "another Helper...the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). This Helper is the Holy Spirit who dwells inside believers, guiding us at all times so we can exercise good judgment.
- **The Word of God.** Psalm 119:30 tells us the Word of God gives light and is the basis for all our discernment. Every single circumstance we face has an answer in the Bible, and our ability to discern this grows stronger as we fill our minds with biblical truths. The Holy Spirit comprehends the will of the Father and reveals it to us (1 Cor. 2:10-12; 2 Cor. 2:13-15).

- **Godly teachers.** In the Old Testament, one of the responsibilities of the Levites to discern between “the unclean and the clean” and to educate the people regarding God’s laws (Ez. 44:22). Likewise, those who have spent time in God’s Word and who have a greater understanding of His will can aid those seeking discernment.
- **Experience.** We will all make mistakes in our lives, confusing God’s voice with our own. However, studying the Word and learning to wait on the Lord will enable us to hear Him more clearly, learn from our errors, and avoid costly ones in the future (Isa. 64:4).

IV. Conclusion: A discerning spirit is the greatest protection we have in a world where truth and error are often mixed. The ability to separate them is a gift from God, and He has provided everything we need to do so—the Holy Spirit, His Word, and godly teaching. Remember, the One who leads us in all truth will always guide our steps (John 16:13).

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