

## GIFT OF DISCERNING OF SPIRITS:

### **Biblical Examples:**

- Discerning The Holy Spirit
  - o John 1:32-33 – John the Baptist discerned the Holy Spirit upon Jesus. Like a “dove”
  - o Acts 2:3 – The believers in the upper room discerned the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire.
  
- Discerning Angels
  - o Luke 22:43 – An angel appeared to Jesus in the Garden and gave Him strength
  - o Acts 27:23-24 – An angel appears to Paul on the ship
  - o 2 Kings 6:16-18 – Elisha’s servant’s eyes were opened to see the army of angels.
  
- Discerning of Human Spirits
  - o John 1:47 – When Jesus discerned Nathanael as a man without guile
  - o Acts 8:20-25 – Peter discerns Simon’s wrong motives
  - o Acts 14:8-10 – Paul discerns the special faith of the lame man
  
- Discerning Evil Spirits
  - o Acts 13:8-11 / Acts 16:16-18 – Paul discerns people operating under evil spirits
  - o Luke 13:11-17 – A spirit of infirmity

### **What is it?**

- This gift is unique in that it gives the individual a supernatural ability to distinguish or perceive things in the spirit realm. It also plays a vital roll in bringing deliverance, and clarity to situations and people.
  
- The Greek word for discernment is *daikrasis* it means to distinguish between and judicial estimation
  
- As stated, the gift of discerning of spirits is the supernatural ability to discern and distinguish between different classes of spirits. These include: The Holy Spirit; Good Angels; Evil Spirits; Demons; and The Human Spirit
  
- Many people with the gift of discernment will supernaturally see in the spirit realm or have a strong sense that a spirit is around or operating through someone.
  
- Many Scholars identify it as the companion gift of prophecy. Just as the gift of tongues should be followed by interpretation, prophecies must be followed by evaluation or discerning (1 Cor 14:27-29). The same sequence is found in 1 Thess. 5:20-21.

### **What is it not?**

- There are a handful of things that try to mask as the gift of discernment when in reality it's not and can cause a lot of harm and issues within the church. These include the following:
  - Suspicion - Suspicion is a feeling or thought about someone or something that you think is most likely true. It can be easy to become suspicious of individuals because of our own view, prejudices, rejection, or understanding of a situation or people/person.
    - o This is when our natural judgment can come into play. Sometimes our suspicions can be correct, but that does not mean it was the gift of discernment manifesting.
  - Criticism - Discerning faults and mistakes is not a gift from God. I'm pretty sure most everyone sees those and it's NOT helpful or good. The devil is known as the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) and if we criticize others we are actually furthering his kingdom and not God's.
  - Conjuring Up Spirits or Necromancy - Being able to discern spirits does not mean you partake in conjuring up spirits or necromancy. The word of God is extremely clear we are not have anything to do with the occult.
  - General Christian Discernment – Just like with the gift of faith, there is a general discernment that all Christians should, seek, receive, and have – This comes from the word of God. But the Gift of Discerning of spirits is a supernatural ability that only the Holy Spirit gives and allows a person to have. (Biblical examples of General Christian Discernment: Rom 12:2 / 1 Cor. 2:14 / Heb 5:12-14).
  - This gift does not enable one to discern people (their weaknesses, failures, etc.), at least not at all times. The Holy Spirit will enable us, when He sees necessary, to discern spirit that may be behind a person, their words and actions

### **Purpose:**

- The Gift of Discerning of Spirits gift plays a very important role in building up the church and furthering the gospel. Here are some of the purposes of the gift:
  - o Aids against spiritual attacks and in deliverance from demons – Acts 8:1-8
  - o Reveals the servants of Satan and their plans – Acts 13:9-10
  - o Exposes error and divisiveness – 1 Timothy 4:1
  - o Discern the true moving of the Holy Spirit and what is not the true moving of the Holy Spirit – John 1:32-33 / John 3:8
- This gift allows the church to utilize all the gifts to work against Satan and then make a full, free proclamation of the gospel.

- As with all the gifts...we need to bring what is revealed to us in prayer before God and good healthy accountability. Having discernment is an honor and we should value the gift by treating it with wisdom and submission before God.

**Important Closing notes:**

- It can sometimes feel like the gift of discernment is for people in church leadership or ministry or those who work only in deliverance ministries. But that's not always the case.
  - o The Holy Spirit can decide to bestow this gift to any believer. Newly saved or mature in the faith. But remember just because you have the gift doesn't mean you know what you are doing or have it all figured out. It takes time to mature in the things God has called you in.
- With discerning of spirits, we must really get into the Word and be grounded in it. A lot of times with this gift comes with the ability to see in the spirit realm. And you will need to know the Bible well to make sure you can rightly discern.
- The lack of discernment in the church has caused so many issues, from pursuing bad theology and even embracing heresy to being completely oblivious to the spirit realm.
- Spiritual discernment is needed for us to correctly judge and see what is going on in the spirit realm. And not be so focused on what is being seen in natural.
- Signs, and wonders can happen and NOT be from God. A good example is pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians replicating the miracles of Moses. (Exodus (7:11, 22; 8:7) Satan's tactics will always be to counterfeit and deceive. His nature hasn't changed because we are now in modern times.
- It's easy to become suspicious and critical when our heart is in the wrong place or we have been wounded or live in fear. And it's easy to think those feelings are the gift of discernment. When in reality it's our flesh or the enemy trying to cause discord.
- We must have accountability, and we must walk in the Spirit (PURSUE LOVE). Also, just because you discern something doesn't mean you blurt it out to everyone or anyone. Pray and ask God if you are supposed to share with the appropriate person (not to gossip!) or maybe it's for you to know and pray for the person or situation.
- Compassion and wisdom go a long way with this gift. If you have or want this gift pursue those as well.