

Understanding and Using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Lesson 9: The Gift of the Discerning of Spirits

In this lesson you will learn:

1. What does it mean to DISCERN?
2. How do we discern NATURAL things?
3. How do we discern SPIRITUAL things?
4. What is the gift of the discerning of spirits for?
5. What are the different kinds or categories of spirits?
6. What are the works of the flesh?
7. What are doctrines of devils?

1. What does it means to DISCERN?

To DISCERN is to see the DIFFERENCE between two or more things.

2. How do we discern NATURAL things?

Things of the NATURAL world are discerned through the five senses.
You can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel the difference.

This tastes good!



This smells good!



This tastes bad!



Something smells bad!



3. How do we discern SPIRITUAL things?

SPIRITUAL things are invisible to the five senses. To discern spiritual things, we need help from the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are **spiritually discerned**.



The Spirit lets us see through HIS eyes so we can see who serves God and who does not.

Malachi 3:18

Then shall ye return, and **discern** between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.





Leviticus 10:10

And that ye may put **difference** between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;





Ezekiel 44:23

And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to *discern* between the unclean and the clean.



4. What is the gift of the discerning of spirits for?

Spiritual discernment tells you if someone or something is holy or not.

But the gift of the discerning of spirits is more SPECIFIC. By this gift, the Holy Ghost shows you if a **SPIRIT** is holy, or not.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, believe not every spirit, **but try the spirits whether they are of God:** because many false prophets are gone out into the world.



The Spirit SPEAKS

The Spirit REVEALS

By the gift of discerning of spirits, the Holy Spirit reveals the source of any spiritual manifestation, and if the spirit that caused it is holy or unholy.



Paul needed the gift of the discerning of spirits in his first mission into Macedonia:



Acts 16:16

And it came to pass,
as we went to prayer,
a certain damsel possessed with
a spirit of divination met us,
which brought her masters
much gain by soothsaying:

Acts 16:17-18

- ¹⁷ The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.
- ¹⁸ And this did she many days.

But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

Acts 16:17-18

- 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying,
These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.
- 18 And this did she many days.

But Paul
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I com
name
come
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hour.

What did she say that alerted Paul to the presence of an evil spirit?

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What did she say that alerted Paul to the presence of an evil spirit?

The fact is, what she said was true!

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If Paul did not have the Holy Spirit to instruct him, he might have thought this woman was helping him call people to God! This is how tricky the devil is!

The Bible does NOT teach us to test the spirit to see if it speaks the truth. We are to test the spirit to see if it is of GOD.

1 John 4:1

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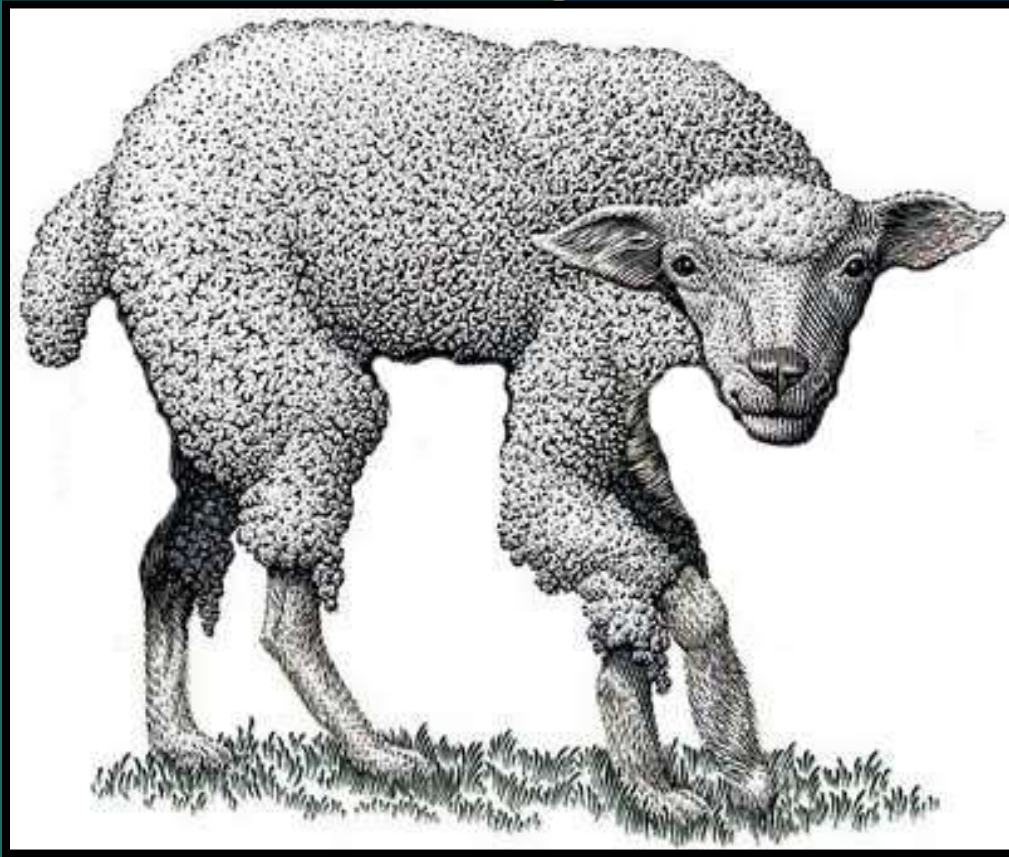


People are deceived by fortune tellers because SOME things they say are true.

We must test the *SOURCE* of the message, not the message itself. Who is *GIVING* the information?

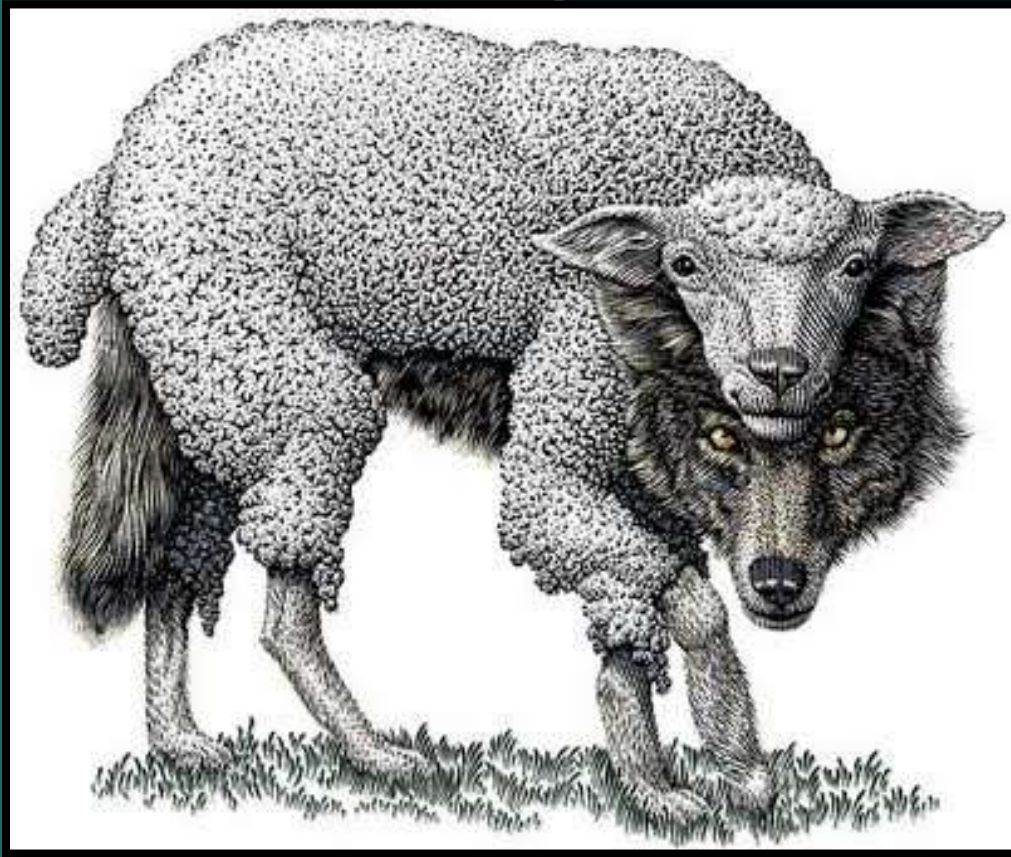


Through the gift of the discerning of spirits, the Holy Spirit showed Paul that there was an unclean spirit in this woman.



This prophetess sounded
like a sheep...

but looks can be deceiving!



Matthew 7:15
Beware of false prophets,
which come to you in
sheep's clothing, but
inwardly they are ravening
wolves.



The worm looks harmless enough, even appetizing. No fish intentionally swallows a hook.



The worm looks harmless enough, even appetizing. No fish intentionally swallows a hook.

Evil spirits use pieces of truth to hide their hook.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Prove all things;
hold fast that which is good.



We must TEST the spirit, whether it is
OF GOD.

This can only be accomplished with the
gift of the discerning of spirits.

5. What are the different kinds or categories of spirits?

Every living creature has a spirit, but there are different kinds of spirit.

There is the spirit of man and the spirit of the beast.

5. What are the different kinds or categories of spirits?

The life of man came from the breath of God.

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.



5. What are the different kinds or categories of spirits?

But the life of all other creatures came from the earth.

Genesis 1:24

And God said,

Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.



5. What are the different kinds or categories of spirits?

The spirit of man is the life in a person.
The spirit of the beast is the life in an animal.

Ecclesiastes 3:21

Who knoweth **the spirit of man**
that goeth upward,
and **the spirit of the beast** that
goeth downward to the earth?



5. What are the different kinds or categories of spirits?

When a person dies, the spirit of man goes upward – it goes back to God.

When an animal dies, the spirit of the beast goes downward – back to the earth that brought it forth.

Ecclesiastes 3:21

Who knoweth the spirit of man that **goeth upward**, and the spirit of the beast that **goeth downward** to the earth?



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and the spirit of antichrist that lives in the children of disobedience.

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There is the Holy Spirit and the holy angels of God.

There is the devil and the fallen angels.



Only God can show you
what is causing that
spiritual wind to blow.



Have you ever known that someone was a Christian before you even spoke to them?

God showed you the SPIRIT inside them – the Spirit of Christ!

The gift of the discerning of spirits is not only for becoming aware of EVIL spirits.

Other times, you know that there is something about that person that does not seem right.



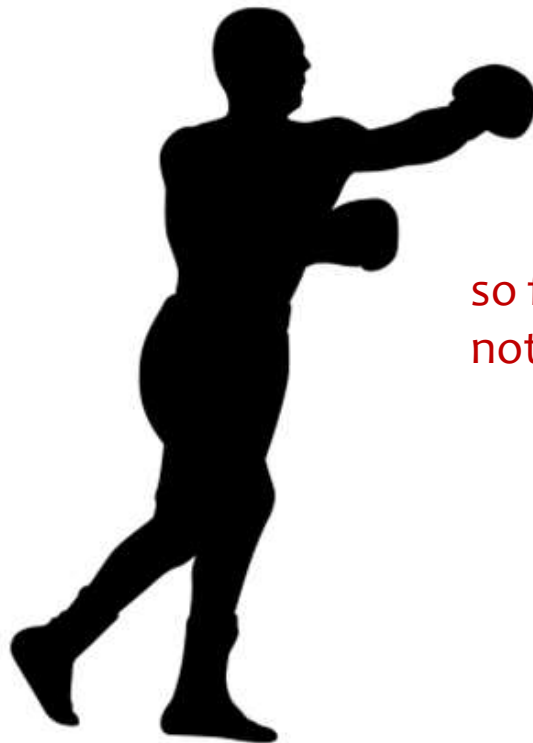
Without guidance from the Holy Spirit,
our “spiritual warfare” will be nothing
more than beating the air:

1 Corinthians 9:26

I therefore so run,
not as uncertainly;
so fight I,
not as one that beateth the air:



I'm
over here!



so fight I,
not as one that beateth the air:

Satan is equally
victorious over
those who say
he does not exist,
and those who see
devils everywhere.



Satan is equally victorious over those who say he does not exist, and those who see devils everywhere.

there's one


there's one

there's one

there's one

there's one





By the gift of the discerning of spirits,
the Holy Spirit shows us what is REALLY going on.

5. What are the works of the flesh?

The temptation to do evil does not always indicate the presence of an evil spirit.

Paul was not possessed of an evil spirit when he wrote this:

Romans 7:19-20

¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not:
but the evil which I would not,
that I do.



5. What are the works of the flesh?

He was speaking of man's carnal nature.

Romans 7:19-20

- ¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not:
but the evil which I would not,
that I do.
- ²⁰ Now if I do that I would not,
it is no more I that do it,
but **sin that dwelleth in me.**



5. What are the works of the flesh?

The works of the flesh are the fruit of the carnal nature, not demonic possession.

Galatians 5:19-21a

- ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*;
Adultery, fornication,
uncleanness, lasciviousness,
²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred,
variance, emulations, wrath,
strife, seditions, heresies,
²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness,
revellings, and such like:



The sins of the flesh are like weeds in your garden.



If they are allowed to grow, they will take over the place.





But you cannot cast sin out of a living person any more than you can cast out his brains.

Dog bark. Cats meow.
People sin.



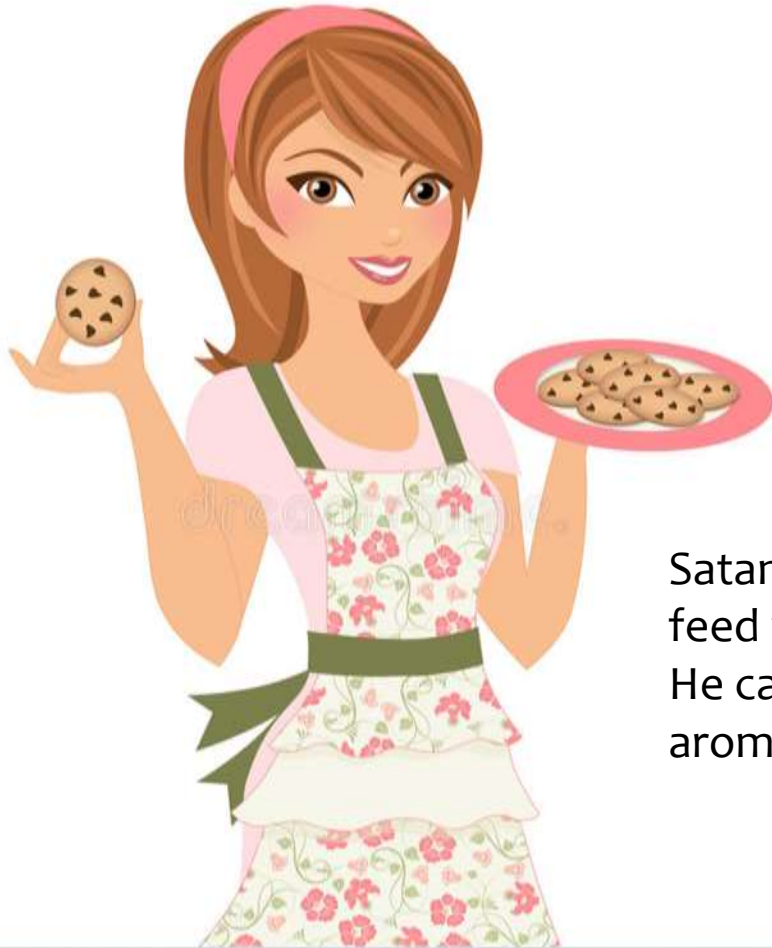
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Dog bark. Cats meow.
People sin.

So what can you do?



Know your weaknesses and avoid them.



Satan cannot force you to feed your carnal appetite. He can only lure you with the aroma.



Satan cannot force you to feed the carnal appetite. He can only lure you with the aroma.



Keep yourself on a leash.

1 Corinthians 9:27:

But I keep under my body,
and bring *it* into subjection:
lest that by any means,
when I have preached to others,
I myself should be a castaway.



Don't expect iniquity
to depart from you ...

You depart from iniquity.

2 Timothy 2:19b

Let every one that nameth the name of
Christ depart from iniquity.



Saying YES to God means saying NO to sin.

2 Timothy 2:21

If a man therefore **purge himself** from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.



The self-destructive, egotistical, and rebellious nature of carnal man makes Satan's work pretty easy.

On top of that, most people are quite ignorant of his devices.

2 Corinthians 2:11

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.



Like a little dog with his hair puffed out and his teeth showing, Satan wants us to think he is more powerful than he really is.



He is a creature, not a god.

He is an angel who was kicked out of heaven by the archangel Michael.





It is not Satan's *power* that defeats us.



It is his tricks – his ‘wiles’.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the whole armour of God,
that ye may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil.



Satan does not want to fight you in the light. He wants to bring you into the darkness where HE is prince.



His attack is never obvious.
His method is to *beguile* or seduce you
through subtlety.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I fear, lest by any means, as the
serpent beguiled Eve through his
subtilty, so your minds should be
corrupted from the simplicity that is in
Christ.



Seducing spirits coax the children of light into the darkness.

Doctrines of devils keep them there.

1 Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

7. What are doctrines of devils?

A doctrine of devils does not necessarily lead to devil worship. It is anything that takes people away from the gospel truth.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- 4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.



7. What are doctrines of devils?

Some arguments against the Bible sound very scientific. Christians should not waste their time trying to win those arguments. We are instructed to *AVOID* them.

1 Timothy 6:20-21a

- ²⁰ O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:
- ²¹ Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.





Through doctrines of devils,
Satan does not have to be
personally present to
accomplish his evil work.



Matthew 13:24-25

²⁴ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

²⁵ But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.



Strange doctrines carry
people away like dead
leaves in the wind.

Hebrews 13:9a

Be not carried about with
divers and strange doctrines.

Bad doctrine cannot be cast out of someone like a sickness or a devil. Only sound teaching – and the meekness to hear it – can root out false beliefs.



PROSPERITY

Because God wants us to have more cash.

For that reason every Bible teacher must be like Jeremiah, able to root out lies and plant seeds of truth.

Jeremiah 1:9-10

- ⁹ Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.
- ¹⁰ See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.



In the next lesson, we will look at some of the ways the Holy Spirit reveals things to us.

Questions to help you understand the lesson:

1. We discern NATURAL things through our _____, but we need the _____ to help us discern SPIRITUAL things.
2. 1 John 4:1 says, “try (or test) the spirits whether they be _____.”
3. The works of the flesh are the product of (a) sin or (b) devil possession.
4. We are to stand against (a) the wiles or (b) the power of the devil.
5. What is the only thing that can root out bad doctrine?

Each question is worth 20 points.



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