

The Discerning of Spirits

THE DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God..."
— 1 John 4:1

TEST THE SPIRITS

- Does it agree with the truth of Christ?
- Does it exalt Jesus?
- Does it align with Scripture?
- What fruit does it produce?
- Is it from God, or another spirit?

PAUL CALLS OUT THE SPIRIT OF DIVINATION

And a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her owners much profit by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.
— Acts 16:16-18

YOUR STANDARD IS THE WORD OF GOD
— Psalm 119:105

DECEPTION
MANIPULATION
DIVINATION
FALSE POWER
PRIDE
CONFUSION
FEAR
BONDAGE
DARKNESS

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT FROM GOD		VS	FRUIT OF DECEPTION NOT FROM GOD	
♥ LOVE	Seeks the good of others 1 Corinthians 13:4		🎭 DECEPTION	Leads away from truth
🕊 JOY	Fruit of salvation John 15:11	💔 FEAR	Produces anxiety and torment	
🕊 PEACE	Surpasses understanding Philippians 4:7	🌀 CONFUSION	Contradicts God's Word	
☀ PATIENCE	Longsuffering, self-controlled Galatians 5:22-23	👍 PRIDE	Exalts self, not Christ	
🌿 KINDNESS	Motivated by godly love Ephesians 4:32	🔗 BONDAGE	Creates addiction and chains	
🛡 FAITHFULNESS	Steadfast and true Proverbs 3:3-4	⚖ MANIPULATION	Uses people for personal gain	
💧 GENTLENESS	Strength under control 2 Timothy 2:24	👁 FALSE POWER	Looks spiritual, is not	
🔥 SELF-CONTROL	Sober-minded, disciplined Titus 2:11-12	🌑 DARKNESS	Opposes the light of Christ	

NOT EVERY SPIRIT IS FROM GOD. DISCERN WITH WISDOM, STAND ON TRUTH, AND WALK IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

EXALT JESUS. ABIDE IN HIS WORD. WALK IN THE SPIRIT.
"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."
— 2 Corinthians 3:17

It had been approximately 40 days since Resurrection Sunday when Jesus Christ spoke these words to His disciples: Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

So Christ ascended into heaven after completing His earthly ministry and His work of redemption through the cross and resurrection. Yet the work of God upon the earth did not cease. Rather, the Holy Spirit was sent to continue the ministry of God through the body of believers.

This is important when speaking about the discerning of spirits. As the Gospel spread, not every spiritual manifestation came from God. The early Church encountered this reality, just as it did from the very beginning. We see this even in the time of Moses

Exodus 7.8 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9“When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.’ ” 10 So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

11But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the **sorcerers; so the magicians** of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods. 13And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.]

So we read the sorcerers and magicians can conjure up different types of spirits to battle against God. Unless the Holy Spirit is the source of the power, we know it's another type of counterfeit spirit, just like with Simon the sorcerer as described in Acts 8.9

But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “**This man is the great power of God.**” 11And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.]

Again we are shown that false spirits were present in the time of the early church and many are still present today. The crowd misidentified the source, attributing it to God. Their main aim is to deceive and steal the worship, making themselves idols in the hearts of people. They can tell half truths when it suits them to gain advantage and even promote the message of God as we read the next scripture.

Acts 16. 16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a **spirit of divination** met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” 18And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And **he came** out that very hour]

The original Greek uses the term “spirit of Python” In the ancient Greek world, Python was connected to the oracle at Delphi, where people sought supernatural guidance and predictions. So the phrase points to a demonic spirit associated with occult revelation, fortune-telling. A counterfeit spirit, tries to mimic the Holy Spirit

From this we begin to see how false spiritual influences operate. Their aim is to draw people into seeking guidance, answers, and power from the wrong source. Over time, when people do not recognise the source of what they are engaging with, it can lead them away from the one true God.

A Simple Gospel

Paul reminds us that the Gospel message of Christ is simple - the enemy seeks to make it complicated and works based.

2 Corinthian 11 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent **deceived** Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the **simplicity that is in Christ**. 4 For if he who comes **preaches another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you **receive a different spirit** which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! And a little further down in verse 13 He says this again the false apostle..

For such are **false apostles**, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves **into ministers of righteousness**, whose end will be according to their works.]

Paul is warning us that we must be aware of false ministers and ministries that harbour half-truths and look and sound good (Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons) Jesus warns us in Matthew 7:15: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.]

The Discerning of Spirits

When Christ ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit down to us as a gift. He does not want us to be ignorant or deceived, lets us all be more aware and ask more for the discerning of spirits to help us recognise

- What spiritual source is behind something
- Distinguish between the Holy Spirit, human spirit, and evil/demonic spirit.
- Detect deception even when it looks spiritual or good. First John 4:1 — “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits. [Does it agree with the truth of Christ? His teachings, His gospel (grace, truth, repentance, Lordship)

What to Do Next -

Simply ask the Holy Spirit in faith and believe in this gift. Also, spend more time with the Holy Spirit; the more we do, the more our spiritual eyes are opened in all things. The Holy Spirit within us produces good fruit, shaping a mind marked by humility, peace, and joy. Read, meditate and dwell on these scriptures so they go into our Spirit.

Time of Prayer.

