

The Gifts of Grace – Discerning of Spirits

“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues”

(1 Corinthians 12:10)

The **Discerning of Spirits** is one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. But what exactly is this gift and what is it for? Discerning of spirits is the supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to perceive the source of a spiritual manifestation and determine whether it is of God (**Acts 10:30-35**), of the devil (**Acts 16: 16-18**), of man (**Acts 8:18-23**), or of the world. It is not mind reading, psychic phenomena, or the ability to criticise and find fault in others.

Discerning of spirits can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit; He bears witness with our spirit when something is or is not of God. The gift of Discerning of Spirits is the supernatural power to detect spirits and their activities in the realm of the spirit. It implies *‘the power of spiritual insight’* - a supernatural revelation of the plans and purposes of the enemy and his evil forces. It is a gift which protects and guards your Christian life. Therefore, Discerning of Spirits is a gift given to us by the Holy Spirit that enables us to distinguish between good and evil. This gift is especially handy when dealing with demonic forces in the ministry of deliverance for example. It makes you aware of the presence of evil in a place or within a person. It is a totally spiritual gift. Not everybody has this gift, because the Holy Spirit bestows this gift to whom He pleases. If we believe, as the Bible teaches, that spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of other believers (of all), it seems clear that the purpose of the gift of the **Discerning of Spirits** is primarily to protect other believers and to protect the local church. Where evangelism is a gift that is offensive in nature, taking the battle to new regions, discernment is a defensive gift that protects the ground that has already been taken. In general, those operating in the gift of spiritual discernment should be able to identify and expose the spirit of satan and other evil forces.

While all believers are exhorted ***“not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God”*** (1 John 4:1), those with the gift of the Discerning of Spirits have been given special ability and also responsibility. Such people are equipped by the Holy Spirit to expose the works of satan in the lives of men. They are able to look into the heart of the issues and see satan’s shadow behind what does not agree with the Word of God. But be aware, satan always tries to counterfeit God, thus also the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, he cannot expose himself for what he is, evil, and therefore, he gives his followers a similar gift, but in a slightly different manner. Satan will use this manufactured gift to enhance his destructive purposes - while God gives us the Gift of Discernment to set us free from evil and its intent.

Usually this gift comes along with another gift, the Word of Knowledge or the Word of Wisdom. This of course varies with each person. With me, it has been both. Also the depth of the gift varies from person to person. One person can have this gift while delivering a person and not perceive evil within a room for example.

However, other people operating in this gift can discern the spirits while delivering someone, as well as sensing evil within a house. I believe that the gift of Discerning of Spirits is given to people who are prepared to fight spiritual battles with evil forces. This gift is imperative if you are called to do this line of ministry. In my experience, whenever I feel an evil presence I also get the “knowledge” of whom and where it is. Now please do not misunderstand me here, we all are called into spiritual warfare, but what I’m trying to explain is, that some people are called to take on and fight stronger battles. They are called into a higher dimension of spiritual warfare (and equipped). It’s therefore imperative that they are provided with a ‘sensor’ - which is called the **discerning of spirits**.

What the Discerning of Spirits – Is Not

1. **It is not suspicion** – The gift of Discerning of Spirits is not simply being suspicious of others. A person who is not “led” by the Holy Spirit can be suspicious of everyone, and often they are.
2. **It is not criticism** – This gift is not discerning of faults, but of spirits. It is the spirit of the devil, which causes people to accuse others. The devil is called the “Accuser of the Brethren” (in the book of Revelation).
3. **It is not natural discernment** – This gift is not simply the ability to discern things, it is the gift of discerning of spirits. Anyone can discern different colours, shapes, and sizes of things, but it takes a supernatural gift from God to discern spirits. To know what’s happening in the spirit realm.
4. **It is not spiritualism** – This gift is not to be confused with spiritualism, which is condemned in the Scriptures. The spirits of our dead relatives are not floating around in our houses or in the air outside. They are either with Jesus, or else they have gone to a very dark place. As spiritualists and

demon-possessed people increase in number we need the gift of Discerning of Spirits more and more.

What the Discerning of Spirits - Is

- a. The Discerning of Spirits is God's Spirit informing a spirit-filled Christian which type of spirit is being manifested. It is a supernatural *look* into the spiritual realm, either by seeing or knowing.
- b. **It's application** – This gift can reveal the various kinds of spirits operating in, through and on people today; such as unclean spirits, deaf and dumb spirits, demonic spirits, oppressing spirits, or even the Holy Spirit. This gift is a requirement for all who are used of God in a deliverance ministry. Without it, those who seek to minister deliverance are simply left guessing at whether or not a demonic spirit is actually present, and if so, what type of demonic spirit is manifesting. This gift is also a requirement of all those who operate in a prophetic ministry, for without it they would not be able to sit by and judge the prophesies of others as they are called to do in 1 Corinthians 14:29 which says, "*Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*"
- c. **It's purpose** – This gift is given to keep the church safe and free from demonic presence and practices.

Bible Examples

- a. **Paul and the girl** – A certain girl, possessed with a spirit of divination, followed Paul and Silas saying that they were servants of the most High God. Instead of making her one of the key members of the church, Paul cast the demon out of her. Please notice that Paul didn't take her into a special deliverance room and ask her all about her past, he just had a gift of Discerning of Spirits (from the Holy Spirit) to know that she had a demon - so he cast it out of her immediately.
- b. **Paul and Bar-Jesus** – Bar-jesus sought to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith (Acts 13:6-10). "*Then Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*" Note, Paul first discerned that this evil spirit was present before he spoke.
- c. **Peter and Simon the sorcerer** – Philip let one man be baptised without discerning the evil spirit that was still in the man. But when Peter started to pray for him he discerned it and said, "*For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity*" (Acts 8:23). Simon had a form of conversion - he believed with his mind, was baptised by Philip - but his heart was not right with God.

If more people had the gift of Discerning of Spirits in our churches, there would be a lot less perverse spirits operating.