

# THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT

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## SEVEN PILLARS CHURCH OF PRAISE INT'L

If you have not heard the first lesson I taught on the Gift of Discernment in Mexico, please go to that lesson and watch it. It is essential to know what I taught there (<https://www.youtube.com/@SevenPillarsChurch>).

There are basically eighteen gifts of the Spirit:

1. Word of **wisdom**: 1 Cor. 12:8; Luke 6:9
2. Word of **knowledge**: 1 Cor. 12:8; Luke 18:22
3. **Faith**: 1 Cor. 12:9; Acts 3:6
4. Gifts of **healing**: 1 Cor. 12:9, 28; Acts 28:1-10
5. Working of **miracles**: 1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 6:8
6. **Prophecy**: 1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Thess. 5:20-21; Eph. 4:11
7. **Discerning** of spirits: 1 Cor. 12:10; Luke 8:29
8. **Tongues**: 1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 19:6
9. **Interpretation** of tongues: 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:13-33
10. **Helping**: 1 Cor. 12:28
11. **Administration**: 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 6:2-3
12. **Grace**: Rom. 12:6; Eph. 3:7; 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10-11
13. **Ministry/service**: Rom. 12:7; 2 Tim. 1:16-18
14. **Teaching**: Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-14
15. **Encouragement**: Rom. 12:8; Heb. 10:24-25
16. **Giving**: Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 13:3; Acts 4:32-35
17. **Leadership** /Ruler: Rom. 12:8; Acts 13:12
18. **Mercy**: Rom. 12:8; Luke 5:12-13

In the early years of my ministry, I both embraced and operated in the gifts of the Spirit. I could share countless stories of the miracles the Lord did through the operation of the gifts. However, and unfortunately, as I began to “grow in

doctrinal knowledge,” I diverted away from the gifts. Why did this happen? I was taught to believe that the “gifts” were insignificant to the one who was growing into the fullness of the Stature of Christ. I was told that a “gift” was for baby Christians and that those who were higher in the stature of Christ had moved on to “deeper” things, namely, focusing on the deep mysteries of the Word.

This was a lie of the enemy! Countless people have missed out on the power, life, victory, encouragement, and glory introduced through the gifts of the Spirit.

In a time of widespread deception, the church has never needed the gift of discernment more than it does now. Not only is discernment crucial, but understanding the difference between critical judgment and true discernment is also vital. Many confuse a critical, judging eye with discernment. Usually, a critical eye is influenced by hearsay, words, rumors, or negative information received, which shapes the mind’s eye to form an opinion of someone or something. The “discernment or judgement” is not from the Spirit of God but is based on "knowledge" or what has been heard. This is not discernment; it becomes critical judgment.

*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. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (1 Corinthians 2:14-15)*

*But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. (NAS 1 Cor. 2:14-15)*

Here, Paul makes a distinction and a comparison between the natural (carnal) man and the spiritual man. The natural man considers the “things of the Spirit” as mere foolishness. The reason for this is that the carnal mind does not, and cannot, spiritually discern anything. The spiritually mature, on the other hand, discerns all things; however, he is not discerned by the carnal man because the carnal man does not understand or grasp the move of the Spirit.

A spiritual man can, and does, discern by the Spirit of God concerning things, matters, people, and situations in a way that the carnal man does not comprehend. This has led to many wars within the church world. This is why on our International leadership board, we have spiritually minded people who can discern spiritual things.

*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8)*

A carnally minded person cannot spiritually discern. Carnality and spirituality do not mix or work together.

The gift of the Spirit is simply that—a gift. All the gifts of the Spirit are given in *measure* or as a seed. It is the receiver's responsibility to develop the gift and cause it to grow by using it, nurturing it, and making it a part of their life.

*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7)*

Grace is a gift and is given to us in measure. Grace is the vehicle that brings to us God's redemptive work of salvation (Titus 2:11). Grace is the power of God to fulfill the will of God. God's will, required of us to achieve, is given to every called and chosen person according to the measure of God's purpose. It was for this reason that the master gave his servants "talents" according to their several abilities, or capacities, and measure (Matthew 25:15). Grace helps us in our weaknesses, delivers us from past iniquities, and elevates us into spiritual dimensions for which we are not worthy. However, even though grace is a gift of the Spirit, we are nonetheless commissioned to "*grow in grace.*"

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)*

God's grace is a model to us for all the other gifts of the Spirit. Every gift is given by measure (as a seed which has the capacity to become everything it is

designed to produce). For example, an acorn has within itself the capacity and measure to become an oak tree. God's intention is for the gift, the seed, to grow to its full potential in our lives, service, and ministry.

*For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13-14)*

Having one's senses exercised to know good and evil is, in essence, the development and nurturing of the gift of discernment from an infant stage into that of maturity based upon the knowledge and experience in the meat of the Word of God.

Discernment that is not *developed and matured* through the strong meat of the Word has the potential to develop into a critical eye and unrighteous judgment. True discernment is based on the knowledge of Truth!

In the first lesson (The Spirit of Discernment 1 - available on <https://www.youtube.com/@SevenPillarsChurch>), I discussed the difference between a critical spirit and a spirit of discernment. A critical spirit judges, condemns, and focuses on finding fault, never recognizing the right or the positive aspect of things or people. A true spirit of discernment, inspired by the Holy Ghost, perceives both *right and wrong*. Discernment is like a pair of scales that can see, perceive, and understand both the positive and negative aspects of situations and interactions with people (good and evil), as well as their words and actions. A critical spirit tends to focus solely on the negative (the evil), rarely recognizing the good unless influenced by biased prejudice.

Sadly, in the world of Pentecostalism, many receive spiritual gifts, but because they are not matured through the Word, these gifts become misused tools in the hands of carnal minds; many allow a "different spirit" to influence and work through them instead of the pure, inspiring Spirit of God. This has been a destructive force, especially within the so-called charismatic renewal. Gifts such as prophecy, word of knowledge, and gifts of ministry and administration have been misused and misguided by people who never matured in the knowledge of God's Word. The gift remained in a seed stage, never germinating

or producing its intended fruit. These individuals may have “learned” knowledge, but they did not “mature” and grow in the knowledge they learned - there is a difference.

#### DISCERNING SPIRITS:

*And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (Luke 9:53-54)*

This is one of my all-time favorite stories in the Gospels. Here, Jesus and His disciples entered a village in Samaria, but the Samaritans rejected Jesus' presence and refused to have anything to do with Him. The disciples, enraged and believing God's Spirit guided them, suggested calling fire down from heaven. However, Jesus, *discerning the spirit* behind their words and actions, defended the rebellious Samaritans and rebuked those defending Him—quite a story.

I am sure that, to the carnal mind, it would seem comforting to know your followers defended you. However, Jesus could not defend His disciples because He discerned the spirit inspiring their words and actions. This kind of discernment is a deep “knowing” that looks beyond the outward actions of people and peers into the *thoughts and intents* of the heart; it views the spirit inspiring the heart.

Please take note, discernment, or discerning, is not something a person chooses to do, nor does a spiritually minded person look for things to “discern.” The critical eye searches and looks for fault by reading people's actions, body language, and poses. This is NOT discernment and is not to be confused with the Spirit of discernment. Instead, the Spirit of discernment causes a spiritually minded person to be aware even when they are not looking.

*And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his*

*disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? (Mark 5:30-31)*

This story always moves me to tears. “Who touched me?” Jesus wasn’t looking at the crowd that day, wondering who would touch Him; hundreds of people were touching Him. He wasn’t waiting for or expecting a touch, nor was he searching for someone to reach out and touch Him. But He discerned one touch of faith—He discerned a hand that had reached out and taken something from Him. Immediately, He knew that spiritual virtue left Him, not because He was looking for it, but because He was aware.

I cannot testify to knowing a touch like Jesus received that day; however, over the years, I have sensed many instances of “a touch”—a touch of faith, longing, hunger, and a reach that goes deep into my being, hoping to grasp whatever God wants to give of Himself through me. I have often felt such a touch mostly when someone was not physically close to me. The ironic part is that frequently such a “touch” comes from unlikely people, at least unlikely to the carnal eye. I am sure that the woman with the issue of blood, rejected by society and mocked for her condition, was not what everyone expected when Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” We need to be spiritually discerning when ministering to others.

Being “touched” can have both positive and negative effects (Matt. 22:18, John 6:15). I have also noticed being “touched” by hate, scorn, and ridicule. If one is not careful, it can be easy to withdraw to avoid being touched again. However, that is neither God’s purpose nor plan for any of us.

Paul, the apostle, is another classic example of one who had *matured in the gift of discernment* given to him.

*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: 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. 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 16:16-18)*

Paul experienced the power of discernment with a woman possessed by the *spirit of divination*. This spirit can speak the truth, but not with the intention of leading to truth, but rather to deceive and corrupt. To an untrained ear, it might have seemed like Paul had a loyal follower and trusted supporter, but through discernment, Paul knew better. He discerned this spirit and commanded it to leave the woman. On the surface, it appeared she was on Paul's side and promoting his fame, but Paul, through the spirit of discernment, knew otherwise. To a carnal mind, Paul's discernment and the actions he took may have seemed preposterous and out of balance. However, to the spiritually minded and discerning eye, Paul's actions were exactly what was needed in the moment.

*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. (John 7:24)*

#### WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT:

It is not possible to grow in discernment without growing in wisdom. The spirit of discernment and the gift of wisdom co-exist and work hand in hand. However, as with the spirit of discernment, the gift of wisdom must also be cultivated and grow through the knowledge and experience of the Word of Truth.

What is wisdom, and how does it work alongside discernment?

Wisdom is defined as the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment. Judgment also has the ability to discern. We saw earlier in the lesson that judgment was translated as discernment (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

The nature of wisdom is to know, judge, and discern the *truth in the moment*; to know the truth that now is. In every encounter we have, every person we meet, every situation we find ourselves in, and every choice we face, there is *Truth to be known*, executed, spoken, and embraced; there is governing Truth to bow and submit to. Discernment and wisdom work together to know and see beyond what the natural eye sees, and act upon the Truth in that moment for that moment.

*And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment. (1 Kings 3:28)*

King Solomon exemplifies how judgment (discernment) and wisdom (the Truth that now is) work together. The carnal mind cannot understand the work of discernment and wisdom—it considers it foolishness. However, to the spiritually mature, what appears “off the charts” is wisdom in action.

#### THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL:

If we look back to the beginning, to Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden experience, we see that amid the garden, God had placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

*And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:9)*

*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:17)*

*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: (Genesis 3:22)*

The Tree of Life is Christ, the Eternal Word, the Way, and the door to the Father. The Tree of Knowledge represents the Father since all knowledge is found in Him.

God’s purpose was not to prevent Adam and Eve from having access to the Tree of Knowledge. Instead, His goal was for them to choose the Tree of Life and to feast on its fruit. The life from the Tree of Life would have led them to the Tree of Knowledge, where true judgment and discernment could have become a reality. Instead, they never approached the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:22). Had they done so, the serpent’s lies would have been discerned and rejected. But they “ate” from the serpent’s lie and refused the life of the Truth.

This principle of Divine Truth remains in effect to this day. God's purpose is for us to choose the Life of Truth. Truth will guide us to the knowledge and discernment of good and evil.