

Christ Church

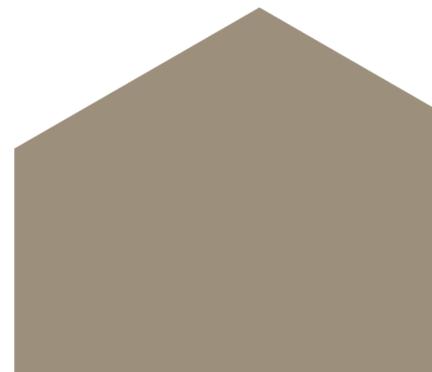
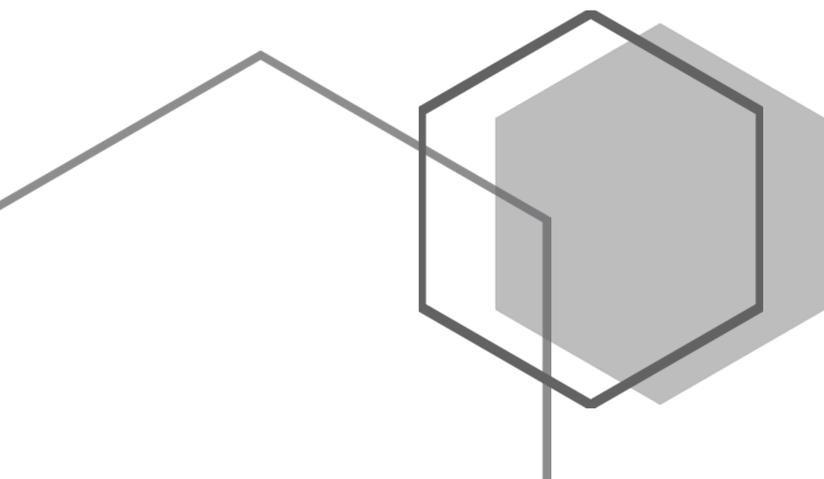


Understanding Discerning of Spirits

LESSON 3

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

- 1 Corinthians 12:7



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Understanding Discerning of Spirits

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Discovery Wednesday

We've agreed to meet the first Wednesday evening of every month to discover together our gifts and explore ways of developing them for the glory of God. Life has many seasons and in each one we must accomplish specific goals through diligent use of the array of gifts God has given us. Therefore, it is our responsibility to discover our primary gifts and learn to develop them to their fullest potential, making every season of life enjoyable and satisfying.

Lesson 3

Understanding Discerning of Spirits

The Gifts of the Spirit Can Be Activated!

Note: When the revelational gifts of the Holy Spirit are in action we gain a glimpse of divine information. This supernatural manifestation in essence pulls back the heavenly curtain and reveals some of God's knowledge, wisdom, and discernment.

1.0 What are the Revelational Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)?

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (NIV)—¹Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

1.1 Let's take a quick look at the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- A) All nine gifts are supernatural and are distributed to each believer as the Holy Spirit desires (12:4).

- B) You do not control which gift or gifts you receive. Your responsibility is simply to discover and develop the gifts you've been entrusted with (12:7).

- C) There are three categories of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit: 1) the inspirational gifts; 2) the power gifts; and, 3) the revelational gifts.

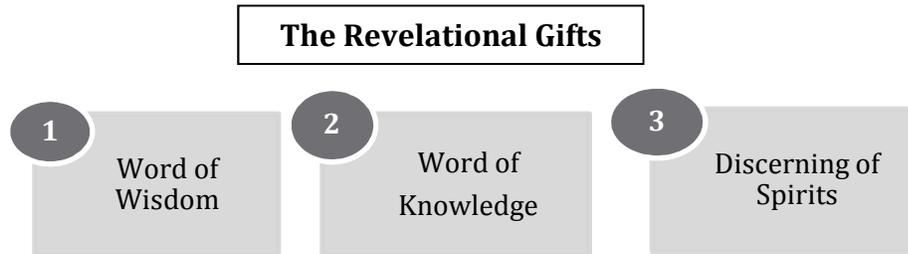
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Gifts of the Holy Spirit		
No.	Manifestation	Name
1	Revelation <i>(Reveals Information)</i>	Word of Wisdom
2		Word of Knowledge
3		Discerning of Spirits <i>(Distinguishing Between Spirits)</i>
4	Inspiration <i>(Inspires Communication)</i>	Gift of Prophecy
5		Different Kinds of Tongues
6		Interpretation of Tongues
7	Power <i>(Performs Miracles)</i>	Gift of Faith
8		Gifts of Healing
9		Miraculous Powers <i>(Working of Miracles)</i>

1.2 How are *the revelational gifts* defined?

- A) The word *revelational* captures the idea that these three gifts *reveal* information supernaturally from God to a believer.

- B) The revelational gifts consist of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits.



1.3 The revelational gifts supernaturally reveal blocks of critical information so that your direction, choices, and perspective align with that of God’s.

1 Samuel 16:6-10 (NIV)—“⁶When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.” ⁷But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

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⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” ⁹Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” ¹⁰Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”

- A) All three are supernatural just like the other six gifts of the Holy Spirit. Information is supernaturally revealed because it is gained outside of the five senses.
1. The Word of Knowledge was in operation. God spoke to Samuel about something in the past or present. This passage illustrates how God’s voice is distinct from our thoughts (1 Sam. 16:6-7).
 2. There are no outward manifestations of the revelation. Knowledge and information were conveyed inwardly, quietly, and personally to Samuel. No one else knew what he knew.
- B) The gift of discerning of spirits (or distinguishing of spirits) was also seen at the same moment.
1. The definition of "discerning" is to have a clear discrimination; judging; judicial estimation; judging by evidence whether they are evil or of God.
 2. When Jesse’s sons passed by Samuel, he discerned they were not God’s choice for king. Samuel had spiritual information about their nature, essence, and person as they simply passed by him (1 Sam. 16:8-10).
 3. The gift operates silently by posting information on your heart about someone. This information is the summary of who that person is. There is no fluff or unnecessary detail that is revealed to you, just a critical summary of the person is known.

2.0 Let’s Examine the Gift of Discerning of Spirits

2.1 How does the gift of discerning of spirits operate (John 1:43-51)?

John 1:43-51 (NIV)—“⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

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⁴⁶ “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” ⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” ⁵⁰ Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” ⁵¹ He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”

A) What does the gift do?

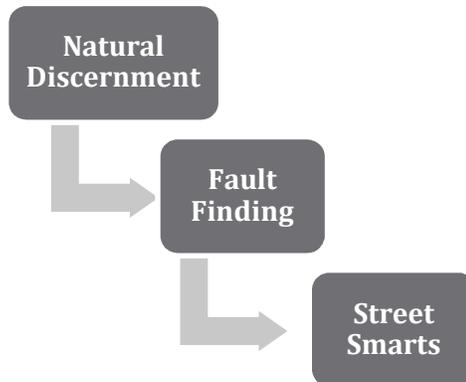
1. The gift enables you to gain insight for a moment into the dispositions of people. Information is supernaturally revealed to you regarding their good or evil tendencies and their character (i.e., “When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false” (John 1:47).
2. The gift reveals what source of influence a person is speaking from; whether selfishness (human), demonic or from God.
3. Human responsibility follows the revelation! The judgment following the act of discerning is a manifestation of the gift of faith; or at times, it is simply experience with God. The gift helps the believer as well as the unbeliever. It also protects the majority of the flock from internal or external danger. This manifestation of the Spirit shows God strong and fair regarding His relationship with people.

B) How does the gift serve God’s purpose?

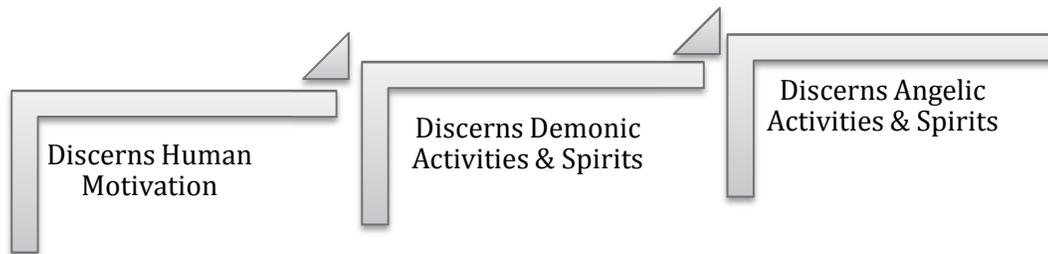
1. The knowledge gained through the gift informs you as to what you should do; how you should minister to the person; or what next steps you ought to take.
2. Jesus knew that He could trust Nathaniel because the revelation conveyed he was not a tricky, conniving person. In fact, he was just the opposite.
3. And, Nathaniel knew he could serve Jesus wholeheartedly because God allowed Jesus to know the essence of his heart supernaturally.

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C) What the gift is **not**:



D) The gift operates in three realms.



2.2 Discerning the human spirit (Acts 5:1-10)

Note: Evidence can be presented in various forms (i.e., inwardly perceiving; vision of a spirit or spirits; through the five senses, etc.). Once evidence is presented judgment is passed or an appropriate action is taken.

A) Peter discerned that Ananias was being deceptive and lying (Acts 5:3). And, he discerned that the motivation came not from fear; but rather from a dastardly source.

Acts 5:3 (NIV)—“Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?”

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- B) Information about the deceptive nature of Ananias was quietly and internally revealed to Peter by the Holy Spirit.
1. This revelation happened, like Samuel and Jesus, as Ananias neared Peter.
 2. This gift protects the church and the Lord's people from wrongly categorizing the person or unknowingly trusting them.
- C) After discerning of spirits occurs, it now takes the natural wisdom (and at times, Spirit-directed wisdom) to know what to do.
1. Peter's questioning of Ananias resulted in a strong judgment against him. Ananias died!

2.3 Discerning the demonic spirit (Acts 16:16-20)

Acts 16:16-20 (NIV)—¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar

Note: The gift reveals clearly what source of influence a person is speaking from. Whether selfishness, human, demonic or from God. The gift can be manifested as a result of one's holy frustration of a particular meeting or events. The gift doesn't discern actions, but *reason* behind the actions and the spirit motivating such behavior (Acts 16:17-18).

- A) Paul discerned that a familiar spirit (a specific type of demon) was using the slave girl to distract people from the authentic message of Jesus. Paul's emotion of annoyance worked within the structure of the gift of discerning of spirits (Acts 16:18).
1. Discerning of spirits does not have to manifest itself if you can blatantly discern what you're dealing with.

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2. In this instance it would be confusing to many if this demonized girl was really a servant of the Lord. She was saying positive things but it was coming from the wrong place, occurring at the wrong time, and bringing attention to herself rather than God.
- B) The information about the demonic spirit working through the slave girl was quietly and internally revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit.
1. Discerning the spirit is one thing. Knowing what to do is a completely different thing.
 2. After discerning of spirits became operational, Paul had to act. He cast out the demon spirit that had possessed the young lady.
- 2.4 The gift can discern angelic beings and spirits under God's domain (2 Kings 6:8-16).
Note: Elisha was able to see the angelic beings as they took their places of battle. One of the fruit of discerning of spirits is peace and assurance.
- A) Here we see the gift of discerning of spirits actually open the eyes of Elisha to see into the spirit realm.

2 Kings 6:8-18 (NIV)—⁸ Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place." ⁹ The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." ¹⁰ So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. ¹¹ This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

¹² "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." ¹³ "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." ¹⁴ Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. ¹⁶ "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

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- B) Only Elisha saw the angelic host. To allow his servant to also have the peace of God, by faith Elisha asked God to open his eyes so that he too could see the angelic army (2 Kings 6:16-17).

2 Kings 6:16-17 (NIV)—¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- C) Once Elisha discerned the presence of the angelic spirits, he acted by using natural wisdom to capture the enemies of Israel (2 Kings 6:18-20).

2 Kings 6:18-20 (NIV)—¹⁸ As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, “Strike this army with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked. ¹⁹ Elisha told them, “This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to Samaria. ²⁰ After they entered the city, Elisha said, “LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see.” Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

Discovery Time

Pair off in two’s (not with a family member) in order to learn how to activate the revelational gifts of the Spirit. After being coached by the instructor you will do the following three things.

- 1. Take a second to introduce yourself to your ministry partner.*
- 2. Pray for God to give you a word of knowledge, word of wisdom, or insight from the discerning of spirits that will bring encouragement, insight, or guidance to your new ministry partner.*
- 3. Share the first thought with your ministry partner that comes to mind. After they’ve shared their first thought with you, discuss.*