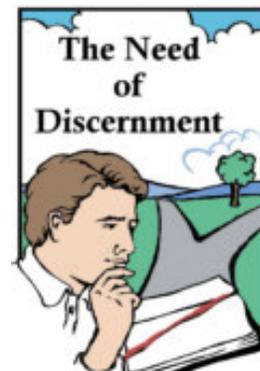


# Church of God

## Sunday School

### THE CHRISTIAN'S TOOLBOX — DISCERNMENT



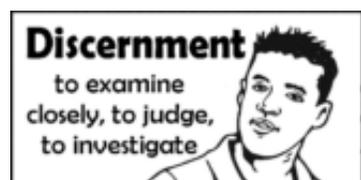
#### DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Discernment is necessary (Deuteronomy 32:28-29; Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Discernment, or wisdom, begins with learning about God (Proverbs 1:1-7; Proverbs 4:1-7).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Discernment requires examining, or testing (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Bible study brings discernment (Philippians 1:9-10; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:15).
- ❑ **Friday:** God's Spirit is needed for discernment (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Ask God for discernment, or understanding (1 Kings 3:9; Psalm 119:125; Proverbs 2:1-6).

**MEMORY VERSE:** *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* —John 7:24

In 1869 two men were hired to dig a well. To their great surprise, while digging they discovered a giant, ten-foot man buried there. The owner of the property soon was charging people 25 cents to come and see this giant. "People came by the wagon load" (Wikipedia.org). In time this giant was sold for \$23,000 to be displayed in New York. This was such a money-making venture that a showman named P. T. Barnum offered to buy the giant for \$50,000. When he was refused, he created his own giant and claimed that it was the original. He, too, made money from people who came to see his giant. While observing the gullible crowds of people paying money, one man was heard to remark, "There's a sucker [fool] born every minute." Can you imagine how foolish people felt when, on February 2, 1870, both giants were determined to be fakes?

There is an ancient proverb that says, "A fool and his money are soon parted." Perhaps you have read about email scams and internet hoaxes. Many people have lost their entire life's savings because they were easily fooled. These people did not use good judgment when making decisions. However, more serious and dangerous than these hoaxes are the plans the devil uses, trying to deceive God's people. There is a tool that should be in your toolbox to help you be wise to those workings of the devil. This tool is called discernment.



#### What Is Discernment?

There is a popular saying: "It does not matter what you believe, as long as you believe in something." This is quite foolish! You might sincerely believe with all your heart that you can fly, but if you jump off a cliff, you will fall. Likewise, there are many other common beliefs in our society today, such as: "Just follow your heart" or "All religions have the same God" or "Being happy is all that matters" or "What you don't know can't hurt you." While these statements might sound good at first, are they really true? Taking a second look, examining closely, and investigating these statements is how the Christian uses the tool of discernment. John 7:24 warns us, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." It has been said, "Spiritual discernment is the ability to see from the Lord's viewpoint."

When you accepted the Lord into your heart and were saved, God gave you something very precious (salvation). It is the devil's plan to take that from you, and he often works in a deceiving way. He will use "profane and vain babblings" (1 Timothy 6:20), which are empty talk, foolish arguments, and contradictions, to try and convince you that you do not need to live such a strict life. He might use someone to try and influence you against the Bible, against your parents, or against your pastor. Discernment will protect you from these persuasive influences.

## How to Get Discernment

Have you ever heard the sayings, "You cannot always tell a book by its cover" or "You cannot believe everything you see"? Just as physical things are not always as they appear, so it is spiritually. Discernment is separating what is true from what is false. It is so necessary! Yet, many Christians are making unwise decisions and are being taken in by false doctrines, false beliefs, and false teachers. Other Christians buy into lies that cause them to stop living for the Lord and to go their own way. Why aren't they using the tool of discernment? Hosea 4:6 tells us that "people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." It is highly unlikely the giant hoax of 1869 would deceive as many people today. Why is that? Today we have better access to information that can quickly show such stories to be highly suspect. Could it be that spiritual knowledge works in the same manner, shining God's light of truth on the devil's lies?

It is vital that every Christian has a "true and personal knowledge of" God (2 Peter 1:3 AMP). How do you do that? The Bible is where you learn about God—who He is, what He has promised, and what He desires you to do. This is where discernment begins. Some have described the Bible as a yardstick (or a measuring rod). It is used as the standard by which all other things are measured. When you place the truth of the Bible beside the hoaxes, lies, and tricks of the devil, God's Word enables you to "discern between good and evil" (2 Samuel 19:35).



The second thing you need to be able to discern is God's Spirit. First Corinthians 2:14 says that these things are "spiritually discerned," and a "natural man" (unsaved) cannot "know them." When you repent of your sins and begin to live for the Lord, God sends His Holy Spirit to live in your heart. God's Spirit will help you to see when things are not quite right. You might feel an uneasiness or you might wonder if something is actually true. It is important that you do not ignore, or "quench" (1 Thessalonians 5:19), these impressions. Ask God for "good judgment and knowledge" (Psalm 119:66). God has promised that if you ask for wisdom, He will give it to you (James 1:5).

## The Danger of Lacking Discernment

If you have ever been around very young children for long, you have learned that they lack the ability to make wise decisions. If left unsupervised, they will put almost everything in their mouths, write on the walls with markers, run out into traffic, climb on top of tables, and so on. However, as children grow up and are properly trained, they begin to gain understanding and make better choices. So it is with the new Christian. At first, there is much he does not understand, and unwise choices could be spiritually deadly. There is a popular saying, "Follow your own heart," but this is unbiblical. Unless your heart is committed to God and His ways (Proverbs 3:5-6), it will deceive you (Jeremiah 17:9). It is vital that every newly-saved Christian begin building his spiritual library by reading the Bible, attending church services, listening to preached messages, and heeding wise counsel.

Lacking spiritual discernment is often a sign of spiritual immaturity. This is understandable when one is a newborn babe. Just as a baby drinks only milk at first, newborn Christians take in only milk (simple food) at first. But how strong would a teenager or grown man be if he only drank milk? He would become susceptible to sickness and disease. Likewise, a Christian must begin to eat "strong meat" (Hebrews 5:14), or the deeper truths of the Bible.

Another reason some people lack discernment is because they are growing cold, spiritually speaking. Backsliding rarely happens overnight; it is a process. When Christians begin to change their beliefs, standards, and ideas from what God's Words says (and what they used to believe) to something easier, more popular, or less restrictive, it is a sign that they are losing their spiritual discernment. This is often caused by failing to pray and read the Bible as they should. Soon they are blinded by the devil's ideas and lies.

Today our world is approving many lifestyles, ideas, and moral standards that were not accepted years ago. Where do you stand on these issues? Do you know what God's opinion is? Can you discern what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is a counterfeit, what is right and what is almost right? It is only through God's Word and His Spirit that you will be kept from making seriously wrong decisions. Do not neglect the tool of discernment.

*"Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning and understanding, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble and fall in them" (Hosea 14:9 AMP).*

# Bible Quiz



1. What is the definition of discernment? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are some of the ways the devil uses to deceive Christians into losing their salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

3. What does Hosea 4:6 say is needed? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How does spiritual knowledge give discernment? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Why is the Bible sometimes compared to a yardstick? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Why is the Holy Spirit necessary for discernment? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Why can you not just "follow your heart" to discern things? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What are two reasons someone might lack spiritual discernment? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. What are some of the ways you can become more spiritually discerning? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What are some of the issues or decisions in life that you will need discernment for? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Discernment

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Choose one of the following for each Bible character:

- Asked for Discernment
  - Lacked Discernment
  - Used Discernment
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**Esther**  
Esther 5:4

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**Balaam**  
Numbers, Chapter 22

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**Abigail**  
1 Samuel 25:3

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**Peter**  
Matthew 16:15-17

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**Pharaoh**  
Exodus 5:2

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**Paul**  
Acts 16:18

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**Solomon**  
1 Kings 3:9

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