

DISCERNMENT IN CRAZY TIMES

DISCERNMENT

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Let's start with some probing questions:

- Is discernment important?
- How do we decide what deserves our attention?
- What really deserves our time?
- Do you realize everyone wants your attention?
- What filters do you use to decide what deserves your attention?
- What dangers or hidden traps lurk for someone who lacks discernment?
- Can you tell the difference between a real opportunity and a clever distraction?
- Scams are on the rise, can you discern a scam?
- Have you ever had a gut feeling about something that turned out right?
- When was your gut feeling wrong?
- What is the danger of making emotional decisions?
- In what ways do you see others around you lacking discernment?
- Can you distinguish between a true friend and someone flattering you?
- Are you willing to learn more to help people not be tricked by deceptions?
- Do you get pressured to make decisions?
- When you're under pressure do you get absent minded? Or clearer?
- Can you perceive the heart attitude people are operating out of?
- Have you regretted decisions you made that seemed good but turned out bad?
- What are the long-term consequences of letting other people make your most important decisions for you?
- How would you define discernment?
- How would you define spiritual discernment?
- Can you discern truth from lies?
- What clues do you look for to determine if someone is actually trustworthy?
- Do you give the right amount of time to issues and concerns?
- Do you major in minor things? How do you tell the difference between a minor issue you should overlook and a major red flag?
- What happens to a person's peace of mind when they accept every piece of advice they receive?
- How can you accurately measure the hidden motives behind a seemingly generous or helpful offer?
- What kind of person do you become if you always choose immediate comfort over long-term wisdom?

Developing Spiritual Discernment: A Comprehensive Bible Study

“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 5:14

Discernment is the God-given ability to perceive, distinguish, and align our choices with the truth of God’s Word. This study breaks down the mechanics of discernment, explores 32 critical areas where believers must apply spiritual clarity, and details how to activate and guard this vital spiritual discipline.

Three Levels of Discernment

To understand how to navigate the world around us, we must realize that discernment operates on three distinct levels: natural, emotional, and spiritual. While humans are equipped with natural faculties to analyze information, we are easily deceived if we do not submit our natural and emotional senses to the ultimate authority of the Holy Spirit.

1. Natural Discernment (The Faculty of the Mind)

Natural discernment is the cognitive ability to evaluate situations using human intellect, logic, observation, and common sense. It relies entirely on the five physical senses and past experiences to make rational decisions.

- **How it operates:** It looks at data, cross-references facts, weighs pros and cons, and identifies patterns or red flags based on earthly knowledge.
- **The Biblical Limit:** While useful for daily survival, natural discernment is completely blind to the supernatural realm. Scripture warns that human logic alone cannot comprehend the things of God.
- **Scripture:** *“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.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

2. Emotional Discernment (The Faculty of the Soul)

Emotional discernment—often called “intuition” or a “gut feeling”—is the ability to perceive the underlying emotional atmospheres, motives, and psychological states of others. It operates within the human soul (the mind, will, and emotions).

- **How it operates:** It senses tension in a room, picks up on subtext in conversation, and evaluates whether a person is being genuine or manipulative based on empathy and emotional intelligence.
- **The Biblical Limit:** Emotions are highly volatile and easily manipulated by flattery, fear, or personal desires. If a person relies solely on emotional discernment, they can easily mistake a smooth-talking false teacher for a loving shepherd because the teacher "feels" good or safe.
- **Scripture:** *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."* (Proverbs 28:26)

3. Spiritual Discernment (The Gift of the Spirit)

Spiritual discernment is a supernatural endowment given by the Holy Spirit to a believer. It allows a person to see past physical appearances, human logic, and emotional manipulation to perceive the true *spiritual origin* and *divine reality* of a matter.

- **How it operates:** It aligns perfectly with the written Canon of Scripture. It reveals whether a teaching, a miracle, or a person is motivated by the Holy Spirit, the human ego, or a demonic spirit. It allows a believer to sense a spiritual trap even when the natural facts look perfect and the emotional vibe feels wonderful.
- **The Biblical Standard:** Spiritual discernment requires a mind continuously renewed by God's Word and a life yielded to prayer. It is developed through consistent use and maturity.
- **Scripture:** *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12)



Introduction Review Questions

1. Natural discernment is foolishness when trying to understand the things of the Spirit because they must be _____ discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)
2. We cannot rely purely on emotional discernment because the person who trusts in their own _____ is called a fool. (Proverbs 28:26)
3. True spiritual discernment uses the Word of God, which acts as a _____ of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

18 Area's of Natural Discernment

Here are **18 critical areas where human natural discernment is absolutely essential** to navigate life successfully.

1. Digital Information & Media Consumption

- **The Threat:** AI-generated deepfakes, algorithmic clickbait, and coordinated disinformation campaigns.
- **Discernment Defense:** Separating verified, evidence-based facts from manufactured emotional outrage and subtle propaganda.

2. AI Collaboration & Automation Integration

- **The Threat:** Blindly trusting automated outputs, software code, or summarized data at work.
- **Discernment Defense:** Auditing machine outputs to catch hidden "hallucinations," biased data, and subtle logical errors before publishing.

3. Cybersecurity & Personal Data Privacy

- **The Threat:** Hyper-personalized phishing scams, data brokers, and sophisticated social engineering tactics.
- **Discernment Defense:** Spotting tiny anomalies in urgent emails, texts, or system alerts before entering sensitive credentials.

4. Academic Research & Intellectual Pursuits

- **The Threat:** Scientific replication crises, predatory journals, and studies heavily biased by funding sources.
- **Discernment Defense:** Evaluating the raw methodology and funding transparency of a study rather than relying on a catchy headline.

5. Personal & Professional Relationships

- **The Threat:** Covert manipulation, toxic workplace dynamics, and charismatic opportunists.
- **Discernment Defense:** Reading underlying motives and tracking behavioral consistency rather than relying on polite manners or a sales pitch.

6. Parenting & Mentorship

- **The Threat:** Misapplying discipline, breaking trust, and missing hidden psychological wounds or online bullying.
- **Discernment Defense:** Looking past outward rebellion or silence to identify and address the underlying fear or sadness.

7. Crisis Management & Physical Safety

- **The Threat:** Panic, decision paralysis, and falling victim to dangerous herd-mentality behaviors during emergencies.
- **Discernment Defense:** Rapidly assessing real-time threats, reading environmental hazards, and taking decisive survival actions under pressure.

8. Community Volunteering & Charitable Giving

- **The Threat:** Emotional, heart-wrenching fundraising appeals from charities that spend most of their budget on executive overhead.
- **Discernment Defense:** Verifying actual resource distribution and local operational impact before donating money or time.

9. Financial Decisions & Investment

- **The Threat:** Get-rich-quick schemes, volatile asset hype, and predatory financial lending products.
- **Discernment Defense:** Calculating true mathematical risk and stepping away from unsustainable economic opportunities.

10. Consumer Purchases & Product Quality

- **The Threat:** Planned obsolescence, fake online reviews, and psychological marketing tricks.
- **Discernment Defense:** Looking past aesthetics to spot true durability, repairability, and true long-term cost-per-use metrics.

11. Health, Nutrition, & Wellness

- **The Threat:** Contradictory diet trends, unregulated miracle supplements, and generic influencer "biohacking."

- **Discernment Defense:** Filtering out corporate health fads to correctly interpret your own unique biological signals and health data.

12. Medical Treatments & Healthcare Choices

- **The Threat:** Bureaucratic medical systems, over-medication, and profit-driven corporate healthcare motives.
- **Discernment Defense:** Patient self-advocacy, asking targeted diagnostic questions, and knowing exactly when to demand a second opinion.

13. Workplace Leadership & Team Dynamics

- **The Threat:** Implementing expensive, superficial "band-aid" fixes that frustrate staff and fail to resolve structural bottlenecks.
- **Discernment Defense:** Diagnosing root causes of organizational friction, culture issues, and dropped productivity.

14. Time Management & Strategic Commitments

- **The Threat:** Overcommitment, chronic daily burnout, and climbing career ladders leaned against the wrong walls.
- **Discernment Defense:** Distinguishing between opportunities that are merely "good" and those that directly align with your long-term life purpose.

15. Legal, Ethical, & Moral Dilemmas

- **The Threat:** Blind obedience to corporate or systemic authority figures who enforce legal but ethically bankrupt rules.
- **Discernment Defense:** Navigating complex gray areas to preserve your personal integrity and prevent systemic human harm.

16. Political Promises & Civic Engagement

- **The Threat:** Tribalism, empty campaign rhetoric, out-of-context statistics, and demagoguery.
- **Discernment Defense:** Tracking a candidate's actual historical voting record and analyzing the real-world feasibility of their policies.

17. Environmental & Climate Adaptation

- **The Threat:** Buying uninsurable real estate or settling down in areas facing unmanaged infrastructure vulnerabilities.
- **Discernment Defense:** Proactively evaluating long-term ecological risks like water scarcity, grid failures, or flood tables before investing.

18. Self-Awareness & Internal Biases

- **The Threat:** Developing massive psychological blind spots, feeding your ego, and repeating the same life mistakes.
- **Discernment Defense:** Brutally but kindly evaluating your own insecurities, motives, and admitting when you are wrong.



32 Target Areas of Spiritual Discernment

1. Discernment of Spirits (Spiritual Origins)

We must test every spiritual manifestation, teaching, or atmosphere to ensure its source is the Holy Spirit and not a demonic or deceptive counterfeit.

- **Scripture Focus:** 1 John 4:1; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Timothy 4:1
- **Study Question 1:** “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but _____ the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)
- **Study Question 2:** “To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another _____ of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues...” (1 Corinthians 12:10)
- **Study Question 3:** “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of _____;” (1 Timothy 4:1)

2. Discernment of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (False Teachers)

Deceivers rarely announce themselves; they dress up like genuine believers but harbor destructive, predatory motives.

- **Scripture Focus:** Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29; 2 Peter 2:1

- **Study Question 1:** “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in _____ clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” (Matthew 7:15)
- **Study Question 2:** “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not _____ the flock.” (Acts 20:29)
- **Study Question 3:** “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in _____ heresies...” (2 Peter 2:1)

3. Discernment of False Doctrines (Theological Deception)

As the cultural tide changes, it is vital to spot subtle deviations from scriptural truth that sound appealing but lead away from Christ.

- **Scripture Focus:** Ephesians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:3; Galatians 1:8
- **Study Question 1:** “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every _____ of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness...” (Ephesians 4:14)
- **Study Question 2:** “For the time will come when they will not endure _____ doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;” (2 Timothy 4:3)
- **Study Question 3:** “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be _____.” (Galatians 1:8)

4. Discernment of Good and Evil (Moral Clarity)

In a world that blurs the lines between right and wrong, God demands absolute moral clarity rooted in His holy character.

- **Scripture Focus:** Isaiah 5:20; Amos 5:15; Romans 12:9
- **Study Question 1:** “Woe unto them that call evil _____, and good _____; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness...” (Isaiah 5:20)
- **Study Question 2:** “_____ the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate...” (Amos 5:15)
- **Study Question 3:** “Let love be without dissimulation. _____ that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” (Romans 12:9)

5. Discernment of the Times (Prophetic Awareness)

Jesus expects His followers to analyze the moral, political, and spiritual climate of the world to recognize the signs of the end times.

- **Scripture Focus:** Matthew 16:3; 1 Chronicles 12:32; Luke 12:56
- **Study Question 1:** "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the _____ of the times?" (Matthew 16:3)
- **Study Question 2:** "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had _____ of the times, to know what Israel ought to do..." (1 Chronicles 12:32)
- **Study Question 3:** "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this _____?" (Luke 12:56)

6. Discernment of Relationships (Wise Associations)

The people we allow closest to us will inevitably shape our character, values, and trajectory in life.

- **Scripture Focus:** Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 22:24
- **Study Question 1:** "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of _____ shall be destroyed." (Proverbs 13:20)
- **Study Question 2:** "Be not deceived: evil _____ corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33)
- **Study Question 3:** "Make no friendship with an _____ man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go." (Proverbs 22:24)

7. Discernment of the Heart's Intentions (Self-Examination)

Human nature is a master of self-deception; we need the Holy Spirit to lay bare our true motives, pride, and secret sins.

- **Scripture Focus:** Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 139:23; Hebrews 4:12
- **Study Question 1:** "The heart is _____ above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)
- **Study Question 2:** "_____ me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:" (Psalm 139:23)
- **Study Question 3:** "...and is a discerner of the thoughts and _____ of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

8. Discernment of the Will of God (Decision Making)

Making choices—whether in careers, moves, or marriages—requires a mind renewed by God to test what is His perfect plan.

- **Scripture Focus:** Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:17; Colossians 1:9
- **Study Question 1:** "...but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may _____ what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)
- **Study Question 2:** "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the _____ of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17)
- **Study Question 3:** "...do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual _____;" (Colossians 1:9)

9. Discernment of Speech (Words of Others)

We must filter the words, flattery, and advice spoken into our lives, weighing them against biblical truth.

- **Scripture Focus:** Proverbs 14:15; Proverbs 10:19; James 3:11
- **Study Question 1:** "The simple believeth every _____: but the prudent man looketh well to his going." (Proverbs 14:15)
- **Study Question 2:** "In the multitude of words there wanteth not _____: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." (Proverbs 10:19)
- **Study Question 3:** "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and _____?" (James 3:11)

10. Discernment of Spiritual Warfare (Satan's Tactics)

We cannot fight spiritual battles with physical weapons; we must recognize when a trial is actually an organized assault from hell.

- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 2:11
- **Study Question 1:** "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an _____ of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14)
- **Study Question 2:** "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the _____ of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11)
- **Study Question 3:** "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his _____." (2 Corinthians 2:11)

11. Discernment of Leadership (Choosing Spiritual Authority)

Not everyone who claims authority is fit to lead. We must evaluate spiritual leaders by their long-term spiritual fruit.

- **Scripture Focus:** Matthew 7:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:2
- **Study Question 1:** "Wherefore by their _____ ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:20)
- **Study Question 2:** "And we beseech you, brethren, to _____ them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;" (1 Thessalonians 5:12)
- **Study Question 3:** "A bishop then must be _____, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour..." (1 Timothy 3:2)

12. Discernment of Priorities (Stewardship of Time)

We need discernment to choose what is eternally valuable over what is temporary.

- **Scripture Focus:** Philippians 1:10; Matthew 6:33; Ephesians 5:16
- **Study Question 1:** "That ye may _____ things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." (Philippians 1:10)
- **Study Question 2:** "But seek ye _____ the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)
- **Study Question 3:** " _____ the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16)

13. Discernment of True Repentance (Authentic vs. Fake Remorse)

It is crucial to distinguish between a person who is genuinely broken over their sin versus someone who is merely sorry they got caught.

- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Corinthians 7:10; Matthew 3:8; Joel 2:13
- **Study Question 1:** "For godly sorrow worketh _____ to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- **Study Question 2:** "Bring forth therefore fruits _____ for repentance." (Matthew 3:8)
- **Study Question 3:** "And _____ your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God..." (Joel 2:13)

14. Discernment of Financial Deception (Greed vs. Stewardship)

The pursuit of money can easily blind a believer. We need discernment to avoid get-rich-quick traps and dishonest gain.

- **Scripture Focus:** Proverbs 28:20; 1 Timothy 6:10; Proverbs 11:28
- **Study Question 1:** “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh _____ to be rich shall not be innocent.” (Proverbs 28:20)
- **Study Question 2:** “For the love of money is the root of all _____: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith...” (1 Timothy 6:10)
- **Study Question 3:** “He that trusteth in his riches shall _____: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.” (Proverbs 11:28) [1]

15. Discernment of Media and Entertainment (Guard Your Gates)

What we watch, listen to, and scroll through directly feeds our soul. We must actively filter out godless philosophies.

- **Scripture Focus:** Psalm 101:3; Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:8
- **Study Question 1:** “I will set no _____ thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside...” (Psalm 101:3)
- **Study Question 2:** “Keep thy heart with all _____; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)
- **Study Question 3:** “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true... if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, _____ on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

16. Discernment of Legalism vs. License (True Liberty)

Believers must discern the dangerous middle ground between legalism (earning salvation by rules) and compromise (using grace as an excuse to sin).

- **Scripture Focus:** Galatians 5:13; Jude 1:4; Romans 6:1
- **Study Question 1:** “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the _____, but by love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13)

- **Study Question 2:** "...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into _____, and denying the only Lord God..." (Jude 1:4)

17. Discernment of God's Voice (Hearing the Shepherd)

Amid the loud voices of culture, family, and self, we must possess the sharp ears to instantly pick out the distinct voice of Jesus.

- **Scripture Focus:** John 10:27; 1 Kings 19:12; Isaiah 30:21
- **Study Question 1:** "My sheep hear my _____, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)
- **Study Question 2:** "And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small _____." (1 Kings 19:12)
- **Study Question 3:** "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the _____, walk ye in it..." (Isaiah 30:21)

18. Discernment of Spiritual Pride (Pharisaical Attitude)

We must identify when our knowledge or spiritual growth breeds arrogance rather than genuine humility and love for others.

- **Scripture Focus:** 1 Corinthians 8:1; Proverbs 16:18; Luke 18:11
- **Study Question 1:** "...Knowledge _____ up, but charity edifieth." (1 Corinthians 8:1)
- **Study Question 2:** "Pride goeth before _____, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)
- **Study Question 3:** "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, _____..." (Luke 18:11)

19. Discernment of Open vs. Closed Doors (Divine Guidance)

It takes discernment to know if a career or life path option is a distraction from Satan, a trial from God, or a genuine supernatural opportunity.

- **Scripture Focus:** 1 Corinthians 16:9; Acts 16:7; Revelation 3:8
- **Study Question 1:** "For a great door and _____ is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." (1 Corinthians 16:9)

- **Study Question 2:** "...they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit _____ them not." (Acts 16:7)
- **Study Question 3:** "...behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can _____ it:" (Revelation 3:8)

20. Discernment of Earthly vs. Heavenly Wisdom (Source of Advice)

Not all logical or practical advice aligns with God's kingdom values; we must filter worldly logic out of our counsel network.

- **Scripture Focus:** James 3:17; 1 Corinthians 3:19; James 3:15
- **Study Question 1:** "But the wisdom that is from _____ is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated..." (James 3:17)
- **Study Question 2:** "For the wisdom of this world is _____ with God..." (1 Corinthians 3:19)
- **Study Question 3:** "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, _____." (James 3:15)

21. Discernment of Flattery vs. Genuine Encouragement (Hidden Motives)

We must discern when someone's kind words are sincere versus when they are trying to manipulate us for their own benefit.

- **Scripture Focus:** Proverbs 29:5; Psalm 12:2; Proverbs 26:28
- **Study Question 1:** "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a _____ for his feet." (Proverbs 29:5)
- **Study Question 2:** "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a _____ heart do they speak." (Psalm 12:2)
- **Study Question 3:** "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh _____." (Proverbs 26:28)

22. Discernment of Culture vs. Kingdom Truth (Societal Trends)

Every generation has cultural pressures that push against biblical truth. Believers must discern where the world system is trying to conform them.

- **Scripture Focus:** Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15; James 4:4
- **Study Question 1:** "And be not _____ to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2)

- **Study Question 2:** "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in _____." (1 John 2:15)
- **Study Question 3:** "...know ye not that the friendship of the world is _____ with God?" (James 4:4)

23. Discernment of Spiritual Blindness (Evaluating Unbelief)

When sharing the Gospel or handling continuous conflicts with unbelievers, we must discern that their core issue is a spiritual veil, not simple stubbornness.

- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:18; Matthew 13:15
- **Study Question 1:** "In whom the god of this world hath _____ the minds of them which believe not..." (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- **Study Question 2:** "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the _____ of their heart:" (Ephesians 4:18)
- **Study Question 3:** "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have _____;" (Matthew 13:15)

24. Discernment of Selfish Ambition vs. Holy Zeal (Ministry Motives)

Even in doing God's work, we must critically evaluate if we are building our own personal kingdom, brand, and ego instead of glorifying Christ.

- **Scripture Focus:** Philippians 2:3; James 3:16; Galatians 1:10
- **Study Question 1:** "Let nothing be done through _____ or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3)
- **Study Question 2:** "For where envying and strife is, there is _____ and every evil work." (James 3:16)
- **Study Question 3:** "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to _____ men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)

25. Discernment of Bitterness vs. Conviction (Soul Status)

We need sharp inner insight to spot when a personal grievance is morphing into a toxic root of bitterness that defiles our entire walk.

- **Scripture Focus:** Hebrews 12:15; Acts 8:23; Ephesians 4:31
- **Study Question 1:** "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of _____ springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" (Hebrews 12:15)
- **Study Question 2:** "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of _____." (Acts 8:23)

26. Discernment of Genuine Fellowship (True Unity)

We must distinguish between a pure, Bible-believing spiritual assembly and groups that gather under a Christian label but lack actual spiritual life.

- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 John 1:6
- **Study Question 1:** "Having a form of _____, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:5)
- **Study Question 2:** "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with _____?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- **Study Question 3:** "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we _____, and do not the truth:" (1 John 1:6)

27. Discernment of God's Chastisement vs. Enemy Condemnation (Guilt Sources)

Believers must discern the difference between the Holy Spirit's loving conviction (which builds us up) and Satan's accusatory condemnation (which tears us down).

- **Scripture Focus:** Romans 8:1; Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 12:10
- **Study Question 1:** "There is therefore now no _____ to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)
- **Study Question 2:** "For whom the Lord loveth he _____, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Hebrews 12:6)
- **Study Question 3:** "...for the _____ of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." (Revelation 12:10)

28. Discernment of Supernatural Manifestations (True Miracles vs. Lying Wonders)

Not every supernatural event originates from God. End-time deception relies heavily on visual signs that mimic the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Matthew 24:24; Revelation 13:13
- **Study Question 1:** “Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying _____,” (2 Thessalonians 2:9)
- **Study Question 2:** “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very _____.” (Matthew 24:24)
- **Study Question 3:** “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh _____ come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,” (Revelation 13:13)

29. Discernment of Covenant Alliances (Unequal Partnerships)

Whether in business ventures, close ministries, or marital commitments, we must discern if a contract binds us to a system working against God.

- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Corinthians 6:14; Amos 3:3; Proverbs 17:15
- **Study Question 1:** “Be ye not unequally _____ together with unbelievers...” (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- **Study Question 2:** “Can two walk together, except they be _____?” (Amos 3:3)
- **Study Question 3:** “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are _____ to the Lord.” (Proverbs 17:15)

30. Discernment of the Prophetic Voice (True vs. False Prophets)

When someone claims to deliver a direct word from God, we must evaluate if the word aligns perfectly with the established Canon of Scripture.

- **Scripture Focus:** Deuteronomy 18:22; Ezekiel 13:3; Jeremiah 23:16
- **Study Question 1:** “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing _____ not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken...” (Deuteronomy 18:22)
- **Study Question 2:** “Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own _____, and have seen nothing!” (Ezekiel 13:3)

- **Study Question 3:** "...Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own _____, and not out of the mouth of the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:16)

31. Discernment of Motivations for Giving (Pure Charity vs. Recognition)

We must guard our hearts against transactional giving or seeking human validation through our financial tithes, offerings, and acts of kindness.

- **Scripture Focus:** Matthew 6:1; Acts 5:4; 2 Corinthians 9:7
- **Study Question 1:** "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be _____ of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 6:1)
- **Study Question 2:** "...whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto _____." (Acts 5:4)
- **Study Question 3:** "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of _____: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

32. Discernment of False Peace (Superficial Unity vs. Holy Rest)

We must discern when a peaceful atmosphere is merely a deceptive compromise that suppresses underlying sin versus the authentic, transformative peace of Christ.

- **Scripture Focus:** Jeremiah 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; John 14:27
- **Study Question 1:** "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is _____ peace." (Jeremiah 6:14)
- **Study Question 2:** "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden _____ cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:3)
- **Study Question 3:** "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the _____ giveth, give I unto you..." (John 14:27)

How to Activate Spiritual Discernment

Spiritual discernment is not an automatic trait; it behaves like a muscle that must be intentionally built, nourished, and regularized through spiritual training.

Saturation in the Written Word

True spiritual discernment is a reflex developed by deep intimacy with Truth. In the natural banking world, counterfeit currency experts do not study every bad fake bill—they spend hours handling real currency so that any deviation is instantly obvious.

- **The Principle:** To spot what is false, your mind must be completely saturated with what is true.
- **Scripture:** *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* (Psalm 119:11)

The Role of Prayer and Fasting

Our natural appetites and the chaotic noise of daily culture act as a visual fog over our spirits. Fasting weakens the influence of our fleshly desires, while dedicated prayer tunes our ears to hear the subtle promptings of the Holy Spirit.

- **The Principle:** When you intentionally silence the noise of the physical body, the frequencies of the supernatural realm become completely clear.
- **Scripture:** *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said...”* (Acts 13:2)

The Counsel of Spiritual Maturity

Individual perspective is limited. Satan delights in isolating a believer and convincing them that they have a special, private revelation that no one else understands. True discernment seeks out validation from established spiritual leadership and mature corporate fellowship.

- **The Principle:** God’s safety net against spiritual isolation is the multi-membered body of Christ working in corporate unity.
- **Scripture:** *“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”* (Proverbs 11:14)

Guarding Against the Danger of "Over-Discernment"

There is a perilous line between possessing accurate spiritual discernment and sliding into a toxic, carnal state of **suspicion and criticism**.

The Trap of a Critical Spirit

When a person assumes they have the gift of discernment but lacks matching spiritual humility, they become self-appointed inspectors looking for a demon under every rock. They begin to assume everyone around them has hidden, sinister motives. This is not the Holy Spirit; it is often unhealed personal trauma, paranoia, or deep-seated spiritual pride.

- **The Test:** Discernment isolates the root cause of an issue to bring healing and truth. A critical spirit attacks people to build up its own sense of superior righteousness.

The Motivation of Love and Restoration

Scripture is absolutely clear: any spiritual gift operated outside of divine love is completely useless. God does not reveal a wolf, a false doctrine, or a hidden sin to give you gossip material or ammunition to tear someone down. He reveals it so that the body of Christ remains protected, the trapped soul is brought to conviction, and truth reigns supreme.

- **Scripture:** *"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge... and have not charity, I am nothing."* (1 Corinthians 13:2)

Let's continue with some probing Questions:

- Is discernment important?
- How essential is spiritual clarity?
- Is natural perception a priority?

The critical purpose of discernment is distinguishing between the absolute Truth and that which is merely "almost" right. Examples:

- Claiming spiritual union without covenant commitment.
- Using another's past mistakes to justify current sin.
- Avoiding fellowship based on the presence of hypocrites.

- Equating personal lifestyle challenges with a lack of love.
- The deception of validating ungodly behavior through faulty filters.
- Relying on false justification based on the actions of others.
- Evaluating the heart of Cain versus Abel; understanding the roots of violence and hatred that lead to tragedy.
- Suspending moral standards under the guise of "deserving" immediate gratification.
- Prioritizing financial provision over safety in an abusive environment.

Essential Areas of Natural Discernment

- **Environmental Safety:** Assessing physical hazards, climate preparedness, and situational awareness in secluded or high-risk locations.
- **Character Assessment:** Evaluating trustworthiness and social dynamics; deciding who to help, who to trust, and where to establish healthy boundaries.

Recognizing the weight of character revealed through behavioral reactions and avoiding the misplacement of credit or blame.

- **Causal Analysis:** Understanding the underlying reasons for success or failure in any given situation.
- **Problem Solving:** Determining the specific resources and actions required to resolve friction.
- **Strategic Direction:** Aligning major life choices with the will of God.
- **Resource Management:** Matching specific needs with the correct skill sets.
- **Practical Evaluation:** Differentiating between ineffective methods and external factors beyond our control.
- **Stewardship of Growth:** Identifying if the seeds, soil, or timing are hindering the harvest.
- **Personal Accountability:** Distinguishing between mechanical failure and user error.
- **Health and Wellness:** Interpreting biological signals and the impact of consumption habits on long-term physical vitality.

Dissecting the Process of Success

A discerning mind can deduct the precise steps and conditions that lead to a successful outcome or event.

Discernment for the Educator

As a teacher, one must evaluate:

- Determining the appropriate instructional level for the group.
- Identifying methods to maintain engagement and classroom order.
- Navigating diverse personalities and varying levels of knowledge.

Discernment in Supportive Roles

An assistant must possess the clarity to maintain a submitted posture, providing prompt support and proactive preparation while avoiding public correction or competition for loyalty.

Discernment for Leadership and Business

- Aligning organizational needs with individual abilities.
- Reading the hidden motives and true capacity of potential hires.

Determining the specific strategies required to meet deadlines and organizational goals through effective team management.

Diagnosing whether organizational friction requires training, confrontation, or simple review.

- Managing self-motivated achievers versus those requiring constant affirmation.
- Tailoring leadership styles to meet the emotional and professional needs of the staff.

Discernment in the Home

Recognizing that every child possesses a unique personality and different motivational triggers. Filtering through the noise of culture and media to identify information that is truly relevant and critical to your family's well-being.

Understanding Spiritual Discernment

Spiritual discernment is the God-given ability to perceive, understand, and distinguish divine Truth from deceptive error.

It is the sharp faculty required to differentiate between what is "almost" right and what is perfectly aligned with God's Word.

Scriptural Examples of Discernment

1. Paul identifies a deceptive spirit behind seemingly right words. (Acts 16:16-18)
2. The failure and rebuke of Simon the Sorcerer regarding the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:18-24)
3. The spiritual blindness of the Ninevites. (Jonah 4:11)
4. The call to understand the perfect will of God. (Colossians 1:9)
5. Differentiating between good and evil. (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:10)
6. The prophetic awareness of the sons of Issachar. (1 Chronicles 12:32)
7. Jesus rebuked those who could not discern the signs of the times. (Matthew 16:3)



Perception in Deceptive Times

"In this season, things are not what they seem."

Believers must navigate a cultural climate where appearances are often an illusion.

Not every open door, impressive presentation, or spiritual-sounding voice originates from the Holy Spirit. We must test every manifestation against the written Word.

God is calling for a people who see beyond the surface, recognizing the true spiritual reality hidden behind emotional experiences and outward success.

Discernment isolates the root cause to bring restoration, whereas a critical spirit merely attacks the surface.

"Look closer. Listen deeper. Test every spirit. Stay near My Word."

Through prayer, wisdom, and saturation in the Spirit, the Lord reveals what is hidden and guides us into all Truth.

Commit to walking in this clarity, refusing to be misled by the deceptive trends of this world.

Declaration: I receive the gift of discernment. My eyes are open to Truth. I will recognize what is alive in God and reject all illusion.

Scripture: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God...” (1 John 4:1)

Intimacy with God prevents us from leaning on human understanding alone, allowing Him to direct our paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Scripture: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Walking wisely in a hostile world requires the innocence of doves combined with the wisdom of serpents. (Matthew 10:16)

Scripture: “The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge...” (Proverbs 15:14)



Target Areas of Spiritual Discernment

How does spiritual clarity operate in these critical disciplines?

1. Identifying the origins of suffering—distinguishing between demonic assault, soul wounds, or theological error.
2. Perceiving the spiritual receptivity of others to the Gospel.
3. Preaching with prophetic awareness of the group's current spiritual climate.
4. Discerning hidden motives and intentions of the heart.
5. Differentiating between ignorance, lack of fortitude, or rebellion in ungodly behavior.
6. Sensing divine timing for personal and corporate intercession.
7. Evaluating the nature of infirmity—discerning spiritual origins versus physical consequences.
8. Understanding the current position on the Biblical prophetic timeline.

9. Strategic warfare—knowing which battles to fight and the divine strategy for victory.
10. Refining the approach for effective witnessing.
11. Testing the spirits present in media, arts, and entertainment.
12. Recognizing when an individual is operating under a personal or demonic agenda rather than the will of God.
13. Identifying legalistic bewitchment and deviations from the Gospel of Grace. (Galatians 3:1)
14. Exposing spirits that stay hidden behind religious rhetoric until an opportune time for assault. (Acts 16:16-34)

Closing Thoughts

Can you perceive the supernatural fingerprints of God as He moves in a heart or orders a situation?

Are you tuned in to recognize an assault or a deceptive trap organized by the enemy?

Reflect on King David; many lacked the spiritual perception to see God's choice in the shepherd boy or the victory in his challenge to Goliath.

We must develop a keen, exercised sense in both the natural and the spiritual to avoid the failure of misaligned armor.

Discernment Review Questions

4. Could you have discerned God's presence with Joseph while he was in the depths of a prison? (Genesis 39:21)
5. Would you recognize the divinity of Christ through the suffering and contradiction of the Cross? (Matthew 27:54)

6. If you were Abigail, would you have perceived the incoming judgment and acted with haste? (1 Samuel 25)
7. Are you able to identify the wrong spirit even when the words spoken are biblically accurate? (Acts 16:16-18)
8. Would you have recognized the prophetic test in the Man of God's arrows? (2 Kings 13:15-19)
9. Can you reject a false gospel even if it is presented by an angel? (Galatians 1:8-9)
10. Would you know Jesus if He appeared in a form that challenged your traditional religious boxes? (Luke 24:15-16)
11. Are you able to discern the inner void that people try to fill with temporary substitutes rather than Living Water? (John 4)

DISCERNING THE TRUTH IN A CRAZY WORLD

We live in a culture saturated with constant noise, deep deception, and strategic distractions designed to pull us off course. Every single day, we are forced to make decisions that impact our families, our finances, our health, and our spiritual destinies. How do we separate God's truth from the enemy's counterfeit? How do we break free from the patterns of failure and betrayal that seek to trap us?

In **DISCERNMENT: Navigating Complexity, Noise, & Deception**, Pastor William "Gino" Bryant delivers a vital blueprint for developing sharp, uncompromising spiritual and natural awareness. Drawing from decades of biblical leadership and pastoral care, Pastor Gino reveals how true discernment is not just a defensive shield, but a strategic key to operating in your God-given dominion and covenant authority.

You cannot afford to live on autopilot. It is time to sharpen your eyes, tune your heart to the Holy Spirit, and step boldly into the alignment, clarity, and truth God has destined for your life.



About the Author

Pastor William (Gino) Bryant is the lead pastor of [Full Gospel Worship Center](#) in Newport News, Virginia. Known for his dynamic preaching and dedication to [deliverance ministries, marriage counseling, and leadership mentorship](#), Pastor Gino has dedicated his life to transforming lives into Christlikeness. Through his expanding [YouTube and social media ministry](#), he passionately teaches believers how to activate biblical virtues, escape life's pits, and walk in the absolute freedom of Christ. He lives in Virginia with his wife, Donna, and their family.