

# **DRAFT**

## **Victory Christian Center of Hollywood**

*A Church appointed to Advance the Kingdom of God!*

Sermon Notes by Pastor MC

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Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits...All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Cor 12:7-11)

### **God has given us gift**

#### **A Gift of the Holy Spirit: DISCERNING OF SPIRITS: Scripture: Psalm**

**119:66** "I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge."

**Introduction: Do you have trouble discerning between good and evil? Are you unsure if you are hearing God's voice or your own? The reason we find it difficult to understand the Father's will is because we lack spiritual discernment, the ability to see beyond our circumstances. This is why King David prayed, "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments" (Ps. 119:66). This petition must echo in our lives as well.**

#### **What is the source of spiritual discernment?**

**The Holy Spirit. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He met with His disciples and promised them "another Helper...the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). This Helper is the Holy Spirit who dwells inside believers, guiding us at all times so we can exercise good judgment. The Word of God. Psalm 119:30 tells us the Word of God gives light and is the basis for all our discernment. Every single circumstance we face has an answer in the Bible, and our ability to discern this grows stronger as we fill our minds with biblical truths.**

**The Holy Spirit comprehends the will of the Father and reveals it to us (1 Cor. 2:10-12; 2 Cor. 2:13-15). Godly teachers. In the Old Testament, one of the responsibilities of the Levites to discern between "the unclean and the clean" and to educate the people regarding God's laws (Ez. 44:22). Likewise, those who have spent time in God's Word and who have a greater understanding of His will can aid those seeking discernment.**

Experience. We will all make mistakes in our lives, confusing God's voice with our own. However, studying the Word and learning to wait on the Lord will enable us to hear Him more clearly, learn from our errors, and avoid costly ones in the future (Isa. 64:4).

## I. Discernment of Spirit:

### What is the Gift of Discernment?

- It is the ability to obtain sharp **perceptions** or to judge well (or the activity of so doing). In the case of **judgement**, discernment can be **psychological** or **moral** in nature. Discernment involves going past the mere perception of something and making simple judgments.
- Considered as a **virtue**, a discerning individual is considered to possess **wisdom**, and be of good judgement; especially so with regard to subject matter often overlooked by others.
- Discernment of spirits is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to some Christian believers. It is a Spirit-given ability to distinguish whether Divine, human or demonic origins are the source of what is presented—whether it be in an atmosphere, encounter, event, or prophetic message.
- In its simplest definition, discernment is nothing more than the ability to decide between truth and error, right and wrong. Discernment is the process of making careful distinctions in our thinking about truth. In other words, the ability to think with discernment is synonymous with an ability to think biblically.
- Discernment intersects the Christian life at every point. And God's Word provides us with the needed discernment about every issue of life. According to Peter, God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (**2 Peter 1:3**). You see, it is through the "true knowledge of Him," that we have been given everything we need to live a Christian life in this fallen world. And how else do we have true knowledge of God but through the pages of His Word,

the Bible? In fact, Peter goes on to say that such knowledge comes through God's granting "to us His precious and magnificent promises" (2 Peter 1:4).

- **Discernment** -- the ability to think biblically about all areas of life -- is indispensable to an uncompromising life. It is incumbent upon the Christian to seize upon the discernment that God has provided for in His precious truth! Without it, Christians are at risk of being "tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14).

#### **More on Discernment:**

- **Detection:** The Supernatural power to detect the realm of spirits and their activities.
- **Spiritual insight:** Implies the power of spiritual insight—
- **Plans and Purpose:** Supernatural revelation of plans and purpose of the enemy and his forces
  
- The gift of discerning spirits is the ability to determine whether or not a message, person, or event is truly from God
- Discerning is good judgment; to perceive by sight or some other sense or by intellectual assent.
- Spiritual discernment is the ability to tell the difference between truth and error. It is basic to having wisdom. Arguments and debates surround spiritual truth because it is obscure.
  
- **Discernment** is defined as “the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure; an act of perceiving something; a power to see what is not evident to the average mind.” The definition also stresses accuracy, as in “the ability to see the truth.” Spiritual discernment is the ability to tell the difference between truth and error. It is basic to having wisdom.

The word of God teaches us: **First Thessalonians 5:21-22** teaches that it is the responsibility of every Christian to be discerning:

"But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." The apostle John issues a similar warning when he says, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits

to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

## II. A Believer's requirement: Discernment

According to the New Testament, discernment is not optional for the believer-it is required.

- The key to living an uncompromising life lies in one's ability to exercise discernment in every area of his or her life.
- For example, failure to distinguish between truth and error leaves the Christian subject to all manner of false teaching. False teaching then leads to an unbiblical mindset, which results in unfruitful and disobedient living—a certain recipe for compromise.
- Unfortunately, discernment is an area where most Believers stumble.
- Believers exhibit little ability to measure the things they are taught against the infallible standard of God's Word, and they unwittingly engage in all kinds of unbiblical decision-making and behavior.
- In short, they are not armed to take a decidedly biblical stand against the onslaught of unbiblical thinking and attitudes that face them throughout their day.
- Some have mistakenly defined spiritual discernment as a God-given awareness of evil or good spiritual presences—the ability to tell if a demon is in the room. While some people may possess this capability, it is not the biblical meaning of *discernment*. Spiritual discernment ultimately has to do with wisdom and the ability to distinguish truth from error.

## III. Wisdom & Spiritual Discernment

- Wisdom is personified in Proverbs 1 and described as someone that we can “get to know” (vv. 20-33). The Bible says that Jesus Christ is “wisdom from God” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Therefore, wisdom, or spiritual discernment, is something that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. The world’s way of getting wisdom is different from God’s way.

- The learned of the world gain knowledge and apply reason to knowledge to solve problems, construct buildings and create philosophies.
- But God does not make the knowledge of Himself available by those means. [First Corinthians 1: 18-31](#) says the “wisdom of the wise” is frustrated by God who delivers wisdom to the “foolish” and the “weak” by way of a relationship with Jesus Christ. That way, “no human being can boast in His presence” (verse 29). We learn to be spiritually discerning by knowing Him.
- It is not wrong to possess knowledge or have an education, and it is not wrong to use reason and logic to solve problems.
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- However, spiritual discernment cannot be attained that way. It must be given by the revelation of Jesus Christ to the believer, and then developed by way of training in righteousness ([Hebrews 5:14](#)) and prayer ([Philippians 1:9](#)). [Hebrews 5:11-14](#) shows how spiritual discernment is developed.

#### IV. Hebrews: dull of hearing-Becoming Skilled in the word of God

- The writer speaks to those who had become “dull of hearing,” meaning they had fallen out of practice discerning spiritually. The writer of Hebrews tells them that everyone who lives on “milk” (rather than the “solid food” desired by the mature) is unskilled in the word of righteousness; however, the mature Christian has been “trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” The keys, according to this passage, are becoming skilled in the Word of God (by which we define righteousness) and “constant practice” (through which we gain experience).
- Arguments and debates surround spiritual truth because it is obscure. Jesus, speaking to His disciples about the Pharisees, said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” ([Matthew 13:11](#)). Satan has “blinded the minds of unbelievers” ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)), so God must shed light on the human mind to enable us to understand truth. It is impossible to attain wisdom

**without God. He gives discernment or takes it away ([Job 12:19-21](#)).**

#### **V. Discernment of Spirit is important for us to. . .**

- **A. Understand God's will.** The Father clearly communicates His purposes for our lives, but we must be able to hear His guidance regarding every decision we make.
- **B. Distinguish truth from error.** The two are often mixed, so a discerning spirit is essential to separate them. This is especially important for parents who are sending children to college. Without a discerning spirit, young people can become spiritually confused for the rest of their lives.
- **C. Avoid being deceived by sin.** Many things that are pleasurable are only so for a moment. This is why we must ask, "What are the consequences of this action?" before we make choices. For example, a certain song may make us feel good, but its message may have a negative impact on us spiritually.
- **D. Differentiate between good and best.** As followers of Jesus Christ, we are expected to be more than "good enough." We should always give Him our very best. Also, a discerning spirit will keep us from making quick decisions we'll later regret because we didn't wait for God's best.
- **E. Distinguish between legalism and liberty.** Simply put, legalism is the pressure of personal preferences we impose as moral mandates from God. For example, if someone insists Scripture be interpreted a certain way, a discerning spirit will prompt us to seek God's wisdom concerning the matter.
- **F. Recognize when God is speaking.** God created each of us with a plan and a purpose for our lives, so He will always give us clear directions and guidance. We have to be able to look past what we see, hear, and feel to comprehend how God views a certain issue.
- **G. Receive Godly counsel.** When looking for counsel, it is essential to seek out individuals who give advice based on the Word of God, not just his or her feelings. We should always ask how God sees the situations we find ourselves in and what He would have us do.

## **VI. The Nature of Discernment**

**But what is this discernment? The word used in Psalm 119:66 means “taste.” It is the ability to make discriminating judgments, to distinguish between, and recognize the moral implications of, different situations and courses of action. It includes the ability to “weigh up” and assess the moral and spiritual status of individuals, groups, and even movements.**

**Thus, while warning us against judgmentalism, Jesus urges us to be discerning and discriminating, lest we cast our pearls before pigs (Matt. 7:1, 6).**

**A remarkable example of such discernment is described in John 2:24–25: “Jesus would not entrust himself to them ... for he knew what was in a man” (NIV).**

**This is discernment without judgmentalism. It involved our Lord’s knowledge of God’s Word and His observation of God’s ways with men (He, supremely, had prayed, “Teach me good judgment ... for I believe Your commandments,” Ps. 119:66). Doubtless His discernment grew as He experienced conflict with, and victory over, temptation, and as He assessed every situation in the light of God’s Word.**

**Jesus’s discernment penetrated to the deepest reaches of the heart. But the Christian is called to develop similar discernment. For the only worthwhile discernment we possess is that which we receive in union with Christ, by the Spirit, through God’s Word.**

**So discernment is learning to think God’s thoughts after Him, practically and spiritually; it means having a sense of how things look in God’s eyes and seeing them in some measure “uncovered and laid bare” (Heb. 4:13).**

## **VII. The Impact of Discernment**

**How does this discernment affect the way we live? In four ways:**

- 1. It acts as a means of protection, guarding us from being deceived spiritually. It protects us from being blown away by the winds of teaching that make central an element of the gospel that is peripheral or treat a particular application of Scripture as though it were Scripture's central message.**
- 2. Discernment also acts as an instrument of healing, when exercised in grace. I have known a small number of people whose ability to diagnose the spiritual needs of others has been remarkable. Such people seem able to penetrate into the heart issues someone else faces better than the person can do. Of course, this is in some ways a dangerous gift with which God has entrusted them. But when exercised in love, discernment can be the surgical scalpel in spiritual surgery that makes healing possible.**
- 3. Again, discernment functions as a key to Christian freedom. The zealous but undiscerning Christian becomes enslaved—to others, to his own uneducated conscience, to an unbiblical pattern of life. Growth in discernment sets us free from such bondage, enabling us to distinguish practices that may be helpful in some circumstances from those that are mandated in all circumstances. But in**

**But in another way, true discernment enables the free Christian to recognize that the exercise of freedom is not essential to the enjoyment of it.**

**What are Some Signs You May Have the Gift of Discernment? Following are some signs that you may have the spiritual gift of discernment, from my personal study, observation and experience. You may not identify with all of them, but if you do have the gift, you will recognize some of these in your life:**

## **VIII. Desire for the Gift**

**As with other spiritual gifts, desire is often the first sign of a gift of discernment of spirits (1 Cor 14:1).**

- **You may have a longing to see people set free from demonic bondage.**
- **You may want to be more effective in prayer and spiritual warfare**
- **You may have a desire for holiness**
- **You may simply be curious about the spiritual realm.**

### **2. Love for God's Presence**

**One of the benefits of having a gift of discernment of spirits is a heightened awareness of God's Presence and anointing. A true discerner will have a passion for the un-grieved Presence of the Holy Spirit.**

**This is because—and I will continually reiterate this—the highest use of the gift of discernment is not to see what the enemy is doing, but to discern what the Spirit of God is doing.**

### **3. Sensitivity to the Spiritual Atmosphere**

**You may be more sensitive to spiritual atmospheres than most other people. In the early stages of developing the gift, you may be affected adversely by the presence of any demonic activity in the environment around you.**

**The reality is that we live in a natural world and a spiritual world concurrently. In the Bible, when Jacob came across a group of angels, he named that place Mahanaim, meaning 'double camp.' (Gen 32:1-2)**

**Like Jacob realised, we also live in a double camp where there is constant spiritual activity, and discerners have spiritual senses that are attuned to this.**

#### **4. Feeling Different from Other People**

**Most people, even in church life, experience life through their natural senses. However, someone with an emerging gift of discernment of spirits can see and sense things that others do not see.**

**This ability can result in us feeling different, lonely or misunderstood at times, especially when starting out. It is vital that someone with a developing gift of discernment finds a safe place to journey with others who are similarly gifted and accountable in the life of their church.**

#### **5. Unusual Signs**

**It is not uncommon for someone who is gifted in discernment to experience unusual events or manifestations.**

**People who are incubating a discernment gift begin to see or feel things that others are not aware of. This may include unusual visions, dreams and sensations that alert them to what is happening in the spiritual realm.**

#### **6. Childhood or Pre-Salvation Signs**

**It is not uncommon to experience things relating to your gift even before becoming a Christian. Our creator-God prepares us for our calling and gifts from conception. Even when a talent or gift is misused, God can redeem it and anoint it for His use to serve Him and love and minister to others.**

**As a child I ‘saw’ things in the night and as a teenager was sensitive to the spiritual realm, sometimes encountering demonic spirits in my room or dreams. Later, as a fully committed Christian, God redeemed this spiritual sensitivity as a gift of discernment. I know Christians who have a gift of discernment who were drawn to New Age counterfeit gifts prior to becoming a Christian.**

#### **7. Ability to Know What Lies Behind a Person’s Words or Actions**

**Someone with a gift of discernment has the ability to see behind what a person is saying and presenting. You may know whether they are**

telling the truth or not. You may also recognise if someone is manifesting a demonic spirit and be able to identify what that spirit is.

If a prophetic or revelatory message is brought, a discerner can often tell whether it is anointed of the Spirit or from the speaker's own heart.

This is not always the case, and as with other revelatory gifts such as prophecy, you will sometimes get it wrong or have incomplete discernment (1 Thess 5:19-21, 1 Cor 13:9-10)

#### **8. Confirmation by Others and Leaders**

You may have the gift confirmed through a prophecy given to you. My gift of discernment was identified through prophecy twice (perhaps this was because I was reluctant to accept it!)

However, the bottom line of the presence of any gift is that it is recognised and acknowledged by leaders in the church and that it is useful for its purpose—which is to help build up the church and bring people closer to Jesus.

When you submit what you are seeing or sensing, your leaders confirm your accuracy and your gift begins to be recognised for its effectiveness.

Whenever a gift is used to criticise or tear down a church, person or leader, you know it is being misused, or is simply a person's hurt, frustration or agenda masquerading as discernment. Because these kinds of abuses are common and have brought disrepute to the gift of discernment, I will take some time over the next couple of posts to share how the gift of discernment can bring value to church life.

Finally, discernment serves as a catalyst to spiritual development: "The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning" (Prov. 14:6, NIV). Why? Because the discerning Christian goes to the heart of the matter. He knows something about everything, namely that all things have their common fountain in God. Increase in knowledge, therefore, does not lead to increased frustration,

but to a deeper recognition of the harmony of all God's works and words.

How is such discernment to be obtained? We receive it as did Christ Himself—by the anointing of the Spirit, through our understanding of God's Word, by our experience of God's grace, and by the progressive unfolding to us of the true condition of our own hearts.

That is why we also should pray, "I am your servant; give me discernment" (Ps. 119:125, NIV).

IV. Conclusion: A discerning spirit is the greatest protection we have in a world where truth and error are often mixed. The ability to separate them is a gift from God, and He has provided everything we need to do so—the Holy Spirit, His Word, and godly teaching. Remember, the One who leads us in all truth will always guide our steps (John 16:13).

Someone I know recently expressed an opinion that surprised and in some ways disappointed me. I said to myself, "I thought he would have more discernment than that."

The experience caused me to reflect on the importance of discernment and the lack of it in our world. We know that people often do not see issues clearly and are easily misled because they do not think biblically. But, sadly, one cannot help reflecting on how true this is of the church community, too.

Most of us doubtless want to distance ourselves from what might be regarded as "the lunatic fringe" of contemporary Christianity. We are on our guard against being led astray by false teachers. But there is more to discernment than this. True discernment means not only distinguishing the right from the wrong; it means distinguishing the primary from the secondary, the essential from the indifferent, and the permanent from the transient. And, yes, it means distinguishing between the good and the better, and even between the better and the best.

Thus, discernment is like the physical senses; to some it is given in unusual measure as a special grace gift (1 Cor. 12:10),

**but some measure of it is essential for us all and must be constantly nourished. The Christian must take care to develop his “sixth sense” of spiritual discernment. This is why the psalmist prays, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge” (Ps. 119:66).**

So, how does one increase spiritual discernment? First, recognizing that God is the only one who can increase wisdom, pray for it ([James 1:5](#); [Philippians 1:9](#)). Then, knowing the wisdom to distinguish good from evil comes by training and practice, go to the Bible to learn the truth, and, by meditation on the Word, reinforce the truth.

When a bank hires an employee, he is trained to recognize counterfeit bills. One would think that the best way to recognize a counterfeit would be to study various counterfeits. The problem is that new counterfeits are being created every day. The best way to recognize a counterfeit bill is to have an intimate knowledge of the real thing. Having studied authentic bills, bank cashiers are not fooled when a counterfeit comes along. A knowledge of the true helps them identify the false.

This is what Christians must do to develop spiritual discernment. We must know the authentic so well that, when the false appears, we can recognize it. By knowing and obeying the Word of God, we will be “trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” We will know God’s character and will. This is the heart of spiritual discernment – being able to distinguish the voice of the world from the voice of God, to have a sense that “this is right” or “this is wrong.” Spiritual discernment fends off temptation and allows us to “hate what is evil; cling to what is good” ([Romans 12:9](#)).

### Let's Pray

Heavenly Father, I thank You for giving me the gift of the Holy Spirit: Word of Wisdom, Knowledge, Spiritual Discernment, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Administration, Helps and many more. But even more important, I want to thank you for Spiritual Discernment. I am believing to walk in the strength of supernatural divine intervention. Jesus name-Amen.