

1. We are going to continue this morning with the subject of discernment.
2. Just so we are all on the same page I want to review several descriptions of the word discernment.
3. Discernment, in a most general sense, is the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God – both in the ordinary moment and in the larger decisions of our lives.
4. Discernment literally means to separate, to discriminate, to determine, to decide or to distinguish between two things.
5. Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish or discriminate between good (that which is of God and draws us closer to God) and evil (that which is not of God and draws us away from God).
6. It is our commitment to discerning and doing the will of God through the help of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes believers in Jesus Christ from non-believers.
7. Non-believers are not interested in seeking and knowing the will of God for their lives. Non-believers are interested in their own will? To live according to what seems best to them according to their own thinking and planning?
8. Non-believers in Jesus Christ set about doing that which makes them feel better or that feeds their ego?
9. As believers however, we are to be different. Not superior. Not better than. But most definitely different.
10. After salvation. After accepting Jesus as our savior, the very foundation of our lives. That which guides and directs our path toward heaven has to be seeking to know and do the will of God.
11. Why must there be this distinction? Because doing our own will our own way always leads to trouble.
12. Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.
13. In the moment we think we know what is best, only to regret later that we made a poor or foolish decision.
14. For sure we didn't make a foolish decision on purpose, but when we rely primarily on our own wisdom and understanding we fail, and we fall.

15. That's why we need a wisdom that is entirely different and superior to human wisdom.
16. We need a wisdom that can only come from the creator of the universe.
17. We need discernment. We need the supernatural ability to see things clearly.
18. The spiritual journey can be understood as the movement from seeing God nowhere, or seeing God only where we expect to see him, to seeing God everywhere, especially where we least expect him.
19. Discernment then is an ever-increasing capacity to see or discern the works of God in the middle of our human situation so we can align ourselves with whatever God is trying to accomplish.
20. According to the bible, as believers we are called to discernment.
21. Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.
22. God doesn't hide his will from us. He wants to reveal His to us. But it is nearly impossible to test or approve or discern God's will for our lives when rather than living a life to please the Lord we live a life to please ourselves.
23. Discernment is also a sign of spiritual maturity.
24. Ephesians 4:14-15 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.
25. I'm not trying to tell you that we can avoid or even change for that matter the ups and downs. Ins and outs. Highs and lows of life. We cannot.
26. But just because the world around us is being blown around like a hurricane doesn't mean we have to be blown around.
27. David said in Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

28. Discernment is not the absence of trouble; it is being able to trust the work of God and to sense the presence of God in the middle of trouble.
29. I don't know about you but that is the kind of life I long for.
30. This morning I want to talk about another aspect of discernment.

**TEXT:** **1 Corinthians 12:1-3** Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. **3** Therefore 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.

**TITLE:** **Discernment – A gift from the Lord.**

**INTRO:**

1. The title of this passage of scripture is "Spiritual Gifts". This is not a series about the gifts of the spirit. However, that would be a great study.
2. Here Paul identifies 9 specific gifts or special abilities that are given to believers by the Holy Spirit.
3. There are other spiritual gifts mentioned in other places in the bible.
4. Some believe there are as many as 25 different spiritual gifts.
5. Not all believers have the same spiritual gifts. Just like not everyone has the same color hair. Or the same color eyes.
6. We are not the same height, and our shape is not the same.
7. Each person is given specific spiritual gifts, unique to them.
8. One of the gifts Paul mentions here is the gift of discerning of Spirits.
9. **1 Corinthians 12:10** to 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. (NIV)
10. The NLT says it this way **1 Corinthians 12:10** He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit.
11. The CEV says **1 Corinthians 12:10** Some of us are prophets, and some of us recognize when God's Spirit is present.

12. Forgive me for not digging to deeply into this particular gift. But let me just say here that we need to be reminded that we are not just physical beings. We are not just mental or emotional beings. We are also spiritual beings.
13. And as spiritual beings God has designed us to be in tune with what he is up to and what he is doing.
14. Discernment. The ability to know when it is God at work and when it is not God at work.
15. Allow me to explain it this way.
16. Have you ever walked into a home, a room, an office or some other environment, and the minute you stepped through the door, you knew something just wasn't right?
17. Have you ever walked into a situation and there was tension in the air? You didn't know why there was tension, but you could sense it.
18. I have had people come into my office who were not getting along or who were arguing, and the moment they entered in the room the atmosphere just shifted into something I wasn't comfortable with.
19. Am I making any sense at all?
20. We are spiritual beings and as spiritual beings we were created by God to be aware of the spiritual circumstances happening around us and in us.
21. But the reality is we have a spiritual enemy who is constantly at work to blind us or confuse us concerning the spiritual happenings in our lives.
22. One of the descriptions the bible gives for Satan is that of deceiver.
23. A deceiver is someone who causes someone else to believe something that is not true, typically in order to gain some personal advantage.
24. We see the great deceiver at work in the very first moments of the history of mankind when Satan deceived Eve in the garden of Eden. Paul let's us know however that Satan hasn't changed any. He is still a deceiver.

25. 2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.
26. What is the advantage Satan longs to achieve by deceiving us?  
To lead us astray or away from Jesus Christ.
27. The great deceiver is at work to destroy, damage, or strain our relationship with Jesus Christ.
28. And because of that the Lord God makes himself available to us to give us wisdom and discernment so that we will not be deceived or lead astray.
29. The Lord Jesus Christ offers every believer the gift of intimate relationship with him in which he communicates with us and guides us and leads us by His Spirit.
30. Why, so we can discern what is good and what is evil and not fall into the devil's traps.
31. How many are still with me?
32. So beyond just a special gift given to certain believers to discern or distinguish between spirits, every believer is offered intimate relationship with Jesus so our eyes can be opened to what is going on around us.
33. And we see a glimpse of that in the first three verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
34. Verse one can be described as...

### **Informed.**

1. 1 Corinthians 12:1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.
2. Notice the great contrast between how Satan relates to us and how our Savior relates to us.
3. Where Satan will lie to us and deceive us and confuse us so as to keep us in the dark.
4. God opens himself up to us so we can be informed.
5. Paul says to the Corinthian believers. I don't want you to be uninformed about the spiritual gifts.
6. The KJV of the bible says I don't want you to be ignorant.

7. How many know if someone calls you ignorant it is not a compliment?
8. Satan wants you and I to be ignorant. Uninformed.
9. But our savior wants us to be informed. Up to speed. In the know.
10. But just because that is what the Lord wants for us doesn't mean it will be so.
11. In order for us to be informed, we have to choose that type of relationship with Jesus. That means...

### **Don't settle.**

1. 1 Corinthians 12:2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.
2. That word Pagan was associated with the Romans who were in control of the territory where Corinth is located.
3. It describes a person or group of people who were not devoted to the one true God, through his Son Jesus Christ.
4. Instead, these Pagans are followers of many gods (little g); and often times the purpose of these gods is to feed the delights and sensual and sinful pleasures of the follower.
5. In other words, a Pagan was someone who's relationship with their god was really about making themselves happy.
6. So, Paul reminds them that when they were Pagans there was something very powerful missing from their lives.
7. They were influenced and led astray by mute idols.
8. What was lacking? As pagans they were involved in a religious experience in which the gods they served didn't speak to or communicate with them.
9. Mute. Speechless. Unable to talk. That was the nature of their religious experience prior to accepting Jesus as savior.
10. But when they were introduced to Jesus Christ, they were offered something entirely different.
11. They were offered a relationship in which our heavenly father delights in knowing us and allowing us to know him as he reveals himself to us.

12. One of the signs of a strong relationship with Jesus is that he regularly speaks and guides and communicates with us.
13. One of the signs of a strong relationship with Jesus is that we regularly hear from him or sense him guiding our lives.
14. On the other hand, one of the signs of a strained or damaged relationship is when we can no longer hear our God speaking and we have lost the ability to sense his presence and his working in our lives.
15. One of the signs of a strained or damaged relationship with Jesus is when we have lost the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God – both in the ordinary moment and in the larger decisions of our lives.
16. One of the signs of a strained or damaged relationship with Jesus Christ is when we are no longer able to separate, to discriminate, to determine, to decide or to distinguish between good (that which is of God and draws us closer to God) and evil (that which is not of God and draws us away from God).
17. And if we find that to be the case, we must know it is not because God has stopped working or speaking.

### **He's still there.**

1. 1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore 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.
2. Paul says to the Corinthians, let me show you an example of how to discern between someone who is speaking by the Holy Spirit of God and someone who is not.
3. If someone says Jesus be cursed, that is not the Spirit of God.
4. But if someone says Jesus is Lord, you know they only way they are able to utter those words is if the Spirit of God is in them.
5. Now, that may seem simple and obvious to us, but evidently to the Corinthians it was not simple or obvious.
6. The question is not whether or not it is simple or hard to discern the Spirit of God, the point is the evidence is still there if we will just look for it.

7. Just as the evidence was there for the Corinthians, the evidence is still available to us.
8. God is still there. He is still working. He is still guiding and directing.
9. The question is, have we lost the ability to discern what he is doing?

## Conclusion:

1. It's our choice.
2. We can have a relationship where God is mute. Speechless. Silent.
3. Or we can have a relationship where God reveals himself to us on a daily basis.
4. This message is not meant to be condemning. It is meant to cause us to be hungry for something more.
5. If you are listening and you recognize, I haven't been hearing from God like I used to. I don't seem to have direction like I used to.
6. I don't sense the Holy Spirit like I used to.
7. Or maybe you have never experienced God in those ways. You are just a choice away from renewing and experiencing the closeness you long for.
8. Prayer.
9. Admit to your self and to God that things have gotten quiet. Confess it to Him.
10. Declare to yourself and to God that you will not settle for the quiet.
11. And now move toward Him.
  - a. Surrender your life to Him.
  - b. Seek His will and His desires.
  - c. Commit to following what He reveals.