

Discerning of Spirits 2

Purposes of the gift of 'Discernment of Spirits'

Why does God reveal to us what is in another person's spirit? It is not just because we are 'nosy parkers'! Here are some of the reasons for God's actions:-

***** To give us a particular bit of helpful information.***

***** To help an individual with a problem with which he/she is unable to cope.***

There are sometimes situations in a person's life that have occurred in the past or are happening at present and he/she is not able to cope with them. eg. adoption, bereavement, rape, addictions. In such cases God can reveal to a Christian the basis of the problem through a gift of 'Discerning of Spirits' and can help the individual to come to terms with their problem.

***** Healing when evil spirits are present.***

There are some people who put down every sickness and illness to the presence of evil spirits, but this is most certainly not so and it can be extremely distressing to be told that you are ill because of evil spirits. God does not cause sicknesses, but, there are times when He allows them for some reason or other. In my own family there is a defective gene concerning the right hand that results in some members of the family not having a completely normal right hand. In my case I have a little finger that is shorter than it should be, but, I do not possess an evil spirit just because I have a funny little finger! We need God's special 'Discerning of Spirits' to know when a sickness is due to evil spirits – and most importantly in such instances, we very much need Him to show us how to deal with them.

***** To help us as individuals not to be deceived by another person's views or actions.***

There are occasions when we can be deceived by a person's intentions. Even the actions of another Christian may have an ulterior motive of which we might not be aware. For example, we may be offered help of some sort, but, the help given may not be for our benefit but because it will bring extra fame or financial gain to the person who appears to be very kind because of the help that they are giving to us.

***** To guard the Church against false teaching.***

The teaching that we receive should always be based on and tally with Scripture. Today there are groups/movements that appear to be Christian, but, in fact have elements of untruth and are actually cults. We need God's discernment to reveal to us when we are being told something that is not 100% correct.

***** Vital to the proper functioning of the Church.***

As Christians we need to be able to recognize the ways in which God is working. Like all of the 'Gifts of the Spirit', the gift of 'Discerning of Spirits' is necessary for the proper functioning of the Body of Christ. It is vital for us to know when the Holy Spirit is guiding us to do a certain thing, when He is showing us an unseen aspect of a person's spirit or when He is trying to empower us as individuals in the use of His Gifts.

Discerning liars

In **Acts 5: 1 – 11** we can read about Ananias and Sapphira. Previously Barnabas had sold a field and brought the money from the sale to the apostles for distribution to those in need. Ananias then did the same thing and sold some of his property. When he brought the money to Peter however, he pretended that that was all of the money from the sale when in fact he and his wife had decided to keep back part of the money for themselves. God showed Peter that Ananias was lying and said that he

had not lied to men but to God. When Peter had said this Ananias fell down dead. When Sapphira came to Peter a little while later, she also claimed that they had brought the whole of the sale amount to the apostles. The result was that, like her husband, she too fell down dead.

Peter had been shown by a gift of 'Discernment of Spirits' that Ananias and Sapphira were both lying; something that he probably would not have realized without God showing him what was in their spirits. Their sin was not in keeping back part of the money, as it was theirs to do with as they wished, but, in pretending that they were giving it all. We can never lie to God as He knows all things. It is rather frightening to think that God takes telling lies much more seriously than maybe we do ourselves.

Discerning intentions

Acts 8: 9 – 24. Simon earned his money by witchcraft and sorcery and was extremely popular because of the results of what he did. When Philip went to Samaria to preach, Simon joined many others who were baptized in water and joined the Church. Later, when Peter and John arrived in Samaria, Simon saw how people were being baptized in the Holy Spirit and offered Peter money to be given that power. Peter was given a gift of 'Discernment of Spirits' and knew that Simon wanted to use the power of the Holy Spirit to obtain more money from people and not for spiritual benefit. Peter knew that even though he was a member of the church, his heart was not right. Simon must have previously been able to cover up his intentions to be accepted as a member of the Church and for Philip not to realize what he was really like in his spirit.

Discerning divination

Acts 16: 16 – 18. There was a slave girl who made a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes. When Paul and Silas were preaching the girl was following them for many days and calling out, ***'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaims to us the way of salvation.'*** Paul got annoyed by this and by discernment of spirit knew that the girl had a spirit of divination. Paul spoke to the spirit and commanded it to come out of her; the result being that she was no longer then able to tell fortunes and earn money for her owners because the spirit had left her.

Dangerous ground

God is supernatural, but, we must also remember that Satan, even though he does not have all of the same attributes as God, is also a supernatural being. He enters into our spirits when we allow him access through certain things that we do. Anyone getting involved in fortune telling, horoscopes, astrology, Ouija boards, tarot cards, lucky charm necklaces and bracelets or seances gives open access to evil spirits. Some of these things are very lucrative businesses; for instance, there are people who charge very high prices to tell people that they will contact their dead relatives for them. We need to guard both ourselves and our loved ones against such practices that on the surface may seem good and innocent, but that actually have a Satanic basis. The Scriptures provide us with a constant measuring stick and helps us not to be led astray into the realm of evil spirits that God does not intend to be part of our lives. He gives Christians the gift of 'Discernment of Spirits' in order to protect both individuals and His Church from entering such unwelcome territory.