

1 Corinthians 12:1

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

1 Corinthians 12:10

and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

It should actually be read – the distinguishings of spirits. Double plural. Nominative feminine plural.

Every believer has a certain amount of discernment that should increase as you mature in Christ.

Hebrews 5:13-14

For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

The Bereans of Acts 17 were commended for not being naïve and testing the apostle's teachings against Scripture.

John tells us explicitly not to believe every spirit.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, 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.

After teaching PMC for so many years I have matured in my discernment enough to know if a couple is really going to struggle in their marriage or not and often times pull them aside to have a serious talk with them.

Evangelicals view the gift of distinguishing of spirits as simply discerning good and evil – dealing primarily with discerning truth. That is only partly correct. It is more about knowing what the source is – either God or angels v. Satan and demons.

**Definition:**

The distinguishing of spirits refers to the ability given by God to perceive issues in terms of spiritual truth, to know the fundamental source of the

issues (God or Satan) and to give judgment concerning those issues – this includes the recognition of the spiritual forces operating in the issue.

### C. Peter Wagner

The gift of distinguishing of spirits is the special ability that God gives to some members of the body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, human or satanic.

I have a little problem with Dr. Wagner's definition in that I don't believe God just gives us a special ability – He gives us Himself. The gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Here are a few insights of when this gift is in operation:

1. A keen sense of recognizing inconsistencies.
2. A good grasp of Scriptural truth in general.
3. A deep underlying sense of conviction, which will not allow you to rest, when you know people are being given half-truth, misapplied truth, or false teaching, and are asked to act upon it.
4. An unusual sensitivity or intuitive grasp of people and situations.
5. You often and usually quickly notice when public speakers give wrong interpretation or misapply Scripture.
6. You sometimes get a glimpse of the behind the scenes supernatural reality in a situation either by mental picture or in reality.
7. You see physical symptoms that lead you to know something is wrong.

Caution – it could be sometimes difficult to discern if someone is operating out of the gift of distinguishing of spirits or a person who is by nature critical and constantly tears things apart. Obviously the gift is very different.

### Examples in the Bible

Acts 5:1-5

Peter used the gift when he correctly discerned that Satan had inspired Ananias to lie about his real estate deal and he was struck dead on the spot. On the surface Ananias' act was a good deed but had demonic intentions. In revival – unity and purity of the pristine church was threatened and was guarded by the Holy Spirit.

⇒ Lied to God – sin

⇒ Lied to Holy Spirit – disunity, impurity of pristine church

(Acts 16:16-18

Again on the surface seems young girl is endorsing Paul's ministry but was in fact demonic.

Most High is used to reference God but Most High God is only used by demons in the New Testament. Hebrews 7:1 also uses the term but it's quoting the OT.

Most High God implies polytheism as in He is the Most High among other gods.

The young girl claims they present the way of salvation but the Greek is actually missing the definite article so it could be better translated as 'a way of salvation.'

The young girl was not supporting Paul but actually opposing him in a very subtle way. Isn't that what the devil does? Gives just a little bit of truth but it's actually a total lie.

And Paul was able to discern and cast it out.

### **Personal Example**

This is a very painful example. First time in my life that I actually seriously contemplated quitting ministry. First mission trip to Cambodia to help the police set up a children's center for sex trafficking victims after an SPer gave a large gift.

Met a man through a very good friend of mine. Former NZ Parliament member. Diplomat for the nation of Nauru. Also, a possible pedophile.

- ⇒ Friend doesn't show up
- ⇒ Colleague comes but doesn't show up to our meeting
- ⇒ British Embassy – meeting with the Ambassador

Stanley Ho had warned me before that something was off with this guy but I totally disregarded him. I later apologized. I believe Stanley was operating out of the gift.

The manifestation of distinguishings of spirits could involve more than just knowledge, it involves entering into battle against them and casting them out. The Greek word translated distinguishings (*diakrisis*) has several meanings. It can mean a discerning or differentiation. Also, it can mean to oppose.

- ⇒ One of the definitions in *Liddel and Scott's Greek lexicon* is "decision by battle, quarrel, dispute."

⇒ In the context of dealing with demons, distinguishing (*diakrisis*), is much more than just mentally discerning and knowing, it has overtones of quarreling or fighting, and involves our dealing with them via the power of God.

### **Why You Should Want this Gift**

It is so easy to be led astray. Deception is everywhere.

We have an adversary who is much more smarter and cunning than we are who is trying to derail our lives.

John 10:10a

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;

2 Corinthians 11:14

No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is not truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The Holy Spirit is also made Himself available to us by releasing the gift of the distinguishing of spirits to help us to not be deceived.

1 Corinthians 14:1a

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts...

Ask and receive.