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**2026 ANNUAL THEME: “Hope in Motion”**

**BIBLE STUDY**

**June 17, 2026/June 10, 2026**

**June 2026 Theme: Spiritual Discernment**

**Weekly Lesson: “Spiritual Discernment in the Church”  
1 Corinthians 12:1-10 [Focus: vs. 10]**

**Topics**

- Scripture Reference
- Reflection Questions
- Important Emphasis
- Key Terms and Definitions
- Outline
- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Explore The Text
- Check For Understanding
- Life Application

**Scripture Reference: 1 Corinthians 12:1-10 (New American Standard Bible)**

*<sup>1</sup>Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be unaware. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup>And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. <sup>7</sup>But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>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.*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- A. Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts. Do you know what yours are? How did you find out what they are?

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- B. Why is it important to consider both unity and diversity in the context of spiritual gifts in the Church?

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## IMPORTANT EMPHASIS

### “Spiritual Discernment” is--

- A spiritual gift from God (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)
- A gift to all believers (1 Corinthians 2:14-16)
- A “manifestation” or “charismatic” gift (1 Corinthians 12:10)
- A gift of “covenant grace” (1 Corinthians 2:12-14)
- A gift of “protection” (Proverbs 2:11)
- A gift that sometimes causes “apprehension” (Hebrews 5:14)
- A gift that promotes “Spiritual growth” (Hebrews 5:14; Philippians 1:9-10)
- A gift that fosters “unity” (1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:2-3)
- A gift that flourishes in “diversity” (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

## “Spiritual Discernment” is not—

- Fortune Telling
- Soothsaying
- Clairvoyance
- Divination
- Ouija Boards
- Tarot Cards
- Crystal Balls
- Mind-reading

### KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- ***Authentic [Sound] Doctrine:*** Biblically accurate teaching that aligns with the truth of Scripture and the character of Christ. **[See Articles of Faith.]**
- ***Body of Christ:*** A metaphor for the Church, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all believers.
- ***Covenant Grace:*** The unearned favor and kindness that God extends to humanity as part of a covenant, or sacred agreement, between God and people. In Christian theology, it often describes the grace given through the covenants God made with Abraham, Moses, and especially the new covenant through Jesus Christ. This grace is not based on human merit but on God's promise and faithfulness.
- ***Discernment / Discerning of Spirits:*** The ability to distinguish between truth and error, good and evil, and the genuine work of the Holy Spirit versus deception.
- ***Diversity:*** The variety of spiritual gifts, ministries, and activities given to believers for the benefit of the whole Church.
- ***Faith:*** Trust and confidence in God, which is also listed as a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 12.
- ***Healing:*** The spiritual gift of restoring health through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- ***Holy Spirit:*** The third person of the Trinity who empowers, equips, and guides believers, and is the source of spiritual gifts.
- ***Interpretation of Tongues:*** The ability to interpret messages spoken in tongues for the understanding of the Church.
- ***Knowledge:*** The spiritual gift of understanding deep truths and mysteries of God.
- ***Manifestation of the Spirit:*** The visible or practical expression of the Holy Spirit's work through spiritual gifts in the lives of believers.
- ***Miracles:*** Supernatural acts performed by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ***Ministries:*** Different forms of service or roles within the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- ***Prophecy:*** Speaking forth messages from God, another spiritual gift mentioned in the passage.
- ***Spiritual Gifts:*** Special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to believers for service and building up the Church.
- ***Testing the Spirits:*** The biblical instruction to evaluate teachings, prophecies, and spiritual experiences to ensure they align with God's Word (see 1 John 4:1).
- ***Tongues:*** The spiritual gift of speaking in languages not previously learned, as a sign or for edification.
- ***Unity:*** The harmonious functioning of diverse spiritual gifts within the Church, reflecting oneness in Christ.
- ***Wisdom:*** The spiritual gift of applying knowledge and understanding in a godly way.

## **OUTLINE**

### **I. Deception Detection**

- A. Falsehood Faltering
- B. Spirit Sifting

### **II. Doctrine Defense**

- A. Teacher Testing
- B. Message Measuring

### **III. Community Cultivation**

- A. Unity Upholding
- B. Maturity Molding

## **INTRODUCTION**

Spiritual discernment is a vital gift within the life of the Church, enabling believers to distinguish between truth and error, good and evil, and the genuine work of the Holy Spirit versus deception. In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul lists "the distinguishing between spirits" as one of the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit for the common good. This gift is not reserved for a select few but is essential for the health and unity of the entire body of Christ, helping the Church remain anchored in sound doctrine and protected from spiritual dangers.

As we begin this Bible Study on spiritual discernment, we will explore what it means to discern spiritually, why it is necessary in the Church today, and how we can cultivate this gift in our own lives. Through examining Scripture and sharing experiences, we will seek to understand how the Holy Spirit equips us to recognize God's voice, test the spirits, and make wise decisions that honor God and build up His people. Let us open our hearts to learn and grow together in this crucial area of our faith journey.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

First Corinthians 12:10 is part of a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Christian community in Corinth, a major city in ancient Greece. Paul, a foundational leader in the early Christian movement, wrote this epistle around A.D. 53–55 while he was in Ephesus.



The recipients were primarily Gentile converts, though some Jewish believers were also present. Corinth was a bustling, cosmopolitan port city known for its wealth, diversity, and moral challenges. The church in Corinth reflected this diversity, comprising people from various social, economic, and religious backgrounds, which often led to divisions and misunderstandings within the congregation.

Spiritually, the Corinthian believers were enthusiastic about their newfound faith and the spiritual gifts they had received, but they struggled with pride, competition, and confusion regarding the proper use of these gifts. Paul addresses these issues by emphasizing unity and the proper function of spiritual gifts within the body of Christ. Physically, the Corinthians lived in a city marked by prosperity but also by rampant immorality and pagan religious practices. This environment posed significant challenges to the believers, who were called to live out their faith in contrast to the surrounding culture. Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12, including verse 10, sought to guide the church toward maturity, mutual respect, and effective ministry through the Holy Spirit’s empowerment.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**I. Deception Detection**

**A. Falsehood Filtering**

Spiritual discernment enables believers to distinguish between truth and error, protecting the church from false teachings and deceptive influences.

This gift is essential for maintaining doctrinal purity and spiritual safety within the body of Christ (**1 John 4:1**).

**B. Spirit Sifting**

Discernment is not just about recognizing doctrinal error but also about identifying the spiritual source behind actions and manifestations, ensuring that what appears spiritual is truly from God (**Acts 16:16-18**).

Paul recognized that a slave girl's fortune-telling came from an evil spirit, not from God. He cast out the spirit in the name of Jesus. The "spirit of divination" means a supernatural or demonic force that gives hidden knowledge through occult [mysterious, mystical] means. Practices like fortune-telling and astrology are examples of divination. The Bible warns against these, teaching that true guidance comes only from the Holy Spirit (**Deuteronomy 18:10-12**).

<b>CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING</b>
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1. What is the purpose of spiritual discernment?

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2. Why does the Bible warn against practices like fortune-telling and astrology?

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**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**II. Doctrine Defense**

**A. Teacher Testing**

Discernment helps the church evaluate teachings and prophecies, ensuring they align with the truth of Scripture and the character of Christ. This guards the church from being led astray by persuasive but unbiblical messages (**Matthew 7:15-20**).

**Examine the message’s content and alignment.** A foundational test involves whether someone affirms that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (**1 John 4:1–3**), and any gospel contrary to apostolic teaching deserves rejection (**Gal 1:8–9**). Scripture provides the standard: if teachers do not speak according to God’s word, there is no light in them (**Isa 8:19–20**). Authentic prophecy conforms to Scripture and Christ’s teachings, glorifies Christ, and edifies the church.

**Observe the prophet’s character and lifestyle.** The moral character of the prophet matters; immoral behavior and adultery signal falsity, while a minister’s lifestyle gauges authenticity. False teachers serve their own interests through deceptive rhetoric (**Romans 16:17–18**), and they exploit others through manipulative words for financial gain (**2 Pet 2:1–3**).

**B. Message Measuring**

The gift of discernment is vital for weighing spiritual messages, affirming what is from God, and rejecting what is not, thus preserving the integrity and unity of the church (**1 Thessalonians 5:19-21**).

The Bereans are commended for testing teachings against Scripture (**Acts 17:11**).

Sound doctrine is the standard for evaluating teachers (**1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:3-4**).

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**CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**

3. What are two key ways the church can identify false teachers or prophets?

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4. Why are the Bereans in Acts 17:11 commended, and what does this teach about how to evaluate spiritual messages?

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**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**III. Community Cultivation**

**A. Unity Upholding**

Discernment fosters unity by helping believers navigate the diversity of spiritual gifts and expressions, ensuring that all contributions build up the body rather than cause division. (**Ephesians 4:3**)

**Old Testament Examples:**

- **Joseph (Genesis 41):** Joseph, through spiritual discernment given by God, interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams and advised on a plan to save Egypt and surrounding nations from famine. His wisdom and discernment brought peace and stability to Egypt and his own family (**Genesis 41:39-40**).
- **Deborah (Judges 4–5):** Deborah, a prophetess and judge, discerned God’s will for Israel during a time of oppression. Her leadership and spiritual insight led to victory over the Canaanites and brought peace to Israel for forty years (**Judges 5:31**).

## New Testament Examples:

- **Barnabas (Acts 9:26–28; 11:22–26):** Barnabas discerned the genuine faith of Saul (Paul) and advocated for him among the apostles, fostering unity and peace in the early church. He also encouraged and unified believers in Antioch.
- **Priscilla (Acts 18:24–26):** Priscilla, along with Aquila, discerned that Apollos needed a fuller understanding of the gospel. They gently corrected him, leading to greater unity and doctrinal peace in the early Christian community.

These biblical examples show that both men and women, through spiritual discernment, played key roles in bringing peace, unity, and protection to their communities according to God’s guidance.

### B. Maturity Molding

Spiritual discernment is essential for the church’s growth in maturity, enabling believers to make wise decisions and remain anchored in sound doctrine (**Hebrews 5:14**).

Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers, taught that spiritual discernment—the ability to distinguish truth from error—is vital for believers and is not gained through intellectual skill alone, but through a genuine relationship with Christ. He used sensory metaphors to show that spiritual maturity involves refined perception, enabling believers to recognize **authentic [sound] doctrine** and reject what is false. This discernment is sharpened by experience and suffering, allowing even the humble and uneducated to judge spiritual nourishment, while mere eloquence without substance leaves souls empty. Spiritual taste requires education; those without discernment consume contradictory teachings indiscriminately, while believers whose senses have been exercised through experiencing **covenant grace** can safely engage deeper doctrines.

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

5. How did Joseph and Deborah use spiritual discernment to bring unity and peace to their communities?

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6. What role did Barnabas and Priscilla play in fostering unity in the early church according to the New Testament examples?

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## LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- How can you identify and use your spiritual gifts for the benefit of others in your church or community?

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- What steps can you take to cultivate discernment and openness to the Holy Spirit's work in your life?

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**Resources:**

LOGOS Bible Software.

Spurgeon, Charles. *Spurgeon Commentary: Hebrews*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 137–139.

Walker, Larry L. and Elmer A. Martens, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Lamentations* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 439.