

LoveWell Ministries Bible Study

Discernment Part 2 (spiritual warfare & identifying false teachings, teachers, and movements)

Note: It is recommended to have ample time to complete this study without being rushed.

I. In this Bible study you'll be looking at discernment and identifying false teachers, teachings, and movements. Take some time right now to pause and invite the Holy Spirit in to guide your thoughts and feelings as you go through this study. Ask the Lord to reveal any false teachings and teachers that have influence in your life.

II. What is discernment?

- According to [Spiritual Gifts Test \(kodachrome.org\)](http://kodachrome.org), discernment is “the special ability God gives to some to know with assurance whether certain behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power. The divine enablement to distinguish between truth and error, to discern the spirits; differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong.”

- www.google.com gives two very different definitions for discernment:

1. the ability to judge well.

2. (in Christian contexts) perception in the absence of judgement with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding.

- What differences do you see between the worldly and Christian definitions for discernment?

III. Spiritual Warfare – You need discernment because you are in a world that is at war.

- **Read John 10:10** and answer the following:

Who are the opposing forces identified as?

What is the mission of each opposing force?

- You can read more about this contrast in **John 8** with Jesus as truth and Satan as a liar with no truth in him. Jesus calls the devil a deceiver, even deceiving those who believe in Jesus and think they are following His ways. Other passages in the Bible reveal that when the anti-christ comes, he will come mimicking Christ, which is just another reason having discernment for Christians is SO important.

- If the greatest commandment is to love God above all else and love others as yourself, then it should be no surprise that these are the two areas the enemy wants to attack: your relationship with God and your

- relationship with others. The enemy wants to deceive you by distorting the true Jesus Christ to keep you from loving Him and serving Him effectively. This keeps you from loving others effectively.

- How does the enemy try to keep you from knowing Jesus as the savior?

- How does the enemy try to keep you from serving Jesus effectively?

IV. Discernment of good and bad fruit:

- Truth, good fruit, and things from God claim Jesus. **Read 1 John 4:2,6**

- Truth, good fruit, and things from God claim the Jesus, the gospel, and the Holy Spirit of the Bible. **Read 2 Corinthians 11:3-4**

- We need to consider if the teacher exhibits the character qualities of Jesus. **Read Jude 11-13,19** and consider the following:

V11 – A false teacher can be known by his pride (Cain’s rejection of God’s plan), greed (Balaam’s prophesying for money), and rebellion (Korah’s promotion of himself over Moses).

V12-13 – hidden reefs at your love feasts, they feed themselves, swept along by winds, fruitless trees

V19 – cause divisions, worldly people, led by themselves and not the Holy Spirit

V. Discernment of the false and deceptive practices of the enemy:

- The process for practicing Biblical discernment is as follows:

1) Is it true as tested against the totality of Scripture? (Keep in mind that it is easy to deceive by taking one verse, passage, or teaching from Scripture and making it fit into a narrative. Therefore, it’s important to know all of Scripture when discerning what’s from God and what isn’t.)

2) What kind of fruit does it bear?

- 2a – Does it claim Jesus?

- 2b – Does it claim the Jesus, Gospel, and Holy Spirit of the Bible?

- 2c – Does the teacher exhibit character qualities of Jesus that glorify God? (Or do they do it for there own glory?)

- The second Book of Peter was a letter written with a purpose. Peter knew His time was coming to an end and the church was facing danger of false teachings. So, he was intentional to remind them of the truth (his teachings of Jesus). Peter wanted Christians to grow in their faith so they could carry the Great

- Commission forward. In chapter two, he depicts what is false. Peter, himself, even speaks from his own experience in denying the truth of Jesus.

Read 2 Peter 1:19-2:19 and consider the following:

1V19-20 – Peter knew his audience was converted Jews who were well taught in the law and the prophets. He shows in verse 20 that no prophecy (truth) of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation but rather comes from God (truth). Truth is from God and moved by the Holy Spirit. This is why someone who is claiming to be prophetic should be moved by the Spirit of God and will never go against Scripture (because God can’t contradict himself).

2V1 – False teachings, teachers, and movements will come as wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing or disguised as angels of light. We as believers need to acknowledge this is reality for us today, as well. Not every pastor, leader, or church is following truth and following the Holy Spirit’s leading.

2V1 – They deny the truth since God and Jesus are truth. We learn in 1 John 4 that denial of Jesus is an indication it’s not from God, but rather the enemy.

2V2 – “many will follow” – Just because there are huge waves of people following something, doesn’t make it true. Further, the enemy wants to attack Christian leaders so that false messages spread farther. This is why there is such a high standard in the Bible for those who want to be teachers. The words of teachers carry greater weight. James 3:1 tells us “not many of us should become teachers... for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

2V3 – Scripture tells us the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Have you ever heard preachers asking for your money as if it is the most important thing, or even going as far as requiring tithing and guilting and shaming people who don’t give to the church? (false *profits* = false *prophets*)

2V10 – “especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.” A pastor or Christian leader who does what they want without regard for authority isn’t walking in the Spirit. If they can’t submit to earthly authority, how can they submit to God’s authority?

2V14 – These are the characteristics of false teachers who bear bad fruit. Again, we see sin and greed. Interesting statement of enticing “unsteady souls” (ESV). What might this mean or look like? (Those who don’t know better, are in unstable situations, and are ignorant to the truth and easily influenced.)

2V15 – “forsaking the right way, they have gone astray” No longer following God’s way (truth), but following their own way (false).

2V19 – “they promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption”

VI. **Read 2 Timothy 4:3** and answer the following:

- What is this verse saying to you?

- Are there any areas God may be warning you about regarding false teachings, teachers, or movements? If so, name them in the space provided:

- Just as false teachers and prophets were parading around as true Christian leaders and deceiving immature Christians in the Bible, they are still with us today. This makes the Biblical warnings from those like Peter and Jude very important for us today. We need to constantly practice discerning good from evil. **Read Hebrews 5:14**
- Reminder that truth is a weapon in the armor of God, and we wield it when we use discernment. **Read Ephesians 6:14-17**

VII. Example for discerning false religion:

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism)
Note: This is applicable to other religions, teachers, teachings, and movements, as well.
- 1) Is it true?
- Required tithing; to go to temple, people must be worthy through tithing. (2 Cor 9:7 – “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”)
 - Adding to Scripture. (Rev 22:18 – “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them...and if anyone takes away...”)
 - Secrets: knowledge is reserved for a privileged few. (see Ephesians 5:12, James 1:5 – “Now if anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him.” Jesus is truth and is for everyone.)
 - Controlling people’s actions and controlling narratives. (God grants us freedom to choose between good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Deuteronomy 30:15 – “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.” Galatians 5:1 – “For freedom Christ has set us free, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”)
 - Works based. Known as “temple-work”. Following the rules and regulations of the church deny the need for a Savior. (Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”)
 - Must have a calling (or job within the church), and the calling is not assigned by God, but by man. (Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you...”)
- 2) What kind of fruit does it bear?
- Does it claim Jesus? Yes.
 - Does it claim the Jesus, Gospel, and Holy Spirit of the Bible? No – see above.
 - Does the teacher exhibit the character qualities of Jesus that glorify God? No. Leadership is very controlling and secretive. There is an overwhelming use of shame and guilt. “Follow me” – Do they lead to get followers for the Mormon church, or to point people to follow Jesus?