

THE  
*Gift of*  
*Discerning*  
*of Spirits*

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# THE GIFT OF DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

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## Preface

My booklet is written from an Apostolic Pentecostal perspective through the Apostles Doctrine, Jesus only/ Oneness of God. We affirm One God (His name is the Lord Jesus Christ), baptism in the Name of Jesus, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire with the evidence of speaking in tongues. This is His present power and authority given to the Bride to discern and overcome the works of darkness. May the Holy Ghost (with the evidence of speaking in tongues) who dwells within, empower the fivefold ministry and every believer to operate in the gift of the discerning of spirits. Not as a spirit of suspicion or criticism, but in humbleness and meekness, with holy Apostolic-Pentecostal authority and power for the edifying and protection of the local Apostolic Pentecostal church.

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### What is the Gift of Discerning of Spirits?

The gift of discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10) is a spiritual ability given by the Holy Ghost to recognize the spiritual source behind words, actions, manifestations, healings, afflictions, and atmospheres. It perceives whether something is of God, of an angelic ministering spirit, of a demonic spirit, of a human unclean spirit, or of a religious/antichrist spirit. This discernment is not mere human intuition or suspicion; it is revelation from the Holy Spirit who dwells within our spirit man.

The Apostolic Pentecostal Foundation

- We believe the believer is baptized in the Name of The Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 19:5).
- We believe in the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues and water baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2; 38 Acts 10–11; Acts 19).
- Through this baptism the believer receives power and authority (Luke 10:19; Mark 16:17–18; Acts 1:8) to walk in the gifts of the Spirit, including discerning of spirits.

### Biblical Basis

- 1 Corinthians 12:10 — the Spirit distributes gifts, including discerning of spirits.
- 1 John 4:1 — we are commanded to test the spirits to see whether they are of God.
- The gift is exercised by the Spirit to verify spiritual reality and to protect, counsel, deliver, and edify the church.

### Jesus: The Pattern for Discerning Spirits

Jesus demonstrated accurate spiritual discernment repeatedly. He discerned unclean spirits, spirits of sickness, religious spirits, and spiritual oppression, and He recognized angelic spirits-ministry. Read and meditate on the Synoptic accounts (see appendix

for full references) to learn His pattern: perception by the Spirit, authoritative word, deliverance, and restoration.

## Examples in the Book of Acts — The Gift in the Early Apostolic Pentecostal church

The book of Acts is the primary record of the Spirit-empowered, apostolic pentecostal Jesus Name church operating with discernment and authority. Notable Acts passages showing discernment and deliverance include:

- Acts 2:4 — The apostles and early believers were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues; this baptism is the source of apostolic power.
- Acts 5:1–11 (Ananias and Sapphira) — Peter, moved by the Spirit, discerned deceit and confronted sin within the assembly.
- Acts 5:15–16 — Those brought to the apostles were delivered from unclean spirits as they were healed.
- Acts 8:6–8 — Philip cast out unclean spirits in Samaria; great joy followed.
- Acts 8:14–24 — Peter and John (apostolic ministry) laid hands for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues . Peter, exercised by the Holy Ghost, discerned Simon the Sorcerer's heart and rebuked him, exposing the motive behind his request and calling him to

repentance (Acts 8:18–24).

- Acts 10:44–48; Acts 11:14–17 — Cornelius and household received the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Just as they did in Acts 2:1–4; 17; 38–39. The experience of speaking in tongues is the connection with Holy Ghost infilling — confirming that apostles and the church recognized the gift of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. This is the blood confirmation witness for mission and discernment.
- Acts 13:8–12 — Paul (Barnabas' companion) discerned Elymas the sorcerer's opposition and, by Spirit-led authority, hindered his deception (temporary blindness).
- Acts 16:16–18 — At Philippi, Paul discerned and cast out a spirit of divination (often called a python spirit) that had enabled a slave girl to profit her owners by fortune-telling. This spirit is a form of familiar/divinatory spirit and demonstrates the gift operating to uncover and remove occult bondage.
- Acts 19:11–16 — Extraordinary miracles and deliverances in Ephesus; evil spirits reacted to apostolic authority. The attempt by the seven sons of Sceva to cast out demons in the Name of Jesus without true authority (and the violent rebuke they received) serves as a warning to operate in the Spirit and under apostolic order.

## Additional Acts Cases and a Focus on Simon and the Slave Girl

- Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9–24): Simon practiced sorcery and amazed people in Samaria. When Philip preached Christ and Samaritans believed and were baptized, signs and deliverances followed (Acts 8:6–7). Peter and John were sent to lay hands so they might receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14–17). When Simon witnessed the giving of the Spirit by the apostles and sought to obtain that power for personal gain, Peter — moved by the Holy Ghost and with apostolic discernment — rebuked him, revealed the state of his heart, and called him to repentance (Acts 8:18–24). This is a clear example of apostolic discernment identifying spiritual motive, deception, and the need for repentance and deliverance.
- The Slave Girl at Philippi (Acts 16:16–18): A slave girl had a spirit of divination and earnestly followed Paul and his companions, announcing that they were servants of the Most High God. Paul, discerning the demonic influence behind her utterances, commanded the spirit to come out in the Name of Jesus Christ, and it departed from her. This instance shows the gift discerning a familiar/divinatory spirit and exercising Christ’s authority to break occult bondage — a model for deliverance ministry in the local church.

## Old Testament examples and Types of Discerning Spirits

The Old Testament repeatedly shows God revealing angelic and demonic realities and His servants being given spiritual sight and discernment.

Key OT instances:

- Deuteronomy 18:10–12 — God forbids mediums and necromancers, recognizing false spiritual influences and the need to discern them.
- 1 Samuel 16:14–23 — An evil spirit comes upon Saul; David's harp playing brings relief. The passage affirms the reality of an evil spirit affecting a king and the need for spiritual remedies.
- 1 Samuel 28 — Saul consults a medium; the account warns of familiar spirits and forbidden occult practices.
- Judges 13 — Manoah and his wife encounter an angel of the Lord who reveals Samson's birth; they discern the divine messenger.
- 1 Kings 18:17–40 — Elijah discerns the spiritual idolatry of Israel and confronts the prophets of Baal; God's response exposes false spirits and affirms the Lord.
- 2 Kings 6:15–17 — Elisha's servant's eyes were opened to see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire — an angelic host ministering protection. God

revealed angelic reality to the prophet's servant.

- Daniel 10 — Daniel receives a vision in which an angel reveals spiritual conflict (princes, demonic opposition) and communicates how prayer and fasting engage the heavenly realm.
- Other prophetic ministries (e.g., many of the prophets confronting false prophets and pagan practices) functioned in discernment of idolatrous and demonic influences.

These OT examples show God's people encountering and discerning spirits, angels, and spiritual opposition long before Pentecost; the New Testament builds on and intensifies this apostolic manifestation through the Holy Ghost in the Church.

### What the Gift Discerns

The gift can reveal:

- The Spirit of God at work (confirming true ministry, miracles, prophetic words)
- Angelic ministering spirits (protection, guidance, opening of eyes)
- Demonic spirits (unclean spirits, spirits of infirmity, principalities, witchcraft, divination/familiar spirits)
- Religious spirits and the spirit of antichrist (deception, doctrinal error, hardened hearts)
- Familiar spirits, mediums, and necromantic

## influences

- The root spiritual source of persistent sin, oppression, or sickness — while recognizing that not every sickness is necessarily demonic (see Safeguards)

## How the Gift Operates in the Local Apostolic Pentecostal Church — practical examples

- During worship: sensing and breaking a heaviness or religious spirit to restore joy and liberty.
- In the altar/prayer line: discerning tormenting spirits and praying for deliverance in Jesus' Name.
- In counseling: discerning a spirit of judgment or pride and applying pastoral correction and discipleship.
- In evangelism and missions: recognizing cultural witchcraft or spiritual strongholds and engaging in prayer, fasting, and deliverance leading to conversions and church planting.
- In fivefold ministry strategy: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists releasing spiritual insight to guard appointments and guide pastoral transitions.
- Caution: Acts 19:13–16 warns against prideful, unauthorized attempts to use Jesus' Name apart from the Spirit and apostolic order.

## How to Pray for and Cultivate the Gift

- Seek the Holy Ghost: “Holy Ghost, baptize me anew. Fill me, clothe me, anoint me to discern spirits for Your glory in Jesus’ Name.”
- Yield your spirit man and ground yourself in Scripture.
- Test what you sense by the Word (1 John 4:1–3).
- Fast and pray for breakthroughs in serious spiritual warfare (Mark 9:29).
- Practice under spiritual accountability with mature ministers.
- Expect confirmations: Scripture, peace, fruit, and corroboration by faithful ministers.
- Serve in humility; let love and edification be the motive.

### Sample corporate prayer:

“Lord Jesus, we ask for Your Holy Ghost to move among us. Baptize us afresh in the Name of Jesus. Grant us the gift of discerning of spirits: that we might recognize Your work, angelic help, and any demonic or religious spirits working among us or against us. Give us wisdom to act in love and authority. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.”

### Safeguards

- Not the same as suspicion: this gift is not a license

to be critical or to spread accusations. Verify and exercise pastoral care.

- Test all revelations against Scripture and the confession of Jesus (1 John 4:2-3).
- Operate under apostolic/pastoral accountability; do not act alone in major deliverance decisions.
- Use medical wisdom: pray for healing and encourage legitimate healthcare when needed.

Deliverance and medical help can be complementary.

- Beware of counterfeit power that seeks human glory or operates outside love and humility.

### Final Exhortation and Apostolic Charge

Beloved, the Bride has been given authority and power through the Name of Jesus and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pray earnestly for the gift of discerning of spirits to operate among us — not for suspicion, but for protection, deliverance, correction, and building up the body. Let the fivefold ministry and local church be a place where revelation brings repentance, where deliverance brings freedom, where angelic ministry is recognized, and where the Name of Jesus is honored in all things. Walk in humility, test all things by Scripture, and operate under godly order. The same Spirit that raised Jesus is in you. Ask, seek, and expect.

## Appendix — Key Scripture References for Study

### New Testament — Discerning and Deliverance in the Gospels and Acts

- 1 Corinthians 12:10
- 1 John 4:1–3
- Luke 10:19
- Mark 16:17–18
- Acts 1:8

Gospel accounts of Jesus casting out spirits (read these passages):

- Matthew 8:28–34; 9:32–34; 12:22–29; 15:21–28; 17:14–21
- Mark 1:21–28; 1:32–34; 5:1–20; 5:25–34; 7:24–30; 9:14–29
- Luke 4:33–37; 8:2; 8:26–39; 9:37–43; 11:14–26

Acts — apostolic church and specific examples of discernment and deliverance:

- Acts 2:1–4 (Pentecost; speaking in tongues as evidence of the Holy Ghost)
- Acts 5:1–11 (Ananias & Sapphira — Spirit's discernment)
- Acts 5:15–16 (deliverance from unclean spirits)
- Acts 8:6–8; 8:14–24 (Philip in Samaria; Peter/Jon's laying on of hands; Peter's rebuke of Simon the Sorcerer)

- Acts 10:44–48; Acts 11:14–17 (Cornelius' household receives Holy Ghost; tongues as confirmation)
- Acts 13:8–12 (Paul's discernment of Elymas the sorcerer)
- Acts 16:16–18 (spirit of divination — slave girl at Philippi)
- Acts 19:11–16 (deliverances at Ephesus; warning about unauthorized attempts)

Old Testament references of spiritual realities and discernment:

- Deuteronomy 18:10–12 (forbidding mediums and necromancy)
- 1 Samuel 16:14–23 (evil spirit on Saul; David's ministry)
- 1 Samuel 28 (Saul and the medium — familiar spirits)
- Judges 13 (angel of the Lord appearing to Manoah's wife)
- 1 Kings 18:17–40 (Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal)
- 2 Kings 6:15–17 (Elisha's servant seeing heavenly hosts)
- Daniel 10 (angelic messenger; spiritual conflict revealed)

## Closing Blessing

May the Holy Ghost open your spiritual eyes and ears, grant you apostolic boldness, and use you in the gift of discerning of spirits for the building up of the body of Christ, the protection of the local church, and the expansion of the Kingdom in Jesus' Name.

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