

Discernment

How to Listen to the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:14 - But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Discernment: Noun - the act or process of exhibiting keen insight and good judgment; to distinguish one thing from another; the power of viewing differences and their relations and tendencies; judgment; to distinguish between things; perceive differences that exist; the condition of understanding.



Proverbs 10:13 - Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of one who has no sense.

How to Listen to the Holy Spirit - the Key to Discernment

The key to Godly Discernment is listening to the Holy Spirit. He is the One Who will judge the rightness or wrongness of situations from within us. How do we “hear” from Him?

First we have to have a foundation of “*how*” we hear from God. Spending time in God’s Word is a “must have” to hear from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works with the Word. No Word, No hearing clearly from the Holy Spirit. And if you don’t know “*how*” God speaks by spending time in His Word, you won’t be able to judge if what you “heard” or what impression you got was from the Holy Spirit or not. The Word is how we are to judge.

God’s Word is truth and God *can’t* lie. Everything God has spoken in His Word is actually a covenant - it is truth and it can’t change - [John 17:17](#); [Titus 1:2](#); [Numbers 23:19](#). And God is always right. Once we have made that decision in our minds that God is always right, we won’t doubt what He has said. We may not understand it but He will reveal it to us when the time is right.

Therefore we take [John 10:1-5, 27](#) as a fact. More than that, as truth:

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. **2** The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for Him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When He has brought out all His own, He goes on ahead of them, and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. **5**

But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.

27 My sheep hear My Voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

There are very important things in this passage for us to embrace:

Jesus is our Shepherd,

We listen to His Voice,

He calls us by name;

He leads us out and goes on ahead of us;

We follow Him because we know His Voice;

We will never follow a stranger and will run away from a stranger because we do not recognize the stranger's voice;

We hear Jesus' Voice,

He knows us,

We follow Him.

That's a home-run right there!!!

Notice how much the Lord is speaking to us in that passage and leading us. That's amazing. So now trust that. Now that we **know** we hear His voice, there are other elements.

John 14:26 - “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, **He will teach you all things** and **bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**”

Psalm 143:10 - “**Teach** me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit **lead me** on level ground.”

The Holy Spirit is teaching us, deep inside of us, and He reminds us of things the Lord has told us. You know how there’s something the Lord gave you a while ago and you had forgotten about it, but then suddenly it “pops” up and you remember it? That is the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:14 - “For all who are **led** by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Psalm 31:3 - “Since You are My rock and My fortress, for the sake of Your Name **lead and guide** me.

As the Holy Spirit is bringing things to your remembrance He is leading you. Sometimes the “leading” comes as a “hunch.” How you judge it is: “is this thought/action in line with God’s Word?” If the answer is yes, then do it. If it is not, get rid of the thought by casting it down in the Name of Jesus, then replace that thought with the Word of God that is contrary to it (**2 Corinthians 10:3-6**).

As the Holy Spirit leads you, you will have “peace” about it in your inner man and a “light” sense to it - no heaviness, and you’ll have “joy” because you now have insight to something that you hadn’t had before.

John 14:16 - “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another **Comforter (Helper)**, that He may abide with you for ever;”

As the Holy Spirit is leading you another scripture that shows more to this is **Philippians 1:9-11** prayer - pray this over yourself! “And this is my prayer: that your **love may abound** more and more **in knowledge and depth of insight**, ¹⁰ **so that you may be able to discern what is best** and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

And then praise God for having done this! Expect to be led by the love of God throughout your day.

Another way of recognizing the Holy Spirit is that He is our comforter. You will be comforted when you are being led by Him. He leads you in ways you weren't thinking about before and it's a help. He is also called the Helper. And He certainly helps.

Ephesians 4:30 - "And ***do not grieve*** the Holy Spirit of God, with whom ***you were sealed for the day of redemption.***"

When we do something that is not God's will for us we will have an "uneasy" sense within us. That is the grieving of the Holy Spirit. When you notice it, repent of it right away and receive your forgiveness. Then ask if there is something you should do about it. It all depends on the circumstance. Follow His leading. Follow the hunch. And when we don't repent we will not be able to hear from God. In fact not hearing from God is for one of three reasons: sin; not spending time in the Word; or during a test. We know if we have been in the Word and most of the time we know when we've sinned. There can be times where it's not on the forefront of our minds and we forget that we didn't do what the Lord had asked, or didn't respond to a dream/or vision He gave us in the correct manner like a warning dream or vision. Whatever the situation get into prayer. Ask the Lord for where you missed it. Ask for forgiveness. Receive it. And go into praise. Sometimes simply spending time in praise is the easiest way to "clean" ourselves up.

Colossians 3:15-16 AMP - Let the **peace** of Christ [the inner calm of one who walks daily with Him] **be the controlling factor** in your hearts [**deciding and settling questions that arise**]. To this peace indeed you were called as members in one body [of believers]. And be thankful [to God always]. **16**Let the [spoken] word of Christ have its home within you [dwelling in your heart and mind--permeating every aspect of your being]..."

When we are being led by the Holy Spirit don't move on the leading until you have peace about it. If you have questions about it in your mind, this means you do not have peace.

Luke 12:12 - ESV "for the Holy Spirit ***will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.***"

Trust the Holy Spirit in *everything*. He's our Helper. Our Comforter. He gives us Peace. He will give you the right words to say, if you let Him. It's in:

Ephesians 6:20 and **1 Corinthians 1:5-7**, with **1 Corinthians 12:7-8**:

"**19**and for me, that **utterance** may be given to me, that I may **open my mouth boldly** to make known the mystery of the gospel,"

"**5**For in Him (the Holy Spirit) you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— **6**God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. **7**Therefore **you do not lack any spiritual gift** as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed."

"**7**But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: **8**for to one is given the **word of wisdom through the Spirit**, to another the **word of knowledge through the same Spirit**,"

So far from the scriptures we have seen, the Holy Spirit:

- Teaches us
- Brings to our remembrance the things the Lord has told us
- He leads us

- He guides us
- He comforts us
- He helps us
- He seals us until the Day Jesus comes
- He gives us words to speak to others. Many times we will find ourselves speaking and not knowing what we are saying. We are hearing the Words as they come out of our mouth.
- He gives us boldness
- He gives us knowledge that we couldn't have gotten any other way.
- We have all the Spiritual Giftings that He has. Important to note: giftings are always for other people *through* you. He doesn't give them to you for yourself.
- He gives you wisdom and revelation knowledge
- He gives you peace.

Something else important to note, [Ephesians 3:16-19](#) - “¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be [strengthened with might through His Spirit](#) in the inner man, ¹⁷that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, [being rooted and grounded in love](#), ¹⁸may be able to [comprehend](#) with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹to [know the love of Christ which passes knowledge](#); that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let's briefly unpack two parts to this passage: Holy Spirit strengthens you, grounds you in the love of God WHICH passes His knowledge.

Romans 5:5 says the Love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Since we have the Holy Spirit, we have the Love of God inside of us. As we give heed to His promptings, leadings, thoughts - which all go in line with His Word - we will have His knowledge. Godly knowledge. Not the world's knowledge.

1 Corinthians 1:6-16 - “**6**However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. **7**But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God [c]ordained before the ages for our glory, **8**which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who
love Him.”

10But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. **11**For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. **12**Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **14**But the natural man does not receive the

things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because **they are spiritually discerned**.
15But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16For “who has known the Mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the Mind of Christ.

The Holy Spirit *knows* the deep things of God and He is in you leading you! That’s amazing! And we weigh out what we are “getting” deep within us, we weigh it against the Word. And whatever He tells you to do, do. This is how you operate in “**discernment**.”

Another way the Holy Spirit leads us is by *revealing* things. I call these “ah-ha” moments. It’s when something “pops” up within you or a thought from within you that answers the question your pondering. It’s like the “light-bulb” turning on. Usually we say, “ah-ha! I got it!”

1 [Corinthians 2:10](#) - “these are the things God has **revealed** to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”

He guides us through our own **consciences** [Romans 9:1](#) - ESV “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; **my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit**—“

It’s very important to follow your “conscience.” If we violate it that can cause damage to our heart and inhibit our “hearing” from the Lord, hinder our growth, and our lives: [1 Timothy 1:19](#) - “holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.”

1 [Peter 3:16](#) says to keep a clear conscience. No matter what, keep a clear conscience.

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Conclusion

Discernment is about weighing out right from wrong by weighing these things out against the Word of God and the Holy Spirit - [John 4:24](#)

And *THE* most important way to hear God's Voice is through knowing His Word. God only speaks in line with His Word. Knowledge of God's Word can help us to discern whether or not our desires come from the Holy Spirit. We must test our inclinations against Scripture—the Holy Spirit will never lead us to do anything contrary to God's Word. If it conflicts with the Bible, then it is not from the Holy Spirit and should be cast down as a vain imagination in the Name of Jesus, and then replaced with the Word of God that opposes it.

As [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) says stay in prayer always. How I use this is I keep the Lord on my mind all day long. I speak with Him all day long and I let Him lead me all throughout the day. Not only does this keep our hearts and minds open to the Holy Spirit's leading, but it also allows the Spirit to speak on our behalf: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God" [Romans 8:26–27](#).

We can tell if we are following the Spirit's leading by looking for signs of His fruit in our lives [Galatians 5:22–23](#). If we walk in the Spirit, we will continue to see these qualities grow and mature in us, and they will become evident to others as well. You'll begin to notice how people speak of you and say things like how you always are happy, and trustworthy, and they always feel good around you. This is all part of the fruit of the Spirit.

It is important to note that we have the choice whether or not to accept the Holy Spirit's guidance. When we know the will of God but do not follow it, we are resisting the Spirit's work in our lives [Acts 7:51](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:19](#), and a desire to follow our own way grieves Him [Ephesians 4:30](#). The Spirit will never lead us into sin.

Habitual sin will cause us to miss what the Holy Spirit wants to say to us through the Word. Being in tune with God's will, turning from and confessing sin, and making a habit of prayer and the study of God's Word will allow us to recognize—and follow—the Spirit's leading.

As you do these things and follow the Holy Spirit you will be able to discern right from wrong. And the challenges in the not-so-easy things to discern like, "Is this where my daughter should go to school? Should I take this job? Is this where I should be living?" Will go easy as you keep "leaning" in to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He will always lead you right.