

WHAT IS “SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT?”

(1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

- I. A General Definition—“The ability to DISTINGUISH God’s THOUGHTS and WAYS from all others” (Jay Adams, *A Call to Discernment*, p. 46).

- II. Key Biblical Terminology
 - A. Hebrew verb, *biyn* (Gen. 41:33, 39; 1 Kings 3:9; Ps. 139:2; Prov. 7:7)
 - 1. Translated “DISCERN or UNDERSTAND”
 - 2. Related to the noun *bayin*, “the INTERVAL or SPACE BETWEEN”
 - 3. Related to the preposition *ben*, “BETWEEN”
 - 4. Refers to the ability to DISTINGUISH things from one another by identifying their points of DIFFERENCE

 - B. Greek *diakrino* (Matt. 16:3; 1 Cor. 6:5; 14:29; Heb. 5:14)
 - 1. Translated “DISCERN, DECIDE, PASS JUDGMENT”
 - 2. Refers to the ability to separate things or ideas from one another in order to make JUDGMENTS and DECISIONS on the basis of an INFORMED discrimination

- III. A More Precise Definition
 - A. SPIRITUAL discernment differs from GENERAL discernment in its IMPORTANCE

1. A JEWELER makes discriminating choices about GEMS
 2. A POLITICAL analyst makes discriminating choices about IDEOLOGIES
 3. A CHRISTIAN must make discriminating choices about SPIRITUAL matters of ETERNAL significance
- B. SPIRITUAL discernment differs from GENERAL discernment in its SOURCE
1. A discerning JEWELER has a trained EYE
 2. A discerning POLITICAL analyst has a trained MIND
 3. A discerning CHRISTIAN has a RENEWED MIND that comes from a SUBMISSIVE HEART (Rom. 12:1-2)
 - a. Requires the involvement of GOD HIMSELF
 - b. Requires willingness to be CHANGED
- C. Spiritual discernment can be defined as “the DIVINELY GIVEN ability to DISTINGUISH God’s thoughts and ways from ALL OTHERS” (Adams)

IV. Dangers to Avoid

- A. Becoming so DISCOURAGED that you GIVE UP
- B. Becoming so NARROW that you WITHDRAW into a shell
- C. Becoming CONTENTIOUS over issues that are not GOD’S TRUTH
 1. Mistaking your INTERPRETATION of the Bible for the Bible ITSELF
 2. Mistaking the TRADITION of the CHURCH for the TEACHING of SCRIPTURE