

What Does the Bible Say About Discernment?

We live in an age full of voices, opinions, teachings, and feelings, all claiming to be the truth. A Christian who cannot tell one from another will be tossed back and forth and finally swept away. The Bible calls God's people to discern, to weigh and test what they hear, to tell truth from error and good from evil. It is not a gift for the few. It is a skill the Scriptures call every believer to grow in. Let us see what they say.

Solomon's Prayer

When God offered the young King Solomon whatever he might ask, he did not ask for riches or long life. He asked for this: *"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad"* ([1 Kings 3:9](#)). The Lord was pleased that he asked for it and gave him both wisdom and what he had not asked for besides. Of all the things a person could want, the ability to tell good from bad is one of the most worth asking God for, and one He gladly gives.

Senses Exercised by Use

Discernment is not given the moment a person becomes a Christian and left at that. It is grown by exercise. *"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* ([Hebrews 5:14](#)). The image is of a sense trained by long use, the way a tracker reads sign that another person would walk right past. The Bible-reading, Scripture-soaked Christian develops a kind of spiritual sense for what is sound and what is off. The one who lives on milk and never opens the Book stays easy to fool.

Try the Spirits, Prove All Things

The Christian is not naive. He does not believe everything he is told, however confidently it is said. John commanded, *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* ([1 John 4:1](#)). Paul gave the same instruction in shorter form: *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"* ([1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)). Notice what we are to test things by. The standard is not how the teaching makes us feel, or how famous the teacher is, but whether it is of God, that is, whether it lines up with His word.

Beware False Teachers

Jesus warned with sober plainness, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits"* ([Matthew 7:15-16](#)). False teachers do not announce themselves. They look like the real thing. The Bereans set the example for every Christian when, even hearing Paul himself preach, *"these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* ([Acts 17:11](#)). The standard is the Bible. Honest hearers do not just trust the speaker, they check him.

Do Not Be Led by Feelings or Sight

One of the greatest dangers to discernment is trusting what seems right at first glance. Solomon warned, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* ([Proverbs 14:12](#)). Paul reminded the Corinthians, *"we walk by faith, not by sight"* ([2 Corinthians 5:7](#)), and warned against the company we keep: *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners"* ([1 Corinthians 15:33](#)). And again, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* ([Galatians 6:7](#)). What feels right and what looks right are not the same as what is right. So pray for discernment, soak your mind in the Scriptures, test every teaching by the Book, and you will not be tossed about by every wind that blows.

Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.