

Loving Well Requires This Kingdom Discipline

We've all met a deceptive person. They acted one way or said one thing, but it turned out they weren't what they said they were.

Or, they had an agenda but didn't tell you that upfront. Every one of us has experienced a person or a group of people just like that.

Typically, we are left scratching our heads, wondering why we didn't see it until it was too late. What's more frustrating is when we realize we ignored a trail of clues that should have been red flags to us.

There is a gift, a supernatural ability, from the Holy Spirit that will unmask these situations. It's called the gift of discerning of spirits, and it reveals the spirit of the matter: human, demonic or divine. This gift, mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:10 alongside other gifts of the Holy Spirit, is not the same as having an evil eye toward others or being suspicious, which are heart issues. It's a divine ability from God to see past the surface and know the spirit and heart motive behind people and situations.

Leading Well Requires that You Discern Well

King Solomon connected discernment to good leadership. He could lead and judge difficult situations and get to the truth because he had discernment from God.

He prayed like this, "Give Your servant therefore an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge among so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9).

My greatest mistakes as a leader happened when I ignored what I discerned. I didn't want to see what I was discerning, or I didn't understand it or couldn't believe that someone had a wrong heart. My husband, on the other hand, would miss points of discernment when it wasn't rational enough.

The gift of discerning of spirits is highly misunderstood in its operation. You won't discern things with your mind. It's not an ability to rationalize something through your intellect. You actually discern through your senses (sight, taste, touch, smell), and you experience spiritual information before you have any rational evidence for it (Heb. 5:14). If you are not aware, you will miss these clues.

For example, I will taste metal in my mouth when I'm near a person who has a spirit of violence on them. I can also "smell" lust, "sense" fear on my skin, or "feel" a religious spirit through a headache. I didn't know these were connected until I asked the Lord to explain my random feelings. My husband discerns differently, however. He discerns things as a general feeling inside of him, and, in his words, he just "knows what he knows."

What Do I Do With Negative Information?

The gift of discerning of spirits is a truth telling gift and a gatekeeping gift. You will supernaturally discern both good and evil. We usually know what to do with the good, but what do we do when we discern evil in people? "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment" (Phil. 1:9).

This verse instructs us that love needs to be balanced with discernment, and discernment needs to be balanced with love. This is where we experience true tension. When a deceptive or possessed person comes into your life or into your church, what then does love look like?

1. **Pray.** Most of the time, you will pray about it and just

leave it there. Prayer is powerful enough to handle it.

2. **Address it with the whole picture in mind.** Love has to consider the individual and the impact of the individual on others. If you are a leader of an organization or church, you will work that out depending on the strength and maturity of those you lead. If you are not the leader, but you have relationship with the leader, you can bring it to their attention. If they don't agree with you, then let it drop to be proved out one way or the other.
3. **Discern the difference between a broken person and a demonized person who has been sent with an agenda.** Most people who are possessed, oppressed or deceptive do so because they are broken. They need a lot of love to feel safe enough to change. There is that small percent that have been sent to you or your church because of a demonic agenda. This gift will reveal it. The latter scenario? We don't try to change them. We cast them out.
4. **Learn from your mistakes.** "But solid food belongs to those who are mature, for those who through practice have powers of discernment that are trained to distinguish good from evil"(Heb. 5:14). There is a connection between maturity and discerning well. We learn to discern through practice, which implies learning by trial and error and a heavy dose of humility.

We need to love well and to discern well. Somewhere in the tension of these two areas, we learn to handle the truth and discover great leadership as a result.

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Jennifer Eivaz is a minister and international conference speaker with a heart to equip the church in the supernatural

and for raising up passionate and effective prayer. She is a regular contributor to Charisma and The Elijah List, has been featured on several Christian television shows, hosts the popular podcast Take Ten With Jenn, and authored several bestselling books. Jennifer and her husband, Ron, co-pastor Harvest Church, now meeting in three locations—two campuses in Turlock, California and one campus in Ripon, California—in addition to hosting a thriving online campus. They also have two wonderful children.