Lesson Eleven

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God."

1 John 4:1

Practicing Discernment

Recognizing the Three Voices

"But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

Hebrews 5:14

Key Truth

As believers grow in hearing God's voice, we also grow in discernment. Not every thought, impression, or feeling comes from the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches us to test what we hear and remain anchored in the truth of God's Word.

Discernment protects the prophetic life. It guards our hearts from confusion, pride, fear, and deception. Learning to discern does not mean becoming suspicious or fearful. It means becoming wise, humble, and grounded in Scripture as we walk with the Holy Spirit.

God desires that His people hear Him clearly. He also desires that we test what we hear so that our lives remain rooted in truth and guided by love.

Discernment grows slowly as we walk with Jesus, remain submitted to Scripture, and stay accountable within the Body of Christ.

Understanding the Voices We May Encounter

As we learn to listen to God, we begin to recognize that thoughts and impressions can come from different places. Learning to discern the difference is an important part of spiritual maturity.

The Voice of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit speaks in ways that align with the character of Jesus and the truth of Scripture. His voice often produces peace, conviction, clarity, and encouragement.

The Holy Spirit may speak through:

• Scripture

• a quiet inner prompting

• a picture or impression

• a gentle conviction

• a burden to pray for someone

The Holy Spirit leads us toward obedience, humility, and love.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

John 10:27

Our Own Thoughts and Desires

Sometimes what we sense comes from our own thoughts, emotions, or desires. This is part of being human. Our thoughts are not always wrong, but they must be tested and surrendered to God.

We may assume something is from God when it is actually coming from our fears, hopes, or personal reasoning. This is why Scripture encourages us not to rely solely on our own understanding.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

Proverbs 3:5

As we grow in maturity, the Holy Spirit helps us distinguish between our thoughts and His leading.

The Voice of Spiritual Opposition

Scripture also reminds us that spiritual opposition exists. The enemy seeks to discourage, accuse, and confuse believers.

These thoughts often produce:

• fear

• shame

• condemnation

• confusion

• discouragement

The enemy's goal is to distract us from trusting God and walking in obedience.

Jesus reminds us that the enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, but His voice leads to life and freedom.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

John 10:10

Learning to recognize these differences strengthens our discernment and helps us remain anchored in truth.

Reflection

Answer these questions honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. Share only what you feel led to share if you are in a group.

Looking back on your life, can you remember a time when the Holy Spirit guided you clearly? What did that experience feel like?

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Have there been moments when you later realized a thought or impression came from your own emotions rather than from God? What did you learn from that experience?

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Have you experienced thoughts that produced fear, shame, or discouragement that did not reflect God's character? How did you respond?

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What practices help you remain grounded in Scripture and attentive to the Holy Spirit?

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Listening Exercise: Testing What You Hear

Find a quiet place. Take a few slow breaths and invite the Holy Spirit to meet you.

Ask Him this simple question:

"Holy Spirit, help me recognize Your voice and grow in discernment."

Spend a few moments in quiet prayer. Reflect on what you have learned in this lesson.

If a thought, Scripture, impression, or memory comes to mind, write it down below. Do not rush or analyze. Simply record what you sense and remain open to what the Holy Spirit may reveal.

Use the space below to write what you sense:

Discernment Questions

When you believe you have heard something from God, ask yourself these questions:

• Does this align with Scripture?
• Does this reflect the character of Jesus?
• Does this produce the fruit of the Spirit?
• Would wise spiritual leaders affirm this direction?
• Does this lead toward humility and obedience?

God's voice will never contradict His Word.

Obedience Step

Based on what you reflected on or sensed during this lesson, identify one step you can take this week to grow in discernment.

This may include spending more time in Scripture, seeking wise counsel, slowing down before speaking, or asking the Holy Spirit to refine your ability to recognize His voice.

This week, I will:

Group Encouragement (Optional)

If you are completing this workbook in a group, remember that discernment grows best in safe and loving community. Encourage one another to remain humble, test what is heard through Scripture, and pursue obedience with wisdom and love.

Celebrate growth rather than perfection. Discernment develops over time as we walk faithfully with the Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for speaking to Your people and guiding us by Your Spirit. I ask that You grow my discernment and teach me to recognize Your voice clearly. Guard my heart from confusion, pride, and fear. Help me remain anchored in Scripture and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. I desire to walk closely with You and respond in obedience to what You reveal. In Jesus' name, amen.