



The Gift of Discernment

What should I do? How do I know which decision is the right one?

These are questions I have asked myself several times over the years, but in the last couple of weeks I have had several people ask me these questions. My personal experience is that times of questioning are often indicative of a change coming. It is with this personal insight that I wish to reflect with you on the gift of discernment.

By definition discernment means to distinguish between different actions or to use a discriminating judgment. When faced with a decision to accept a job offer or a job change, go back to school, move to a different home or community or any other major decision, we usually begin by asking others for their opinion and start looking at the pros and cons for making the change. We may even create lists and post them on our refrigerator for weeks as we try to make the right decision. During this time it is common to experience physical pain; headaches, stomach aches, even back aches. It can be a very unsettling time. There is often a struggle with the fear of making the wrong decision and yet knowing something has to change one way or another. So, how do you decide?

We read in 1 John 4:1 of the New Living Translation of the bible, “Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world”. Author Tim Challies wrote, “The gift of discernment is the Spirit’s special defense against the lies that come from lying spirits”. So it sounds like we are always at risk of making the wrong decision if we act too quickly on someone else’s advice.

How many times have you been faced with a major decision where it took weeks or months to feel right about the decision you made? Feel right! Discernment is more a feeling than a loud and clear black and white answer. Years ago I struggled with a decision for months! I had physical pain and cried a lot. I felt trapped. Unable to make a decision I felt like I was destined to stay in that painful state. Fortunately for me, a dear friend noticed my despair and reminded me of a bible verse I have always loved (but for some reason had forgotten), which is, “be still and know that I am God”, Psalm 46:10. It was then I realized I had been trying to make changes based

solely on the opinions of others. I was searching for guidance without discernment.

Discernment requires us to take our time and evaluate our sources of advice. Our decisions are more likely to align with the right time for making a change when we use the gift of discernment. After reflecting on how my spirit was aligning with God’s will for my future I was freed from worrying about how it would turn out. I was able to relax into the process and my physical pain was relieved. A door then opened for me that would never have opened had I clung to my own process of simply collecting opinions. The end result was a change that was better for me than I could have ever imagined.

I think we spend a lot of time worrying about what is going to happen in the future without taking time for discernment of the messages we are getting. The messages from “lying spirits” will always leave us feeling overwhelmed. The messages from our true spirit will leave us feeling supported as we navigate life’s journey trusting the gift of discernment.

Questions to ponder:

- What decisions am I facing in my life right now?
- What physical symptoms might indicate a need for change?
- How can discernment help me come to a decision?
- How will I know which messages are from the Spirit and which are from “lying spirits”?

May God’s Peace Be With You,

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