



# THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

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14 Rules to  
liberate us from  
discouragement  
and deception  
in our spiritual  
walk

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# 3 STEPS IN DISCERNING SPIRITS

- **Be Aware** – notice what is happening in our inner spiritual experience, what are the stirrings of our hearts and thoughts?
- **Understand** – reflect on these stirrings to recognize what is of God and what is not. Are there signs of God?
- **Take Action** – accept and live according to what is of God and reject and remove from our lives what we recognize is not of God.

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# BECOMING AWARE

- The gateway to all discernment
- Why we may not be aware
  - Not enough instruction about spiritual awareness
  - Live on the “surface” of life – grasp only what takes less work/effort on our part
  - Our own sinfulness
  - Not disciplining our attention span
  - Diversions: TV, social media, fast paced culture, etc.

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# UNDERSTANDING

- Figuring out if stirrings affect our lives of faith, hope, love, and following God
- Stirrings/thoughts/emotions should bear the signs of God
- 2 questions to ask:
  - Does it lead me toward God or Does it lead me away from God?

# TAKING ACTION

- Accepting or rejecting these spiritual movements. Firmly accept what is of God and reject what is not.

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# #1 – WHEN A PERSON MOVES AWAYS FROM GOD

- Living according to “the flesh”: The enemy uses our imaginations to confirm how attractive certain activities, vices, sin can be, which then hooks us into deeper sinfulness.
- Enemy tactics
  - Sadden us – highly effective and one of clearest signs of the enemy!
  - Obstacles - become reasons we cannot keep our spiritual commitments
  - False Reasons – disquieted by reasons that are untrue but seem legit

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## #2 – WHEN A PERSON MOVES TOWARD GOD

- The Holy Spirit will:
  - Give courage and strength (Psalm 23)
  - Give consolations – experience God’s love that energizes and refreshes & we rest
  - Draw us to tears, inspiration, quiet, hope, remove obstacles
    - Tears can be healing
    - Inspiration can come from revelation, clarity, peace, love, etc.
    - Quiet opens to revelation

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## #3 – SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION

- A happy, uplifting movement of the heart that directly affects our lives of faith and our pursuit of God's will
- A perceptible experience of God's love
- We experience spiritual consolation by
  - Reading and studying the Word
  - Prayer
  - Tuning to hearing, seeing, understanding what the Spirit shows us
  - Fellowship of believers
  - Serving

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## #4 – SPIRITUAL DESOLATION

- It is an **affective heaviness** that directly affects our life of faith and pursuit of God's will
- It instills sadness and depletes energy for living our life of faith
- It varies in duration & intensity
- All believers experience it – alternations of consolation & desolation
- Remember all evil is subject to God's grace – nothing happens unless God permits it
- Much of how this season plays out depends on the person being **AWARE** of, **UNDERSTANDING** it, and **TAKING ACTION** to reject the desolation



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# FORMS OF DESOLATION

- Darkness of the soul – helplessly trapped in confusion that is mixed with a troubled heart – an anxiety-filled darkness
- We experience disturbance in our spiritual life – disquietude – loss of former peace in seeking the Lord
- Experience temptations – a downward attraction toward low and earthly living, no attraction to prayer or God’s service but more to material comforts, gratification, immersion in empty trivia, diversion through media, busyness, superficial conversation
- Experience lack of confidence, hope, and love in our spiritual life

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# FORMS OF DESOLATION, CON'T

- Find ourselves totally slothful, tepid, and sad in our life of faith
- Feel alone and separated from our Creator and Lord
- The lie of spiritual desolation includes false equation between what the person feels and what or who the person really is

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## #5 – SPIRITUAL DESOLATION: A TIME FOR FIDELITY/FAITHFULNESS

- Keep your spiritual practices
- Learn how to take back the wheel – in desolation the enemy guides
- Understand desolation has great potential for spiritual harm and an obstacle in our growth toward God
- Remember who you are in Christ and how He's worked in your past

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# #6 – SPIRITUAL DESOLATION: A TIME FOR INITIATIVE

- We should pick up our intensity against the desolation
- Being firm and constant in spiritual habits adopted before the desolation
- Insisting more on prayer
- Devoting ourselves to contemplating the truths of the faith – worship, reading past journal entries, scripture memorization
- Committing to much examination
- We are not called to passively bear spiritual desolation but to resist it actively!

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# #7 – SPIRITUAL DESOLATION: A TIME FOR RESISTANCE

- We are not victims! Truths that can strengthen us:
  - The Lord is permitting this trial so we may have the opportunity to resist it & by resisting, GROW in the ability to resist.
  - We can resist this desolation because, in spite of our feelings, God is always giving sufficient grace to resist it.
  - We must recognize the nature of the trial – what might be going on? What's the driver?
  - By faithfully resisting we become increasingly able to bear it without spiritual harm.
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# #8 – SPIRITUAL DESOLATION: A TIME FOR PATIENCE

- Don't give up – persevere until peace returns
- There will always be these alternations of consolation and desolation – take it in stride
- Think how you will again experience consolation

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# #9 – WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SPIRITUAL DESOLATION?

- 4 principal reasons (causes)
  - Because we are slothful or negligent in our spiritual habits
  - To try us – to see how much we extend ourselves in his service without consolation and increased graces
  - To give us true recognition and understanding that all consolations are a GIFT and GRACE of God – we embrace all of our life and learn to do it well
  - We have sinfulness that needs unearthed and delt with

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# SPIRITUAL DESOLATION OF ITSELF DOES NOT PRODUCE GROWTH

- If not resisted it will cause spiritual harm
- It becomes fruitful when we resist it!



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# #10 – SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION: A TIME TO PREPARE

- Think of how we will conduct ourselves in future desolations
- If we prepare, its power to harm us, when it returns, will be GREATLY DIMINISHED
- Ways to prepare:
  - Ask in prayer for help & strength in areas we know ourselves to be weak
  - Meditate on truths that will sustain in these times
  - Consider the value of desolation to bring growth
  - Reflect on past personal growth through desolation

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# #11 – SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION AND DESOLATION: FINDING OUR BALANCE

- Key is to maintain a balance – so we don't find ourselves “down on the mat” all the time
- Maintain a spiritual equilibrium through daily throne room, worship, prayer, healthy habits
- Memorize and meditate on the Word
- Talk to God about past times of desolation and ask for revelation that will guide in future seasons

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# #12 – STANDING FIRM IN THE BEGINNING

- Standing firm when temptations or deceptive suggestions of the enemy hit us
  - Remember:
    - The enemy is weak when faced with strength & strong when faced with weakness!
    - If we respond firmly to the enemy's temptations, he will weaken and lose heart
    - If we are weak in confronting the temptations, these temptations will grow stronger and increasingly harder to resist

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# #13 – BREAKING THE SPIRITUAL SILENCE

- The enemy wants us to maintain silence regarding his troubling deceptions so he can work them further into our hearts
- By revealing these deceptions to another spiritual person who understands this tactic, we can recognize & be freed – bring it into the light!
- 2 signs are always present when the enemy is using the tactic of secrecy:
  - We are in a state of spiritual confusion, doubt, or discouragement
  - We are experiencing resistance to speaking with a competent spiritual person to discern with

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# #14 – STRENGTHENING THE WEAK POINT

- The enemy has an astute sense of our weakest points in our spiritual life – this is where he attacks
  - He will continue to attack that same weakness until it is shored up – look for the patterns of attack
  - What might weak points look like:
    - Prayer life is non-existent
    - Unforgiveness, critical spirit, hurtful sarcasm, etc.
    - Numbing out with time wasters
    - Over exerting or over committing
    - You don't know your identity in Christ – you speak over yourself the enemy's identity
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