

"Discernment Has One Primary Function"

The motive for true discernment is never self-promotion or personal gain. Discernment has one primary function: To distinguish between right and wrong so that we may pursue the right and avoid the wrong. It is more a function of the Holy Spirit bearing witness to our spirit than it is of the human mind. Our union with God makes spiritual discernment possible through the process of illumination.



"Discernment Comes Through The Holy Spirit"

Apart from God we are spiritually deaf, dumb and blind. Discernment comes through the Holy Spirit illuminating us as to what is consistent with the Word of God. Paul says in Romans 8 that the Holy **"Spirit bears witness with our spirit..."** Hebrews 5:14 identifies those who have discernment: **"...the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."** Jesus said in John 8:31-32 to the Jews who had believed him, **"If you hold to my teaching, you**

**are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** The Light of God's truth is the only valid weapon against the darkness of deception.

"How Can One Be "Inoculated" Against Deceptions?"

1. Believe God wants you to know—He wants His people free! (John. 8:32; 16:13)
2. Be willing to do His will in advance of knowing it. (James 1:22; John 7:17)
3. Believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and our final authority. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
4. Be diligent in studying God's Word with a humble, teachable attitude. (2 Timothy. 2:15)

"How Can We Sum Up What We Have Learned On This Important Topic?"

It is impossible to have a biblical worldview without believing in the reality of Satan and the serious threat of his dangerous devices—especially deception. Ignorance is not bliss. The better we know what we are up against the more we are to recognize how and when the enemy attacks and the more likely we will be able to resist the fiery darts of the evil one in the strength of the Lord. We are vulnerable to Satan's lies if we fail to exercise mental discipline. We need to take advantage of the resources that God has provided in order to successfully resist the attacks from the evil one—spiritual discernment through the Word and Spirit of God. We overcome the evil one by the blood of the Lamb—when we discover who we are in Christ and learn to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, we will be free from the bondage of Satan's lies . The good news is that we have available to us the first line of defense—the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God .



The biblical picture of Satan is quite different from the popular one. In the Bible, he is not the comical cartoon creature with horns, tail, and pitchfork, ludicrously dressed in long red underwear. Rather, Satan is an adversary, who is clever, crafty, deceptive and dangerous (1 Peter 5:8) **"Be of sober spirit, be on the**

**alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."** Satan knows our weakness and exploits them to great advantage against us. The Bible does not speak so much about the power of Satan as of his extreme subtlety, trickery and deceptiveness. He uses clever wiles, deceptive devices, wily stratagems and deceitful designs. Paul wrote about the evil powers of darkness against which we struggle (Ephesians 6:12) **"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."** And it is in the darkness that we are easily attacked and deceived. Therefore, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, **"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."** Ignorance is not bliss, especially when it comes to knowing our enemy! One of the cardinal rules of military warfare is to know your enemy. The better we know what we are up against, the more likely we are to recognize how and when the enemy attacks and the more likely we will be able to resist the fiery darts of the evil one in the strength of the Lord.

"Satan Is Known By Almost 30 Different Names In Scripture"

The names of a person frequently reveal the nature, activity and mission of a person. Satan is known by almost 30 different names in Scripture, some of which are:

- The adversary (1 Peter 5:8, 9)
- The god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- The prince of the power of the air (Ephesians. 2:1-3)
- The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10; Job 1:6-12)
- The enemy (Matthew 13:39)
- The tempter (Matthew 4:3)
- The roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8-10)
- The father of lies (John 8:44)
- The deceiver (Revelation 12:9)
- The murderer (John 8:44)



**"What Are Some Of The Primary Objectives Of Satan?"**

- 1) To Deceive Us Concerning The True Nature Of Sin.
- 2) To Cause Us To Doubt The Truth Of God's Word
- 3) To Cause Us To Feel Inferior And Inadequate—Low Self-esteem
- 4) To Tempt Us Not To Trust In The Lord.
- 5) To Discourage Us Concerning Our Progress In Spiritual Growth.
- 6) To Disappoint Through The Inconsistency Of Ourselves And Others.
- 7) To Cause Us To Lose Our Vitality And Credibility.
- 8) To Encourage Us To Abandon The Christian Life.
- 9) To Render Us Ineffective And Unfruitful In Our Service Of God.
- 10) To Divide Us From Others Through Unnecessary And Unresolved Conflict.

**"What Are Some Of The Weapons That Satan Has In His Arsenal?"**

- ❖ Fear/False Accusation/Condemnation
  - ❖ Doubt/Misinformation
  - ❖ Anger/Hostility
  - ❖ Worry/Anxiety
  - ❖ Guilt/False Guilt
- ❖ Tempts and blinds by Deception/Lies
  - ❖ Discouragement/Disappointment
  - ❖ Deep Depression
  - ❖ Division/Conflict
- ❖ Ignorance/Misconceptions



**"What Are Some Of The Specific Ways In Which God's Word Says We Deceive Ourselves?"**

1. We deceive ourselves when we hear the word and don't do it—when we fail to practice what we preach: James 1:22—**"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."**
2. We deceive ourselves when, because of our pride, we say we have no sin. We are not sinless saints. We are saints who sin and the church is a hospital for sinners. First John 1:8-10 says, **"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."** James 4:6—**"But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**
3. We deceive ourselves when we think we're something that we are not: Romans 12:3 says, **"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."** Galatians 6:3—**"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."**

4. We deceive ourselves when we mistake the world's wisdom for God's wisdom: 1 Corinthians 3:18-19—**"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness.'" The height of arrogance is to think that we know better than the "all-wise God." Paul said in Romans 1:22—**"Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools."** We cannot match wits with the god of this world, let alone the God of this universe. Whenever we think we can out smart Satan we are candidates for being led astray by his crafty deceitfulness. It's important that we not rely on our own understanding; (Proverbs 3:5, 6) **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."****
5. We deceive ourselves when we think we are religious but do not bridle our tongue. James 1:26—**"If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."**
6. We deceive ourselves when we think we will not reap what we sow. Galatians 6:7—**"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."**
7. We deceive ourselves when we think that we can continually associate with bad company and not be corrupted: 1 Corinthians 15:33—**"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"**

**"What Is More Deceitful Than Anything Else?"**

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS AND DESPERATELY SICK:



WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT? JEREMIAH 17:9

Jeremiah 17:9 says, **"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"** In Ephesians 4:22 Paul tells us to **"Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires."** Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, **"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."** Sin in general, and our human heart in particular, are extremely and inherently sinful. Hebrews 11:25 talks about **"The pleasures of sin for a short time."** Sin appears to be good for a while but that is because it is deceptive. Sin is never in our long-term best interest.

**"What Is Our First Line Of Defense Against Deception?"**

Spiritual discernment is God's antidote or first line of defense against deception. The Word and Spirit of God discern the thoughts and intentions of our hearts and give us the ability to discern—the ability to make proper distinctions. Spiritual discernment presupposes proper motives.