

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

A person can only discern truth through the Spirit of God. Unsaved people can be convicted of sin, the need for right standing with God, and the fact of future judgment. Spiritual discernment starts in the unbelievers under conviction of the Spirit and through cooperation with the Spirit may lead to belief in Jesus, receiving Jesus, regeneration, and the “new creation in Christ”.

John 16:8-11 The Spirit does convict the natural man of sin. The natural man can discern his sin to some extent.

The natural man alone does not discern spiritual truth apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Free-will alone would never bring a man to regeneration without conviction of sin and his cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14

After the natural man responds appropriately to conviction of his sin and the need for righteousness, and once he has cooperated to the point of receiving Christ as Savior and Lord, then he becomes a new creation in Christ and can receive further spiritual discernment from the Spirit of God.

In order to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, the natural man must first receive discernment concerning the gospel of Jesus. Holy Spirit led conviction of sin includes the understanding that sin needs to be killed daily in a person's life and replaced with the fruits of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ living in the believer provides the power. The fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

To receive Jesus, a person is given spiritual discernment as he chooses to follow Jesus with his life. The following are examples of spiritual discernment encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

I want Jesus to enter my life and take control of me.

I want to be obedient to Jesus as I learn His commands.

I want Jesus to be my Deliverer from sin in my life.

I want Jesus to be my LORD and Master of my life.

I turn from any other way to be right with God except through Jesus.

I believe that when I prayed to Jesus to save me He released me from the penalty of my sin.

I believe that "forgiveness of my sin" means that I am released from the penalty of my sin and that God will continue His work of releasing me from the power of sin and finally complete His work of releasing me from the presence of sin.

God's forgiveness of sin should be recognized as a release from bondage of sin.

God's forgiveness of sin does not mean that:

Sin is okay, or that I will escape the bad consequences of my sin.

Born again believers still pay for their sin in this life and in life to come. In eternity, believers can have loss of reward because of personal sin in this life.

Misunderstanding of God's forgiveness of sin leads some people to become rocky ground hearers of the gospel. Rocky ground hearers are not born again because they have believed in a false Jesus.

Seed that falls upon the rocky soil, results when the hearer perceives the false Jesus who only provides a supposed heavenly transaction. The perceived false Jesus provides a ticket for release from the consequences of sin. The false Jesus is thought to have taken on the guilt of the believer and has been punished in place of the believer. The false Jesus is thought to have become sin so that a transfer of guilt to Jesus and a transfer of his righteousness to the believer transactionally occurred. Belief in the false Jesus does not produce the new birth. Without faith in the true Jesus, regeneration can not occur in the rocky soil believer. No root

can occur. True faith in the true Jesus is the mechanism of connection by which the believer is firmly established in Christ. The believer must be born again of the Spirit of the living Christ and this new creation provides stability, nourishment, and staying power in Christ and His love.

Belief in the false Jesus gives false hope, false assurance of salvation, and faith in the deliverer of the false salvation rather than true faith in the real Jesus. This rocky soil believer has been so deceived that recovery can only come about by true heartache over personal sin and the realization of his lostness and that he never believed in the transformational power of the real Jesus.

The real Jesus brought condemnation of sin, victory over sin, and the right as Last Adam to rescue the believer in Him from sin. The good soil is the person who truly received Jesus as Savior and Lord and wants to be rescued from sin.