

Discernment

Discernment is one of those quiet, powerful traits that grows with maturity. It's more than just knowing the difference between right and wrong—it's the ability to sense what's wise, what's true, and what's best in each situation. It's like having a spiritual compass that helps us navigate decisions, relationships, and even our own emotions.

This month, we're focusing on Discernment. We'll be looking at it through some unusual lenses—creatures that use amazing senses to detect danger, plants that react to light and shadow, and even natural patterns that give early warnings. We'll also explore lesser-known Bible stories of people who needed wisdom in difficult or confusing situations.

Discernment helps us pause and ask: "What is really going on here?" It gives us clarity in a noisy world and helps us listen for God's guidance above all else.

As always, this chapter is designed for all ages. You can use it in a group or with just one child. Each week includes a Bible story, questions, journal prompts, and activities for different age groups. At the end of the chapter, you'll find a wrap-up section to help you reflect and celebrate the growth that's taken place.

You'll also find two printable pages to help you anchor the month's focus in your home or classroom.

Character Trait of the Month: Discernment

Definition for Children:

Discernment means telling the difference between what's good and what's not—and choosing what's right, even when it's hard to see clearly.

Definition for Parents/Leaders:

Discernment is spiritual insight. It's the ability to sense truth, recognize danger, and make wise decisions based on God's Word and His Spirit's leading.

What Discernment Looks Like:

- Thinking before reacting
- Noticing what's really happening in a situation
- Choosing what's wise, not just what's easy
- Listening to God's voice when making decisions

What Discernment Does Not Look Like:

- Going along with the crowd without thinking
- Jumping to conclusions or acting out of emotion
- Believing something just because it sounds nice
- Ignoring warning signs or red flags

Memory Verse for the Month:

“Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go.” — Proverbs 2:9

Suggested Printables for This Month:

1. Printable Character Poster
2. Printable Memory Verse Page

Week 1: The Discernment of a Moth and Elijah’s Gentle Whisper

Discernment often starts with paying attention to what guides you. Some things look bright or exciting but lead us off track. Others are quiet and steady—and lead us exactly where we need to go. This week, we’ll learn from the moth and how it follows the moon, and from the prophet Elijah, who learned to listen for God’s still, small voice.

When we tune our hearts to God’s truth, we can walk with clarity—even in the dark.

Animal Study: The Moth

Moths are nocturnal insects that use the moon to guide their flight. Their internal sense of direction is based on staying at a constant angle to the light of the moon. But when artificial lights like porch bulbs or flashlights come around, moths often spiral toward them instead, getting confused and off course.

This teaches us an important lesson: not every light is trustworthy. Moths remind us that staying focused on the true light—God’s guidance—keeps us on the right path. Discernment means knowing which “light” to follow and which ones are just distractions.

Discussion Questions: The Moth and Discernment

1. How does a moth usually find its way in the dark?
2. Why do artificial lights confuse moths?
3. What kinds of “false lights” might distract us in life?
4. What helps you tell the difference between what’s true and what’s just popular?
5. How can staying close to God’s Word keep us from going off course?
6. When have you followed something that seemed good at first but wasn’t?

Bible Story Connection: Elijah Hears the Whisper

Read 1 Kings 19:9–13 together.

Elijah was hiding in a cave, scared and tired. He had seen God do amazing things, but now he felt alone and unsure. God told him to stand on the mountain, and then came a powerful wind, an earthquake, and a fire—but God wasn't in any of those. Then came a gentle whisper. That's when Elijah knew God was near.

God often speaks in quiet, gentle ways—not in loud shows or flashy signs. Discernment means learning to recognize His voice in the stillness.

Discussion Questions: Elijah and the Whisper

1. Why was Elijah hiding in the cave?
2. What did he expect God's voice to sound like?
3. Why do you think God came in a whisper instead of something big and loud?
4. What does this story teach us about how to hear from God?
5. When do you find it easiest to listen for God's voice?
6. How can you make space in your life to hear Him more clearly?

Journal Prompts:

1. Write about a time you listened to the wrong voice and how it turned out.
2. What "false lights" are easy to chase in today's world?
3. How can you train your heart to follow God's voice like the moth follows the moon?
4. Describe what it feels like to hear God in a whisper.
5. Where in your life do you need more clarity and discernment right now?
6. Write a prayer asking God to help you tell the difference between truth and distraction.

Activity Suggestions by Age Group

Elementary:

- Make a paper moth craft and draw a bright moon to guide it.
- Act out the story of Elijah—wind, earthquake, fire, and whisper.
- Play a “true light” game: shine two flashlights and ask which one to follow, practicing choosing wisely.

Middle School:

- Research how moths navigate at night and share with the group.
- Write a short reflection: “Not every light is worth chasing.”
- Design a quiet space at home for thinking and listening to God.

High School:

- Reflect on how media or peer pressure can be “false lights.”
- Journal about how to create more stillness in a noisy world.
- Study other Bible verses about listening for God’s voice and write a devotional.

Week 2: Owls and Solomon's Wisdom

Discernment often involves quiet observation, careful thinking, and the ability to separate truth from lies. This week, we'll learn from one of God's most quietly powerful creatures—the owl. Then we'll turn to the story of King Solomon and how he used discernment to lead God's people with wisdom.

Discernment isn't about having all the answers—it's about seeking God for clarity and listening carefully before making a decision.

Animal Study: The Owl

Owls are often symbols of wisdom, but it's not just because they *look* smart with their big, thoughtful eyes. God designed them with special abilities that make them excellent at watching, listening, and acting only when the time is right. Unlike birds that make lots of noise and flap around during the day, owls remain calm and still, observing everything around them before they move.

They remind us that discernment starts with noticing—paying attention to what's happening, waiting before we speak or act, and learning to trust what we know to be true instead of jumping to conclusions.

Discussion Questions: The Owl and Discernment

1. How does an owl show quiet observation before acting?
2. Why do you think God gave owls such powerful hearing and vision?
3. What can we learn from the way owls stay calm and focused instead of flapping around?
4. How is silent flight like using discernment in how we speak or act?
5. In what ways can you practice being more watchful and wise in your everyday choices?

Bible Story Connection: Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Read 1 Kings 3:3–14 together.

When Solomon became king after his father David, God appeared to him in a dream and asked what he wanted. Solomon could have asked for anything—riches, power, victory—but he asked for *wisdom*. He wanted a discerning heart to govern well and know right from wrong.

God was pleased with his request. He gave Solomon not only wisdom, but also long life, wealth, and honor. Solomon’s story reminds us that discernment begins with humility—knowing we *need* God’s help to understand what’s right.

Discussion Questions: Solomon’s Wisdom (1 Kings 3:3–14)

1. Why do you think Solomon asked for wisdom instead of something else?
2. What does it mean to have a “discerning heart”?
3. How do you ask God for help when you don’t know what to do?
4. What are some situations where you’ve had to choose between right and wrong?
5. What can we learn from the way Solomon humbled himself before God?
6. What would you ask God for if He offered you anything?

Journal Prompts:

1. Write about a time you made a good choice after thinking and praying first.
2. What does it mean to be “slow to speak and quick to listen”?
3. Describe how an owl stays quiet and observes. What can you learn from that?
4. If you were given Solomon’s offer, what would you ask God for and why?
5. How do you know when something is right or wrong in your heart?
6. Write a prayer asking for a wise and discerning heart like Solomon’s.

Activity Suggestions by Age Group

Elementary:

- Make an owl craft and talk about what makes owls special.
- Play a “quiet listening” game where kids close their eyes and name every sound they hear.
- Read the story of Solomon and act it out with puppets or stuffed animals.

Middle School:

- Research different owl species and how their eyes and ears help them hunt.
- Write a short story titled “The Wise Choice” based on a fictional character making a hard decision.
- Create a journal page listing ways to tell truth from lies in daily life.

High School:

- Reflect in writing: “What does it mean to have wisdom in a noisy world?”
- Study Proverbs 4 and summarize what it teaches about seeking wisdom.
- Write a prayer or poem based on Solomon’s request for discernment.

Week 3: The Discernment of the Deer and Abigail's Wisdom

Some animals survive not through strength or aggression, but through stillness and awareness. This week, we look at the deer—a creature that teaches us the value of quiet discernment—and we pair it with the story of Abigail, a woman who stepped in with wisdom, courage, and peace when a dangerous situation was unfolding.

Discernment often means noticing what others miss, slowing down before reacting, and choosing peace over pride.

Animal Study: The Deer

Deer are naturally cautious and alert. They sense danger early, not because they are loud or showy, but because they are tuned in to their surroundings. They pause, listen, and move with purpose. That kind of sensitivity is a picture of discernment—paying attention to what's happening, reading the situation wisely, and moving carefully instead of rushing in.

In the wild, a deer may notice a rustle in the bushes before any other animal. It will freeze, assess, and act based on what it discerns. It's not about fear—it's about wisdom and awareness.

Discussion Questions: The Deer and Discernment

1. How does the deer show caution and awareness in its environment?
2. Why is it important to pause and observe before acting?
3. What happens when we rush into a situation without paying attention?
4. How can being still and watchful help you make better choices?
5. What can we learn from the deer about handling emotions and reactions?

Bible Story Connection: Abigail Acts with Discernment

Read 1 Samuel 25:1–35 together.

David was angry—furious, even. Nabal had insulted him, and David planned to take revenge. But Nabal’s wife, Abigail, heard what happened and acted quickly. She prepared food, met David with respect, and spoke with wisdom. Her calm, thoughtful response changed the outcome entirely.

Abigail could have stayed silent or joined her husband in pride. Instead, she used discernment—reading the situation clearly, stepping in with peace, and protecting her household from disaster.

Discussion Questions: Abigail (1 Samuel 25)

1. What did Abigail do that showed discernment?
 2. How did her actions change David’s plans?
 3. What do you think would have happened if she hadn’t stepped in?
 4. When have you seen someone stop a situation from getting worse with wisdom?
 5. How can you practice Abigail’s kind of discernment in your home or friendships?
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Journal Prompts

1. Write about a time when slowing down helped you make a better decision.
 2. How are you learning to notice things that others might miss?
 3. What’s something you feel God is showing you to handle with wisdom?
 4. Describe how the deer uses stillness and what that means for you spiritually.
 5. Write a prayer asking God to help you be more aware and wise in your choices.
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Activity Suggestions by Age Group

Elementary:

- Create a simple deer craft and talk about their senses.
- Act out a quiet nature walk, practicing being alert like a deer.
- Role-play the story of Abigail with toy figures or costumes.

Middle School:

- Research how deer communicate and how their senses help them survive.
- Write a short skit where someone stops a conflict with discernment.
- Make a journal page titled “Pause, Pray, Proceed” with drawings or words.

High School:

- Reflect in writing: “What does spiritual discernment look like in a noisy world?”
- Read Proverbs 15:1 and discuss how gentle words can change outcomes.
- Write a modern-day version of Abigail’s story as if it happened today.

Week 4: The Discernment of the Spider and the Wise Woman of Abel

As we close this month's focus on discernment, we turn to a small and often overlooked creature—the spider—and to a lesser-known story in the Bible about a woman who used wisdom to save an entire city.

Discernment isn't always loud or dramatic. Sometimes, it works quietly behind the scenes, patiently weaving something strong—just like a spider spinning its web.

Animal Study: The Spider

Spiders are master builders. They spin intricate webs with careful planning and precision. Each thread is placed intentionally, with attention to tension, spacing, and connection points. They do not rush. They work silently, but their creations are strong enough to catch prey and withstand the wind.

A spider teaches us that discernment takes patience. It's about knowing when to move, when to stay still, and how to build something wisely over time. Even though many people fear spiders, they play an important role in nature—controlling pests and showing us what thoughtful, persistent work can accomplish.

Discussion Questions: The Spider and Discernment

1. How does the spider build its web, and what does that teach you?
2. What would happen if the spider didn't pay attention while building?
3. Why is patience important when we're making decisions?
4. How can careful planning help you avoid trouble?
5. When have you had to stop and rebuild something in your life?

Bible Story Connection: The Wise Woman of Abel Saves Her City

Read 2 Samuel 20:14–22 together.

A rebel named Sheba threatened the kingdom, and Joab came after him, surrounding the city of Abel. War was about to break out. But one wise woman stepped forward. She spoke up, asked questions, listened, and made a plan. Her calm, thoughtful actions saved the entire city without a single battle.

She didn't use force or fear. She used discernment—understanding what was happening, choosing the right words, and acting for peace.

Discussion Questions: The Wise Woman of Abel (2 Samuel 20:14–22)

1. What did the woman in the story do that was wise?
2. How did she bring peace in a dangerous situation?
3. What might have happened if she hadn't spoken up?
4. Why does it take courage to be discerning?
5. When have you seen quiet wisdom make a big difference?

Journal Prompts

1. Describe a time when you had to pause and think before acting.
2. What does the spider teach you about building something with care?
3. How can you be like the wise woman in situations of conflict?
4. What does it mean to “speak with wisdom” instead of reacting?
5. Write a prayer asking for wisdom in how you use your words and actions.

Activity Suggestions by Age Group

Elementary:

- Make a paper spider web craft using yarn and a paper plate.
- Act out a story about a spider patiently building and repairing its web.
- Practice a role-play about using calm words in a disagreement.

Middle School:

- Research different kinds of spider webs and how they're made.
- Write a diary entry from the wise woman's perspective.
- Create a visual map of “wise vs. foolish” choices in everyday life.

High School:

- Reflect in writing: “Discernment isn't loud—it's strong.”
- Study other women in the Bible known for wisdom and create a short report.
- Write a modern retelling of the story from 2 Samuel 20, applying it to a current event or situation.