References


Fr. Francis McAlloon, SJ, Power Point Lecture for Discernment in Christian Tradition, Module 2, Week 1, ”The Life of Anthony,” Fordham University GRE Blackboard.

Fr. Francis McAlloon, SJ, Power Point Lecture for Discernment in Christian Tradition, Module 2, Week 2, ”Evagrius, Cassian & Climacus,” Fordham University GRE Blackboard.


Photos

Taken by the Lee Family, Grand Canyon & Sedona, March 2017.

Contact Us

If you have any questions concerning the content in this booklet, please contact:

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Wisdom from the Desert

BOOKLET FOR TEENS ON THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

Lisa Lee
Choose Love

make difficult decisions in life.

We must pursue a life of virtue, prayer, 

Even if, the Early Church Fathers teach each 

Eventually, we learn that choices that bring 

How can you discern the will of God?

Pray, Pray, Pray

How to Exercise Good Discernment

Practice Makes Perfect

Climbing the Ladder

Who were they?

When did they live?

What is Discernment

The Early Church Fathers

The Middle Way

Beware of the Deceiver and the Viper!

All three of the Early Church Fathers teach each

McAlpino, PP Mod2, Wk2

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The Middle Way

John Cassian (365-435 A.D.) preached that people should live according to a "Middle Way," which is restraint between a life of discipline & simplicity, and a life of excess & self-indulgence. (McAloon, PP Mod2, Wk2)
He wrote that discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It can only grow through humility, being honest by making our thoughts and actions transparent, and consulting with elders in the Church when making decisions. (Cassian, 90-93)

Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Climbing the Ladder

John Climacus (579-649 A.D.) is another church father that described discernment as "understanding the will of God in all times, in all places, in all things." (Climacus, 229) Climacus taught that seekers climb a spiritual "ladder of ascent", which starts with detachment from the world and material things and finally ends living a life in union with God. (McAloon, PP Mod2, Wk2)

Although Climacus' ladder of growth can be a challenge, he still takes into account human weakness. He advises that we should be shrewd and know when to stand and fight against sin and when to choose to walk away. Once a person is adept at climbing the ladder, they will be able to tell whether a thought comes from themselves, from God or from the demons. (Climacus, 255)

What is Discernment?

Discernment of Spirits

Discernment of Spirits or just plain "Discernment" is a term used by Christians to describe how to make solid decisions, even in the toughest of times.

What do you mean by "spirits?"

The Early Church Fathers described "good spirits" and "evil spirits" as those forces that push us toward God or pull us away from him. Their language included the use of devils and demons to describe evil forces. Today, we don't use this exact language. Instead, we understand that there are thoughts and actions in life that can bring us closer to the love of God, or pull us away from his love and light. (McAloon, PP Mod2, Wk2)
Who were the Early Church Fathers?

The Early Church Fathers

When did they live?

St. Antony (died 356 A.D.) was believed to be the first monk to practice an ascetic life in the desert during the 4th century. This means the lived a life of discipline which included fasting, prayer, scripture reading, abstinence and solitude.

(Cassian, 41)

The Desert Fathers practiced Contemplation, which means they made it a habit to fix their minds on God.

Evagrius also cautioned to beware of the Viper. The Viper tricks those already living a simple life into thinking that they must give up more and more, until finally they become deceived and guilty. The Viper can be defeated by remembering our earth, our desire that is our enemy. "Deceiver" can take our focus away from holiness and towards things of the world. The Deceiver can take our focus away from God.

Evagrius the Solitary (345-399)

The Deluder (Evagrius, 44)

Why we became jealous, angry, or churlish and thinking only about our own thoughts and pleasures can be defeated by examining our own thoughts and pleasures. Evagrius taught that the Deceiver people to desire wealth and glory. "Deceiver" can take our focus away from holiness and towards things of the world. The Deceiver can take our focus away from God.

Evagrius the Solitary (345-399)

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Evagrius also cautioned to beware of the Viper. The Viper tricks those already living a simple life into thinking that they must give up more and more, until finally they become dejected and quit. The Viper can be defeated by remembering our earth, our desire that is our enemy. "Deceiver" can take our focus away from holiness and towards things of the world. The Deceiver can take our focus away from God.

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