



BIBLICAL & SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

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Outline

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- Introduction

- What is Discernment?
 - ▣ The Why and the How Come?

- Biblical Discernment

- Spiritual Discernment



A Little Humor

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Why Is This Teaching Important?

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Biblical and Spiritual discernment is an area where most Christians stumble.

Many Christians exhibit little ability to measure the things they are taught against the infallible standard of God's Word, and they find themselves engaging in all kinds of unbiblical decision-making and behavior.

We are supposed to arm ourselves and take a decisive, biblical stand against the onslaught of false teachings, unbiblical thinking and attitudes and snares placed before us by an enemy who seeks to deceive us.

Scripture: Proving and Testing

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1st Thessalonians 5:21,22: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. (KJV)

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. (NASB)

- We have a responsibility to discern the truth and to avoid any appearance of evil in the world.
- God does not want us “tossed to and fro” by every wind of doctrine (**Ephesians 4:14**) and misled and deceived by seducing spirits (**1 Tim 4:1**)

Prove All Things

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- **Prove all things** - Subject everything (i.e. teachings) spoken to you to be believed after it is properly tested & vetted.

- **Prove** - to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (**to see whether a thing is genuine or not**); to recognize as genuine after examination
 - Stop taking whatever is shared with you for granted – give some scrutiny to it
 - Why? **Read 2nd Peter 2:1-3,18; Matthew 24:4,5; Colossians 2:8**

- When a test has been made (according to the standard of God's Word and the discernment of spirit, also from among reliable leaders), we then **hold fast to what is good.** 10/14/2015

Abstain from Evil's Form

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- **Abstain from every form of evil:** When the testing is made, any aspect of evil must be rejected.
 - ▣ Let not the form of it, symbol, appear with or among you, much less the substance – **If evil has form and appearance then it can be recognized.**
 - ▣ Abstain from all appearance of evil to include doctrinal evil - **wherefore all new words and phrases of this kind should be shunned** (Clarke)
 - ▣ Be careful, when you hear teachers of the Word, change words from original manuscript for when you change the word of something, you sometimes change the nature of it

Word Changes

"For we are not as many, which CORRUPT the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." 2 Corinthians 2:17

- Example: The NIV Bible is becoming “Gender-Neutral”
- **Diluting the Gospel** – To “dilute” means : to make thinner, to lessen strength, to adulterate, to reduce value or efficiency, to make fainter, or to water down. Examples:
 - ▣ Sin – “Missing the Mark” (This is not archery)
 - ▣ Faith – “Positive Thinking” – A marketing strategy
 - ▣ Christ is replaced as “God” – Denies the deity of Christ and reduces “God” to a universal term

Scriptures References: **Caution!**

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- **Deuteronomy 4:2** "Ye shall NOT ADD UNTO THE WORD which I command you, NEITHER SHALL YE DIMINISH OUGHT FROM IT, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
- **Jeremiah 23:36** "for **YE HAVE PERVERTED THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD**, of the LORD of hosts our God."
- **2 Corinthians 4:2** "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, **NOR HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD DECEITFULLY**; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."



Benefit of Proper Discernment

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1 Thessalonians 5:23 - Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)

1 Thessalonians 5:23 - And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [separate you from profane things, make you pure and wholly consecrated to God]; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound and complete [and found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). (Amplified)

Discernment Preserves & Protects You

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- **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely:** The idea behind the word **sanctify** is "to set apart" - to make something different and distinct, breaking old associations and forming a new association.
 -
 - For example, a dress is a dress; but a wedding dress is *sanctified* - set apart for a special, glorious purpose. God wants us to be *set apart* to Him. (Guzik)
- 2 Corinthians 7:1 - Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The Wisdom of God – Proverbs 3

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My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Vs. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones.

21 My son, let not them (God's commandments) depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: 22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. 23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

Benefits of Walking in Truth

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3 John 1: 2-4

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

3 For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. 4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.



That Thou May Prosper

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- God wants us to walk in the truth of His Word – There are lasting benefits for walking in the Word
 - ▣ Prosper – means that it may be well on your journey; a blessed life
- Some have wrongly taken this as a guarantee of perpetual wealth and perfect health for the Christian.
- One aspect of this scripture leads to more than just prospering of the soul through the Word of God, but that the soul be “without error”
 - ▣ Soul prospereth – advancing in the knowledge of the truth

What is Discernment?

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- In its simplest definition, discernment is nothing more than the ability to decide between truth and error, right and wrong.
- Discernment is the process of making careful distinctions in our thinking about truth as it relates to competing philosophies, culture, or events
- A discerning mind demonstrates wisdom and insight that go beyond what is seen and heard.
 - God's Word is "spiritually discerned." To the human mind without the Spirit, the things of God are "foolishness" (1st Cor 2:14). The Spirit, then, gives us spiritual discernment.

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Discernment

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- Those who desire to walk uprightly before God realize the importance of discernment
 - Hosea 14:9 - Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, **and the just shall walk in them:** but the transgressors shall fall therein.
 - And the transgressors shall fall therein - Literally, “shall stumble thereon” (Psalms 119:165). Transgressors, i. e., those who rebel against the law of God, “stumble” in divers manners, not “in,” but “at” the ways of God.

Discernment is a Choice

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- There are those who are “willingly” ignorant of God’s Word and the things revealed to them by the Spirit of God.
- 1 Corinthians 14:38 - But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.
- Ephesians 4:17,18: This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:
 - **This scripture denotes willful blindness and ignorance**

Discernment is a Choice

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- Many people, to include carnal Christians, seek not to know the things of God because knowledge brings with It accountability
- In Acts 7:51-60 and notice especially v. 57. "Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears." WHY? They did not want to know the truth about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
- This is true in our day as well. There are multitudes of people who do not want to "know" the things of God because they do not want to "do" the things of God. **They are willingly ignorant**

Discernment is a Choice

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Romans 1:28 - And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

- The key to living an uncompromising life lies in one's ability to exercise discernment in every area of his or her life.
 - ▣ For example, failure to distinguish between truth and error leaves the Christian open and subject to all manner of false teaching and seducing spirits. False teaching then leads to an unbiblical mindset, which results in an unfruitful and disobedient lifestyle.



What You Value You Investigate

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- One of the reasons for limited biblical and spiritual discernment is that many believers give little time to it
- We believe the “30 Minute Sermon” is more than enough and some allow complacency to keep them from studying and Meditating God’s Word



The Word of God Was Rare

1 Samuel 3:1 - NOW THE boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. The word of the Lord was rare and precious in those days; there was no frequent or widely spread vision.

- **The word of the Lord was precious** - There were but few revelations from God; and because the word was scarce, therefore it was valuable.
- **The word of the LORD rare in those days** because of the hardness of heart among the people of Israel and the corruption of the priesthood. God will speak, and guide, when His people seek Him, and when His ministers seek to serve Him diligently.

The Word of God Precious

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- *There was no frequent or widely spread vision - there was* no publicly known prophet raised up, to whom the people could receive counsel, direction, and instruction in divine things
 - ▣ Proverbs 29:18 – “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”
 - ▣ Keep in mind that the word, “perish” means to cast off restraint which means that there is disorder
 - ▣ *Where there is no prophetic vision or revelation from God the people cast off restraint, no longer faithfully interpreting God’s Word and His Laws.*

“Are You Hungry”

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Amos 8:11 - Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

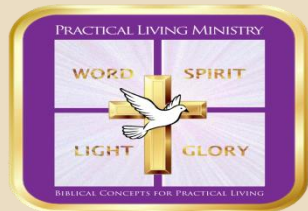
- *If there is no hunger for God’s Word nor thirst for Living Water, people will not pursue or dedicate themselves to properly discerning God’s Words or the words of others*
- *I believe that many of our spiritual leaders are “mis-reading” God’s intent: They focus on so many who have little appetite for the truth and neglect those who are truly starving to receive hope, comfort, direction, and strength from God’s Word*

Hungry for God's Word

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Notice carefully the nature of this **famine**. It is not a lack of Gods Word, but a **famine . . . of *hearing the words of the LORD***. It is not a case of God withholding His revelation; but of people being in such a state that they do not see it, do not hear the words. (Morgan)

*1st Thessalonians 2:13 properly describes the right way to hear the Word of God: “**When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**”*



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