

Principles of Biblical Discernment

- 1) As believers we have the ability to examine various issues and concepts and make a determination as to whether they are right or wrong, good or bad, etc.
- 2) The discerning believer possesses the ability to understand and discriminate in various matters due to his knowledge of sound doctrine.
- 3) Sound doctrine as a whole functions as the sounding board by which we can compare various ideas, concepts, beliefs, philosophies, etc.
- 4) In addition to the knowledge of sound doctrine, biblical discernment is dependant upon the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.
- 5) During 1st advent, the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus Christ as a ministry that would provide additional information and insight to believers in His absence (John 14:17, 16:13, 1 Cor. 2:12).
- 6) Hence the FGHS is critical to exercising correct discernment (1 Cor. 2:15).
- 7) Under the FGHS and armed with sound doctrine, the believer is enabled to judge wisely between facts and conditions without being swayed by personal prejudice, emotion or other outside factors (e.g. principles of worldly wisdom, Col. 2:23).
- 8) In the last days the believer is bombarded with an incredible amount of evil through various mediums (e.g. print, internet, lectures, etc.).
- 9) We must be very careful to discriminate between what constitutes human viewpoint and what is in accordance with divine viewpoint.
- 10) We are in the AC so we must tenaciously hold on to the truth, refusing to compromise the Bible doctrine, and not let our guard down (Eph. 6:12, 1 Tim. 4:1-3, 1, 1 Peter 1:13, 5:8, John 2:18).
- 11) No one is immune from being influenced by the OSN or external evil under the right circumstances (e.g. Solomon, Gideon, etc.).
- 12) Biblical discernment is demonstrated in the correct application of sound doctrine in one's niche (Prov. 28:7 cf. James 3:13).
- 13) Conversely, as in the case of many believers, a lack of discernment is demonstrated by the misapplication or lack of application of God's directive will. Examples:
 - a) Jonah.
 - i) He was a prophet who received a direct command from God to go on a mission to Nineveh.
 - ii) The prophet was given the "where," "what," and "why" of his assignment so really there wasn't much to "discern" (**Jonah 1:1-2** The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, ²

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"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.").

- iii) Yet, despite knowing what to do, he allowed himself to be influenced by his emotions, and consequently made a critical error in judgment (**Jonah 1:3** But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.).
- b) Gideon.
 - i) Tested God on numerous occasions (John 6:36-40).
 - ii) Due to various factors, he participated in idolatry and polygamy (Judges 8:27, 30-31).
- 14) A believer must first possess some knowledge of the Truth (i.e. wisdom) in order to exercise some biblical discernment.
- 15) The learning process begins in Bible class (**Hebrews 10:25** not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.).
 - a) Diligently pay attention to the teaching (cf. Prov. 2:2).
 - b) Be humble and recognize that you as a believer need sound doctrine (Psa. 25:8-9, 8:5, 15:33, James 1:19-21).
- 16) Merely gathering knowledge or information in Bible class is insufficient. A believer must **use** the knowledge gained in Bible class to discriminate between what is and what is not proper in his niche (James 1:22).
- 17) Sound wisdom and biblical discernment are linked (Prov. 10:13, 16:21, Phil. 1:9).
- 18) Various traits exhibited by believers who exercise biblical discernment.
 - a) The abandonment of human viewpoint and acceptance of the Divine viewpoint (Isa. 55:7-9).
 - b) The recognition of the importance of sound doctrine (cf. Psa. 19:7-11, 138:2).
 - c) The ability to distinguish between good and evil (Heb. 5:14).
 - d) A zeal to apply God's directive will and avoid evil (Psa. 34:14; 119:59-60).
 - e) Problems, pressures or trials are approached from the standpoint of sound doctrine (Psa. 142:6).
 - f) The examination of self before erroneously judging others (Matt. 7:1-5, Rom. 2:1-3).

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- g) The acceptance of admonishment and exhortation from fellow believers (cf. Rom. 15:14, 1 Thess. 5:14, 2 Thess. 3:15).
 - h) The refusal to develop friendships with those in the world (**James 4:4-5** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?).
 - i) On guard against those who oppose the Truth and are factious (cf. 2 Tim. 4:15, Titus 3:10).
 - j) The recognition of the will of God in all our enterprises (James 4:13-15).
- 19) The discerning believer will strive to be pleasing to God in all his thinking and conduct (Col. 1:10, 1 Thess. 4:1 cf. Heb. 13:16).

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