

DISCERN, DISCERNED, DISCERNER, DISCERNETH, DISCERNING, DISCERNMENT

The woman from Tekoah told David that he was like an angel of God (in the sense that he could **discern** between what was good and what was bad). It seems this was pure flattery, said in an attempt to manipulate him into allowing Absalom to return.

- **2 Samuel 14:17:** "Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee."

When Barzillai told David that he didn't want to go to Jerusalem with him to eat at his table, he said that he could no longer **discern** between good and evil. (In other words, he was old and his judgment had become poor.)

- **2 Samuel 19:35:** "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?"

When Adonijah asked for Abishag as his wife, Bathsheba didn't realize why he made that request. She didn't **discern** his true motive (which was to overthrow Solomon and become king).

- **1 Kings 2:13, 17-18:** "And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably. ... And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. And Bathsheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king."

The reason Solomon asked God for wisdom was so he could be a good king over Israel and **discern** the difference between good and evil. (Even though God gave him the wisdom he requested, that didn't stop him from becoming evil in his old age. People can know the difference between good and evil and still choose evil anyway.)

- **1 Kings 3:5, 9:** "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. ... Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

When Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he could govern the Israelites and **discern** the difference between good and evil, it pleased God.

- **1 Kings 3:5, 9-10:** "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. ... Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing."

It's better to seek wisdom and **discernment** than to seek long life.

- **1 Kings 3:11:** "And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;"

It is better to seek wisdom and **discernment**, to tell the difference between good and evil, than it is to seek riches. (God greatly blessed Solomon when he asked for wisdom instead of the things of this world.)

- **1 Kings 3:11-12:** "And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

God told Solomon that since he asked for understanding and **discernment**, He was going to give him more wisdom than any king who came after him or would come after him.

- **1 Kings 3:12:** "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

God told Solomon that since he asked for understanding and **discernment**, He was also going to give him more riches and honor than any of the other kings who would reign during his lifetime.

- **1 Kings 3:13:** "And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days."

Jehoshaphat had very poor **discernment**. First, he should have never agreed to go fight against the Syrians with Ahab. Second, he should have inquired of the Lord *before* agreeing to join forces with Ahab (not after). Finally, when a prophet of God told him that they would lose their fight with the Syrians, he *definitely* shouldn't have gone. But he did anyway. (Throughout his reign he had a consistent pattern of showing remarkably poor judgment.)

- **1 Kings 22:3-4:** "And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses."

Job told his friends that he was able to **discern** between that which was perverse and that which was good.

- **Job 6:30:** "Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?"

Discernment is something that can be learned. The book of Proverbs can help us learn the difference between wisdom and foolishness.

- **Proverbs 1:1-2:** "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;"

A fool can't **discern** the truth about his actions. (To him his foolish actions make perfect sense.)

- **Proverbs 12:15:** "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise."

We can't use our own feelings to **discern** the difference between right and wrong. (Instead we need the Word of God to show us the difference. There are many paths in life that seem right, but which lead to death.)

- **Proverbs 14:12:** "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

It's good to exercise **discernment** and critically evaluate the things we're told. (Those who believe everything they're told are fools.)

- **Proverbs 14:15:** "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going."

We must exercise **discernment** when it comes to the teachers we're willing to listen to. We must stop listening to those who

lead people astray.

- **Proverbs 19:27:** "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

We need to be **discerning** about who we spend our time with. Those who spend their time around wicked people may become wicked themselves.

- **Proverbs 22:24-25:** "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

If you want to gain **discernment** then seek wisdom.

- **Ecclesiastes 8:5:** "Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

Those who are wise can **discern** true justice.

- **Ecclesiastes 8:5:** "Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

Those who are wise can **discern** the proper time for things.

- **Ecclesiastes 8:5:** "Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

We must exercise **discernment** when someone claims to be

speaking for God. (There are some people who claim to be speaking God's word, but who are actually liars that are speaking out of their own hearts.)

- **Ezekiel 13:2-3:** "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"

The people of Nineveh couldn't **discern** between the right and the left. (In other words, they were spiritually blind.)

- **Jonah 4:11:** "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more then sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Jesus expects religious leaders to be able to **discern** the signs of the times.

- **Matthew 16:3:** "And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"
- **Luke 12:56:** "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?"

The reason the religious leaders asked Jesus for a sign from Heaven was because they couldn't **discern** the signs of the times. Jesus gave *many* signs (including healing the sick,

casting out demons, and *raising the dead*), but they missed all of them.

- **Matthew 16:1-3:** "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

We must learn to be **discerning** when it comes to doctrine (so that we can identify and avoid it).

- **Matthew 16:6, 12:** "Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. ... Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

We must have **discernment** so that we're not led astray by false claims that the Messiah has already returned. (When the Lord Jesus Christ actually returns, it will be obvious to everyone. There will be no hiding it.)

- **Luke 17:23-24** "And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day."

We must have **discernment** so that we're not deceived by

false Messiahs.

- **Luke 21:8:** "And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."

We must do God's will in order to develop **discernment**, and gain the ability to tell the difference between good and evil.

- **John 7:16-17:** "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

We must exercise **discernment** and seek things that are perfect in God's sight. We must accept nothing less than that which is wholly acceptable in His sight, and refuse to partake in anything that's sinful or unclean.

- **Romans 12:2:** "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

We must exercise **discernment** and seek the will of God (not our own will or the will of this world).

- **Romans 12:2:** "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

We must exercise **discernment** so we can tell the difference between good and evil. (Otherwise we won't be able to cleave to the good and abhor the evil.)

- **Romans 12:9:** "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

We must exercise **discernment** so we can find *and avoid* those who cause divisions by bringing sin or false doctrines into the church.

- **Romans 16:17-18:** "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

We don't need to have a deep knowledge of evil. It's enough to have **discernment** so we can recognize evil and avoid it.

- **Romans 16:19:** "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

The reason the wicked can't understand divine revelation is because it's spiritually **discerned**. To people who lack the Holy Spirit (which all unsaved people do) the great truths of God's word appear to be foolish.

- **1 Corinthians 2:14:** "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are

spiritually discerned."

It's not wrong to **discern** what teachings a church is mature enough to handle and deal with them on their level. (However, this is in regard to spiritual maturity, not hiding doctrines they disagree with.) If a church is only able to handle the basics then it's wise to start there, and help them grow over time until they can be taught weightier matters.

- **1 Corinthians 3:2:** "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."

Having less knowledge puts people at a disadvantage because it impairs their ability to **discern** good from evil. (If someone misunderstands a situation, they may be tempted to sin even though the action they saw wasn't sinful at all.)

- **1 Corinthians 8:7, 9:** "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. ... But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."

Those who partake of communion in an unworthy manner lack **discernment**. (This is a serious sin that can lead to *death*. It's astonishing thing to think that the Corinthian church was doing such an incredibly bad job of partaking of the Lord's supper that God killed *many* of them over it.)

- **1 Corinthians 11:29-30:** "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself,

not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

One of the spiritual gifts a Christian can have is the gift of **discernment**, which goes beyond ordinary discernment. (Paul grouped it with working miracles and speaking in tongues, indicating it was something miraculous.)

- **1 Corinthians 12:10:** "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"

It's important to learn **discernment** so that we're not deceived by evil. (If we don't have discernment then evil may appear to be something good.)

- **1 Corinthians 15:33:** "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Paul didn't believe the Corinthian church had **discernment**. He thought if someone preached a false gospel to them, they may well believe it.

- **2 Corinthians 11:4:** "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

The church must learn to **discern** between true apostles and false ones. (There are *many* people who claim to be apostles

but aren't.)

- **2 Corinthians 11:13:** "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."

The church needs to learn **discernment** so it can tell the difference between the servants of God and the servants of the devil. This is very important because the servants of the devil can appear to be righteous.

- **2 Corinthians 11:14-15:** "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

We need to exercise **discernment** so we can tell if someone else is overtaken in a fault (so that we might reach out and help them without getting into trouble ourselves).

- **Galatians 6:1:** "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

We need to exercise **discernment** so that we're not deceived into thinking that actions don't have consequences.

- **Galatians 6:7-8:** "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Even churches that are persecuted (such as the Thessalonian church) must learn to exercise **discernment**.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:21:** "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

It's important for Christians to learn **discernment** so they can tell true doctrines apart from the doctrines of devils.

- **1 Timothy 4:1:** "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"

It takes **discernment** to be a good church leader. (Those who seek to lead the church must be able to tell the difference between truth and lies, so they can reject the lies and teach that which is right.)

- **1 Timothy 4:7:** "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."
- **1 Timothy 6:20-21:** "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen."
- **2 Timothy 2:14:** "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers."

Christians need to learn **discernment** so they can tell the

difference between a wise question (which should be answered) and a foolish one (which should be avoided). (There really are such a thing as bad questions that only lead to fights.)

- **2 Timothy 2:23:** "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."
- **Titus 3:9:** "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain."

The conscience of the wicked is defiled. They don't have the ability to **discern** between good and evil. Since they're corrupt, they look at the world from a corrupt vantage point. To them *everything* looks corrupt.

- **Titus 1:15:** "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

Christians must learn **discernment** to avoid being deceived.

- **Titus 3:3:** "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

The word of God is able to **discern** the thoughts and intents of our heart.

- **Hebrews 4:12:** "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the

joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

All Christians are expected to be able to tell the difference between good and evil. (This means we need to learn **discernment**.) One of the ways we do this is by becoming mature in the faith, *and by practice*.

- **Hebrews 5:14:** "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

We must learn to exercise **discernment** so that we're not led astray by false doctrines.

- **Hebrews 13:9:** "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

Christians should be a thinking people. We should pursue wisdom and **discernment**.

- **1 Peter 1:13:** "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

Christians must develop **discernment** so that we're not led astray by the wicked.

- **2 Peter 3:17:** "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own

stedfastness."

Christians must exercise **discernment** so that we're not led astray by false teachers or false doctrines.

- **1 John 4:1:** "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."