

Pastor Scott L. Harris
Grace Bible Church, NY
May 6, 2014

A Call to Discernment Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Last week we were privileged to have the regional representative of the Voice of the Martyrs, Patrick Vanderbeck, with us to explain their ministry and give the message during the morning worship service. Mr. Vanderbeck not only made us aware of some of the persecution that our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are suffering, but also gave us a strong challenge from 1 Peter 4:12-16 in preparing ourselves for persecution. There is no question that we as Christians will suffer persecution. Jesus warned His disciples in John 15:20, "*A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you . . .*" Paul gave Timothy a direct warning in 2 Timothy 3:12, "*Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*" The only question is the degree of insult, slander and persecution that will come upon us. The 1 Peter 4 passage calls on us to 1) Be prepared, 2) Rejoice in the midst of it, 3) Accept godly suffering, 4) Refuse to be ashamed of Christ or for suffering because of Him. The following websites are helpful resources for you to keep aware, pray for and take action on behalf of other Christians who are suffering for the cause of Christ.

<http://www.icommittoprayer.com/> <http://www.persecution.com/> <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>
<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/>

This morning I am taking a break from our current study of the Sermon on the Mount in order to bring to you an anniversary sermon. Last week I completed my twenty-third year of ministry here at Grace Bible Church, and today I begin my twenty fourth year. There are times that I want to present to you things that have been weighing on my mind and heart and this is a proper occasion for doing so.

About a month or so ago I finally got a chance to begin listening to the *Strange Fire* conference that was held at Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California last October. In the opening message, John MacArthur made a statement about the church being in a crises of discernment. The problems in the church around the world that the conference would be addressing had developed to a large degree because so many professing Christians are lacking discernment. That brought into focus several issues that have arisen within our own church that I have had to deal with over the last six months or so. Though the particular issues are quite diverse, what they all have in common is a lack of discernment. For that reason, I want to give a Call to Discernment.

As a warning, I know that some of what I will say could be taken as offensive to some of you. While I have no desire to unnecessarily offend anyone, I do have a responsibility before God to clearly explain His word and make application of it to the issues of our day. I am asking you in advance to remain calm and carefully consider the Scriptures and their application even if you do not like what I say or how I say it. Take notes and prove yourself to be wise. Proverbs 9:8 states, "*Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.*" If I am wrong on something, then please come and correct me and I will love you for it. If you are wise, you will respond the same way because our mutual goal must be to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ as closely we possibly can. Lovingly challenging each other is part of that.

Defining Discernment

Discernment does seem to be at an all time low. Even what should be very obvious has become confusing to many people. There are many reasons for this, but at the foundation is the loss of how to

determine truth and error and the increasing rejection of the Bible as the word of God. As people increasingly follow the vain philosophies and foolish speculations of men, there is a corresponding reduction in discernment.

According to Webster, to discern is from a root which means “to separate, distinguish between.” It is to “recognize and identify as separate and distinct” and is used in conjunction with both the physical senses, such as in discerning the identify of a flower, and with mental understanding, such as in having good judgment. This is very similar to the meaning of the Hebrew word, בִּינָה / bin, used in Proverbs and variously translated as understand, insight and discern. It includes the concept of being able to distinguishing between things. This is knowledge that is much greater than just having a lot of facts. It can distinguish between those facts along with the ability to use them to make proper judgements. In Proverbs, this is especially applied to distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust. The Greek word group translated as discern or discernment (διάκρισις, διακρίνω / diakrisis, diakrino) is similar in meaning - “to judge that there is a difference or distinction.”

God desires that we develop the ability to detect, recognize and identify things as separate and distinct. We are to develop discernment between that which comes from Him and that which comes from men, between that which is true and that which is false. One of the purposes of the book of Proverbs is “to know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding” (Proverbs 1:2). The wise will “cry for discernment” and seek wisdom so that they can “discern the fear of the Lord” and “discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course” (Proverbs 2:3,5, 9). One of the differences between the mature and immature is having their “senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14). Without the ability to discern, a person remains immature and subject to the false teaching that abounds in our land.

Testing God’s People

God has often tested His people to see whether they would follow Him or not, but it takes discernment to know the difference. Let me point out a few examples.

Exodus 16:4-5 is the first example. The children of Israel are in the wilderness after having been freed from their bondage in Egypt. The food they brought with them is running out and they are beginning to complain. God tells them that He would provide food for them in a special way. 4 *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 “And it will come about on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.”*

Notice that God's plan for providing food for them also included a test of whether they would obey or not. Those familiar with the story know that many did not. Contrary to the command, some tried to store what they gathered overnight and it became wormy and foul. Others failed to follow Moses’ command to gather twice as much on the sixth day for there would not be any on the Sabbath. Some went out anyway, but found no Manna and so went hungry. They were given God’s commands, but they did not obey.

Judges 2:20-23 reveals the specific reason the Lord left so many of the Canaanite people in the land after the conquest. *So the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice, 21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, 22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not. “ 23 So the Lord allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.*

The Philistines, Hivites, Sidonians, Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, and Jebusites, were all left in the land to test Israel whether they would follow the Lord or turn to Idols. Each of those nations became a thorn in the side of Israel for the nation would forsake the Lord and turn to the false worship of the surrounding nations. The Lord would then chastise them causing them to repent after which the Lord granted them a deliverer. It would not take long for the people to turn away from the Lord and go back to the idols of the pagan nations. That cycle was repeated over and over again throughout both the period of the judges and the kings.

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 explains the testing that would come to them in the form of false prophets. *“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 “You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. Note carefully again the end of verse 3, “The Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Over 3,400 years have passed since God gave that warning through Moses, but the truth is still present for today. Peter warns against false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1-3 saying, *“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in [their] greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”* The apostle John also warned of false teachers saying in 1 John 4:1, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

There has not been any fundamental change since those ancient times. Many false religions and cults have developed since then, but they are all still false teachers which God allows to test people whether they will love and follow God or not. It was then and it still is now a two fold test. First, what is the truth about what God has commanded. Second, obedience to that command.

False religions such as Hinduism, paganism, Islam, human secularism, Scientology, Taoism, Jainism, Buddhism, the New Age movement and many others should be obvious, yet many professing Christians adopt ideas from these religions to incorporate with their own beliefs. They seem to be oblivious to the fact that beliefs such as reincarnation and karma and eastern mystical practices such as yoga, transcendental meditation and visualization are antithetical to Biblical doctrine and practice. They lack either basic discernment or are just flagrantly disobedient to God.

There are also the religions and cults that claim to be “Christian” but diverge from the Scriptures and the gospel on essential points. Some of these should be easy to identify because they believe their books are superior to the Bible, they flagrantly contradict the Bible, and they have a different Jesus. For example, the Mormons have many additional sacred books, are polytheistic, believe that *Jesus is a son of a god named Elohim, *Jesus is the brother of Lucifer and became a glorified resurrected man, *that you can also become a god over your own planet if you follow their teachings. Yet there are over 11 million people in this cult and countless millions more think it is just another sect within Christianity. Where is the discernment?

Other cults are a little more difficult to figure out because they do use the Bible and are often very good at twisting Scripture to fit their doctrines. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are a prime example of this as all who have talked with them have experienced. It can take a little time to learn that they can only interpret the Bible according to what the Watchtower society proclaims, that they deny the trinity, that their Jesus is a transmutating created being who was Michael the Archangel, then became the human

Jesus who died on a stake, then was resurrected spiritually but not physically. Over seven million follow this cult. Where is the discernment?

Then there are the many churches that have fallen for the false teachings of theological liberalism which has spread its heretical tentacles not only in the main line denominations, but also throughout many groups claiming to be evangelical. Denial or redefinition of fundamental doctrines replaces salvation from sin by God's grace through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ with something else that leaves the person ignorantly traveling on the broad road to Hell. The Charismatic movement has not helped with its experientially based system of beliefs which leaves the door wide open for all sorts of aberration, heresy and apostasy to enter in. That is the reason Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn and so many others that teach false doctrine are accepted within the movement.

The Lord tolerates false religions, cults, apostates and heretics because each of them is a test for us whether we will follow the Lord or men. You cannot pass the test if you cannot discern the difference between God's revealed truth and the musings of men.

Testing the Prophets

How does a person begin to discern the truth from error? How do you distinguish between what God actually wants and what people claim He wants? Please keep in mind that many if not most people involved in a false religion, cult or aberrant sect are very sincere in their false beliefs and claims.

We begin with Deuteronomy 18 in which Moses foretells the coming of the future prophet Jesus and then address this question about false prophets. Starting in verse 20 Moses states, *"But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."* ²¹ *"And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'"* ²² *"When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."*

A prophet who was not 100% accurate in foretelling the future was to be killed. I already pointed out from Deuteronomy 13 that a prophet encouraging worship of a false god was to be disregarded. He was also to be put to death. I wonder how many of those who make prophetic predictions in our time would dare to do so if this same standard was upheld today? We cannot do that in our time and society, so they proliferate even after they are exposed as frauds. However, the warnings still apply. We must carefully examine what people claim and if it promotes another god, which includes perverted claims about the true God, or makes false predictions, we are not to heed their claims and we are not to be afraid of them. They need to be exposed as false prophets and people warned about them.

Instruction is also given in the New Testament regarding false teachers. Jesus gives a stern warning in Matthew 7:15-23. ¹⁵ *"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* ¹⁶ *"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn [bushes,] nor figs from thistles, are they?"* ¹⁷ *"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit."* ¹⁸ *"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit."* ¹⁹ *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* ²⁰ *"So then, you will know them by their fruits."* ²¹ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."* ²² *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"* ²³ *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*

I already pointed out the warning in 2 Peter 2 about false teachers who *secretly introduce destructive heresies*, promote sensuality, malign the way of truth, and in their greed exploit their followers.

How will you be able to identify the false prophet? By what they teach and the fruit of their lives. Even if they are claiming to be speaking the truth on behalf of God and doing things in His name, if their

lives are marked by practicing lawlessness and living in a manner that departs from God's commands, then they are false. Their doctrine and lives must be compared to the Scriptures.

These are serious responsibilities that belong to every Christian. How then do you mature and develop the needed discernment?

Developing Discernment

The first requirement is that you are a genuine Christian. 1 Corinthians 2:14 states, *"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."* As Paul explains in the passage, you have to have the Spirit of God in order to have the mind of Christ and that comes with becoming a Christian.

The second requirement is that you have to know the word of God for yourself or you can easily fall into being a follower of men instead of God. Consider the commendation that Paul gave to the Bereans in Acts 17:10, *"And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, [to see] whether these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men."*

This is quite a commendation because the Thessalonians were no slouches. Paul praised them in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 saying, *"for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, [that is] Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."*

The Thessalonians responded well to the gospel and had a great impact throughout that region of the world, yet Paul commends the Bereans as being *"more noble-minded."* Why? Because the Bereans went beyond just receiving the gospel message from Paul to examining the Scriptures to make sure what he said was true. The Bible is our source of truth, not the musings of men. This cannot be stressed enough.

Man's wisdom cannot bring about discernment for it cannot give sight to minds blinded by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4) or change our corrupt desires (2 Peter 1:4). The knowledge of man makes him arrogant (1 Corinthians 8:1), and arrogance is a trait of a fool (Proverbs 14:6). It is the scriptures that transform us by the renewing of our minds so that we can discern good and evil, truth and error. As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* Each of us must be diligent to present ourselves *"approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15).

However, the Scriptures by themselves are not enough otherwise those with doctorates from the prestigious divinity schools such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Dartmouth would be the most godly and discerning, but they certainly are not. They have the Scriptures, but they have twisted them by man's wisdom. It also takes a third requirement. You must walk by the Holy Spirit.

The Christian is changed by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:5, Titus 3:5) through God's revelation and as you set your minds on the things above (Colossians 3:2). The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8), enlightens your mind (Ephesians 1:17-18), and teaches you (1 John 2:27), since He is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). This enables the Bible to come alive in you to do its work in dividing even the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews

4:12). You are transformed as your corrupted mind is renewed so that you can live according to God's will (Romans 12:2). The Holy Spirit is also the paraclete, your advocate who indwells and strengthens you (John 14:16-17). Walking by the Spirit will prevent you from carrying out the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:16) and bring His fruit into your life (Galatians 5:22-23).

Discerning Truth and Error

A professing Christian faces grave dangers if they do not develop the ability to discern truth from error by knowing the Scriptures and walking in the Spirit for they will end up following man instead of God. I must emphasize that both knowing the Bible and walking in the Spirit are required. As already pointed out, knowing the Bible without walking in the Spirit results in arrogance and pride. Claiming to walk by the Spirit but not knowing and submitting to the Bible is self-deception. This is the major problem with both the modern Charismatic movement and the emergent church movement. It also shows up among professed evangelicals that we would assume should know better, but often do not. The writings of such people can be very deceptive. An example of this is the devotional book, *Jesus Calling*, by Sarah Young.

I recently did an extensive review of this book. I have placed copies of that review in the back of the church. I know that many people in this church have this book with quite a few receiving it as a gift from some very well intentioned and godly ladies. The fact that even they were deceived only illustrates the dangers that you face unless you are very diligent in being Bereans. The book contains Scripture references at the bottom of each daily devotional and it also uses quite a few phrases that would be assumed to reference Biblical concepts, the main one being some form of "My Presence" which appears in 261 out of 365 devotionals. Most Christians would assume this to refer to Jesus' promised spiritual presence in Matthew 28: 20 or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Only by carefully reading the introduction and noticing that "Presence" was always with a capital P, would you know that the author is actually referring to mystical encounters with a being that produced in her feelings of peace and love, manifested itself at least on some occasions as a golden light, and communicated personal messages to her.

The book is written as if these are the messages that Jesus Himself spoke to her, but what is communicated is usually so vague it could mean anything the reader assumed. However, further analysis proves this is a false Jesus because he says things the Biblical Jesus would not say including things are just plainly heretical even to the point of changing Scripture. For example, on August 10, this pseudo Jesus changes the Biblical reference in Psalm 119:105 from God's word to "My Presence." Several of the devotions place such an emphasis on the importance of being in "My Presence" to the point it actually excludes responsibilities commanded by God. In short, the book is both heretical and very dangerous because of its strong push to get other people to practice Mrs. Young's form of mystical devotions to receive personal messages from a spirit wrongly assumed to be Jesus. It is demonic, yet it remains a best seller and is flooding into even evangelical and fundamental Christian circles.

We are to be Bereans who examine everything by the Scriptures. That includes everything I teach or preach. Beside, with my last name you would be in trouble following my teaching anyway because it would be "Harrisey." Yes, a bad word play, yet a truth too. I was not called to make disciples of me, but of Jesus Christ and to teach them to observe whatsoever things He has commanded. You have been given the same commission (Matthew 28:19-20). People should imitate you only to the degree that you imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Do not fall into the trap of following men. The reality is that even the good ones are going to err somewhere along the way because none of us has all knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Godly people will increase in these areas over the years and become more humble as well as discerning and stronger in their convictions. They will recognize errs in their earlier works and the vulnerability to errs in the present and so will desire to be corrected as David expressed in Psalm

140:5, *Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it. . .*”

We also need to recognize the opposite happens. There are those that start off well, but then veer off course or finally write or speak enough that their errors get exposed. Those may be just quirks and aberrations, but it can also go to the extreme of apostasy (1 John 1:19). Charles Templeton (1915-2001) is an example. In the 1940's he had greater prominence as an evangelist than his friend, Billy Graham. Templeton ended up as an agnostic with his autobiography entitled, *Farewell to God*.

I have all sorts of books in my library and we have used the works of many, many authors over the years as study aides in our Bible studies. Every work of every author and teacher must be considered with a discerning mind to compare it to the Scriptures. Certainly some are more trustworthy than others, but anyone can err. Our eyes must be fixed on Jesus for He is the author and finisher of our faith and no one else (Hebrews 12). If an author or teacher has been helpful to you, then praise God, but to the degree you become defensive because you like him or her instead of examining their teaching in light of the Scriptures, your eyes have shifted off of Christ.

An example of this was a Beth Moore DVD series we purchased a couple of years ago that was a remake of a book we used many years earlier. The changes in it highlighted some teachings that were at best questionable. This created some contention between some of the ladies. We don't throw out the baby with the bath water, but we do want to throw out the bath water. If Beth Moore has been helpful to you, then praise God, but you must examine what she teaches in the light of the Scriptures just as you must everyone else. In researching *Jesus Calling*, I was disappointed to learn that Beth Moore recommended it for her followers on December 14, 2011. A little more research showed that at times she needs to be either more careful with her words or she also believes in receiving direct revelation from God in a manner similar to Sarah Young with a form of contemplative prayer. Be a Berean for that is the only way you can remain a follower of Jesus Christ and not be side tracked by following a man or woman.

According to Ephesians 4:11-16 one of our protections against deceptions is for the whole body, the church, to mature together by every member using their spiritual gifts. The overall health of any local church is in part dependent on its people walking together with Christ and practicing all the one another commands. You must do your part to mature and protect the rest of the body from being tossed about by the winds of doctrine, the trickery of men and the craftiness in deceitful scheming that abound around us.

Conclusions

Discernment is seriously lacking in our time in all areas. Targeted marketing strategies easily separate people from their money. The smooth sounding sound bites and emotional pleas of self serving politicians have replaced principled ideology built on thoughtful discourse and reasoned conviction of statesmen. And in the church, emotionalism, superficial piety, religiosity, and the wisdom of men is replacing a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. Professing Christians are not only having their ears tickled, many show an obvious desire for it. We Christians must be a discerning people.

We do not develop discernment by self righteous piety or the reading of books upon books. Discernment is developed by the Holy Spirit working in us through the Word of God. We must have a humble holiness that is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and a thorough knowledge, understanding and application of the book of books - the Bible. The greater our familiarity with the truth, the easier it is to distinguish it from what is false.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ . . . Philippians 1:9-10

Sermon Notes: *A Call to Discernment*
May 4, 2014 - Selected Scriptures

Defining Discernment

Discern = “to separate, distinguish between” (W). “_____ and identify as separate and distinct” (O)

To _____ between those facts along with the ability to use them to make proper judgements

A purpose of _____ is to develop discernment (Proverbs 1:2; 2:3,4,9)

A mark of _____ is having “senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14)

Testing God’s People

Exodus 16:4-5 - Instructions concerning gathering _____

Judges 2:20-23 - The reason so many _____ nations were left in the land

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 - the reason for God’s _____ of false prophets

2 Peter 2:1-3 - The _____ of false teachers today

1 John 4:1 - The command to _____ *the spirits*

False religions should be _____ - yet many of their beliefs and practices are assimilated by “Christians”

Obvious cults should easily be identifiable, yet millions think they are _____ sects

Scripture twisting cults are harder to recognize, yet can be identified with a little _____

The tentacles of theological _____ and experientially based beliefs add to the mix of groups that test

Testing the Prophets

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 - The test of a prophetic _____

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 - The test of _____ soundness

Matthew 7:15-23 - The test of _____

2 Peter 2:1-3 - The test of _____

The doctrine and lives of those who teach _____ be compared to the Scriptures.

Developing Discernment

1) You must be a _____ Christian - 1 Corinthians 2:14

2) You must know the _____ - Acts 17:10-12, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

The Bereans were more noble because they examined the Scriptures to see if Paul was _____

Man cannot develop discernment by his own wisdom because his mind is _____ and desires corrupt

2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17 - We must know the Scriptures to be properly _____ in life

3) You must walk by the _____

The Holy Spirit _____, convicts of sin, enlightens the mind and teaches

He makes the Bible alive in you (Hebrews 4:12) and _____ by the renewing of your mind (Rom 12:2)

He _____ and strengthens (John 14:16-17) to prevent the deeds of the flesh and bring His fruit (Gal. 5)

Discerning Truth and Error

Claiming to walk by the Spirit but not knowing and submitting to the Bible is _____

The self-deceived can in turn be very _____: Example: *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young

“My Presence” - in 261 / 356 devotions - it is _____ Jesus’ spiritual presence (Matt. 28:20) or Holy Spirit
_____ encounters with a being that produces feelings, may radiate light, communicates personal messages

The Jesus of Mrs. Young’s book says things the Biblical Jesus would not say & _____ Scripture

Be a Berean - examine _____ by the Scriptures

Godly teachers recognize they will _____ in knowledge, wisdom & understanding of the Scriptures over time

Some teachers start well, but then veer off course even to the point of _____ - 1 John 1:19

_____ of a teacher instead of Biblically examining their teaching is a shift away from Jesus

Ephesians 4:11-16 - Each member of the body is important in _____ the body and helping it mature

Conclusions

Discernment is seriously lacking in our time in all areas - Christians must become _____

Discernment is developed by the Holy Spirit working in us through the _____

Philippians 1:9-10 _____

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God’s Word to your children’s lives. Here is some help. **Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up. 2) Count how many times the words “discern / discernment” is said. Talk with your parents about how to become discerning in your own life.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. Define discernment. Why does God desire us to become discerning? Why did God give Manna to Israel in the manner that He did (Exodus 16:4-5)? Why did God leave so many Canaanite nations in the land (Judges 2:20-23)? Why did God tolerate false prophets (Deut. 13:1-4)? What is Peter’s warning about false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-3)? Why does John say we must test the spirits (1 John 4:1)? Why do professing Christians incorporate ideas and practices from false religions into their own beliefs and practices? How can cults be quickly identified? What is the danger of theological liberalism and experientially based belief systems? What is the test of a prophet in: Deut. 18:20-22? Deut. 13:1-5? Matt. 7:15-23? 2 Peter 2:1-3? Why must a person be a Christian to develop spiritual discernment? Why must you know the Bible to be discerning? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in developing discernment? Why is it self-deception to claim to walk by the Spirit but not know and submit to the Bible? How have you seen this manifested by “Christian” teachers or writers? Why must every teaching and every book be examined with a discerning mind to compare it to the Scriptures? What is the normal progression of a godly teacher? Why do some teachers start well but then veer off course or even end badly as apostates? What are you doing to develop your ability to discern? Are you doing your part to help mature and protect the rest of the church?

Websites with information on false religions, cults and sects.

<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/> & <http://www.watchman.org/> - Information on multiple religions & cults

<http://www.utlm.org/> - Exposes Mormonism

<http://www.watchtowerinformationsservice.org/> - Exposes Jehovah’s Witnesses

<http://www.justforcatholics.org/> - seeks to bring the gospel to Catholics