

Developing Discernment  
Selected Scriptures

### Introduction

This morning I will speak on another one of the topics I was asked to address before we begin a study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. While the topics requested were given to me somewhat randomly, I have arranged them so that foundational truths can be laid out upon which the specific subjects can be built. This morning we are going to be looking at the subject of discernment, but the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood and right from wrong requires a foundation of knowing what is true and right. The topics I have addressed the last two months have done that.

\*God, the Creator, is the infinite in every respect and far beyond man's ability to comprehend. We can only understand God according to what He has revealed about Himself in Creation and His word, and to the degree we are capable of comprehending it. For example, God has revealed Himself to be only one God, yet existing in three distinct persons that are co-equal and each fully God. That is beyond our full understanding because it is beyond the range of human experience.

\*God created everything for His own glory, and He created man in His own image in order to display in man a limited reflection of certain of His own attributes.

\*Man's sin has corrupted that image of God and brought about God's condemnation. Yet, God will still glorify Himself in man by the display of His attributes such as mercy, patience, longsuffering, goodness, kindness, love and compassion to all men in providing life and the opportunity for redemption and forgiveness of sin through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God displays additional attributes upon vessels of mercy that will repent of their sins and believe. He displays other aspects of those attributes and additional ones on those who do not repent who become vessels of His wrath.

\*Man's purpose of existence is to glorify God, and the first priority of His life is to love the Lord God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind and all his strength. His second priority in life is to love his neighbor as himself. Christians are called to a higher standard of loving others as Christ has loved them.

\*God saves people so that they will be holy and blameless before Him. They are given positional righteousness before God when they place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit continues to change Christians throughout life as He conforms them to the image of Christ. We are to become increasingly righteous in our practice throughout life. The believer will then become perfectly righteous when Jesus returns and we receive our glorified bodies. Our position and practice of righteousness will become unified in perfect righteousness and we will remain holy and blameless throughout eternity.

These foundational truths enable the Christian to be discerning in life in a different way than non-Christians. As 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 explains, the natural man does not accept the things of God. Man's sinful nature corrupts man's mind so he cannot see clearly what should be obvious, and it is often completely blind to it (2 Corinthians 4:4). In contrast, the Holy Spirit enables the mind of the believer to understand and empowers him to follow Christ. I will expand on this and how to develop discernment later in the sermon, but first, let's make sure we understand what is meant by discernment.

### Defining 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 it is used in conjunction with both the

physical senses, such as in discerning the identity of a flower, and with mental understanding, such as in having good judgment. This is very similar to the meaning of the Hebrew word, בִּין / bin, used in Proverbs and variously translated as understand, insight and discern. It includes the concept of being able to distinguish 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 judgments. 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.”*

To discern then is to be able to distinguish between. God desires that each person develop the ability to detect, recognize and identify things as separate and distinct, and especially 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).

### **The Need for Discernment**

There is a great lack of discernment in our land and the situation is getting worse. Even what should be obvious has become confusing to many people. There are many reasons for this, but at the foundation is the loss of the ability to determine truth and error. Without some basic knowledge about a subject, there is no basis upon which to determine the claims made about it. If you have been taught things that are false, it is even harder to determine if something is true. The ability to discern is very important for even practical matters of daily life.

For example, in order to make a wise purchase of a product, you need to be able to determine 1) If the product would meet some actual need that you may have, and 2) which of the competing products would best meet such a need. If you lack skills to discern between truth and marketing claims, you will be a victim of advertising strategies designed to easily separate you from the money you have labored to earn. All of us have fallen for marketing efforts and purchased things we did not need and never use. We have also all bought products that proved to be much less than the advertising claims. This can even be dangerous in such things as homeopathy in which wonderful anecdotal stories of a cure for an ailment convinces you to ingest a “natural” remedy product that is a modern version of the “snake oil” medicines of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The product might even be poisonous to you because it interacts with something else you take, or you are allergic to one of its unnamed ingredients. Remember, just because it is “natural” does not mean it is safe. Arsenic and strychnine are both natural and both are deadly.

Those who lack skills in discernment are very susceptible to the smooth sounding sound bites and emotional pleas of self serving politicians. They are adept at using terms such as justice, freedom and equality to make things that are actually unjust, enslaving and unequal to sound not only good and right, but necessary to advance society and the nation. The emotional appeals of political marketing replace thoughtful and reasoned discourse. The reason money is now so important in political campaigns is for the purchase of advertising. TV debates are only good at finding out who is best at political quips, zingers and comebacks, none of which are actual leadership skills.

The most dangerous area to lack discernment is about truth claims that will affect the condition of your soul. Without the ability to discern, the unsaved remain trapped in their sins and bound for Hell. The undiscerning Christian will remain immature, susceptible to false teaching, and be of little value in the kingdom of God.

A major reason for the great lack of discernment in our society is the growing rejection of the Bible as the word of God and therefore the source of truth. As people increasingly follow the vain philosophies

and foolish speculations of men which have flourished in our post-modern age, there is a corresponding reduction in discernment. If you reject the idea of absolute truth, then truth is abandoned in favor of fleeting feelings, thoughts and impressions which may even be contradictory. Hence the increasingly popular idea of my truth, your truth, and his truth are all true even if they oppose one another, or the absurd statement that *“there are no absolute truths,”* for that itself is an absolute statement. In the church, life built on a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures is replaced by emotionalism, religiosity, the wisdom of men or a superficial piety. To be wise and live the kind of life that fulfills the purpose for which God created you, it is critical for you become discerning.

### **Man’s Faulty Wisdom**

How do you become discerning? It certainly cannot be by man’s wisdom otherwise we would expect those with great learning from prestigious universities with high degrees to be the most discerning, but that is not what we find. Intelligence is helpful, but if your education is faulty, then you end up with the kinds of foolishness that is coming from so many of the elite schools that is politically correct but factually wrong and they are confused when that is pointed out.

Man’s wisdom cannot bring about discernment for the minds of the unbelieving are blinded by the god of this world, Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). Worldly wisdom does not lead to the knowledge of God (1 Corinthians 1:19-26) stranding those following it on the shifting sands of human ethics and justifying things God declares to be immoral and abominations. The philosophers mocked Paul’s proclamation of the gospel because it was not reasonable to them (Acts 17:22-32). Human wisdom is used in prestigious universities, divinity schools and seminaries to educate their students to twist the Scriptures and deny its truths. This results in the churches and denominations they serve being cast about by every wind of doctrine and shipwrecked on the rocky shores of theological and moral compromise.

### **The Necessity of the Fear of the Lord**

Discernment requires both knowledge and wisdom, and according to Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10, both begin with the fear of the Lord. Discernment begins with understanding that God created everything, including you, and He will hold you accountable for what you do in life. That warning brings blessing with Proverbs 14:27 stating, *“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death,”* and Proverbs 16:6 stating *“By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.”* Proverbs 8:13 explains how, *“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil,”* with the Proverb continuing on to explain that wisdom *“hates pride, arrogance, the evil way and the perverted mouth.”*

This is why God-fearing non-Christians can develop some discernment. They recognize that there is right and wrong and that there is a God that will judge them. As Romans 2 explains, God has placed an internal witness in man that knows right from wrong. We call it the conscience. An individual becomes more discerning as that conscience is developed according to the principles and precepts of God’s eternal witness in His word. That may happen directly through knowledge of the Bible, or indirectly through a culture that has been influenced by the Scriptures. That had been true of all western cultures to some degree in centuries past, and it is true today in nations in which there is a large percentage of Christians that influence their society. The level of discernment increases to the degree its people fear God and are influenced by the Bible.

The opposite is also true. Those cultures and sub-cultures that are not God fearing and reject the Bible as the source or even a source of truth will become less discerning. Why? Because the consciences of the people become seared and truth is replaced with lies. The doctrine of demons replaces the teachings of God resulting in the people being blinded to truth and even more entrapped in their sins.

To summarize so far. Discernment begins with the fear of the Lord, therefore the God-fearing, even if non-Christians, will develop some discernment arising out of their conscience and increasing to the

degree they know and follow God's commands. Human wisdom that is not God-fearing or contrary to His commands will sear the conscience and cause discernment to degenerate.

While a God-fearer has more discernment and will live a better life than someone who does not fear God, his discernment is still greatly limited and will be perverted by his own bent toward sin and selfishness. And worse, he still remains in His sins heading for God's judgment and condemnation. To reach any level of discernment beyond this and be saved from your sins, you must become a genuine Christian.

### **The Necessity of Holy Spirit**

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 the necessity of the Holy Spirit in order to know spiritual wisdom and what God freely gives to those who belong to Him. You must be taught by Him in order to have "*the mind of Christ*." In verse 14 Paul 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.*" How can you be discerning of what God declares to be good or evil if the things of God seem foolish to you? Proverbs 14:12 describes the natural man, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*" Proverbs 12:15 adds, "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.*" Without the Holy Spirit, you are left to your own wisdom, and that is foolish and leads to death. To be wise, you must have the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

There are many aspects to the ministry of the Holy Spirit including His involvement in creating man with a conscience. Jesus points out in John 16:8-11 that the first work of the Holy Spirit in training the natural conscience of man is convicting the world of sin, and of righteousness and judgment. That is crucial since godly discernment is the ability to distinguish good from evil. The conviction of sin enables you to recognize what is evil. The conviction of righteousness enables you to recognize what is good. The conviction of judgment is the warning to abhor and flee what is evil and cling to what is good. It is this threefold conviction that prods a person to repentance, that is, to change his mind about himself, sin and the Savior.

It does little good to recognize something as bad if you cannot also recognize the other things that are bad and what is actually good. Reformation without conversion is ultimately of little value, yet that is all most people ever develop in dealing with self-destructive vices. John has told me about his involvement with AA for many years and acknowledges it can help people resist the vice of alcoholism. However, many simply trade that vice for something else, and several of his AA friends have died from drug abuse. Even if a person manages to learn to avoid the more destructive vices and perhaps gets "religion" of some type and lives a responsible life that contributes to society instead of being a detriment to it, if it is only reformation and not conversion, he will still die in his sins and be condemned to Hell. Remember, the Pharisees were considered to be holy by society, but Jesus condemned them multiple times for their self-righteous hypocrisy and warned them to repent or they were doomed.

For true discernment to develop, the Holy Spirit's ministry must continue in you to bring you to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and then to spiritual maturity. It is the Holy Spirit that regenerates (makes you alive spiritually), and makes you into a new creation in Christ (Ephesians 2:5, Titus 3:5, 2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit continues to convict you of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8), He enlightens your mind (Ephesians 1:17-18), and He teaches you (1 John 2:27). He is also the "*Spirit of truth*" "*who proceeds from the Father*" who testifies of Jesus, abides with and in the Christian and guides into truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The Holy Spirit must be at work in order for you to discern truth from error. 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).

Now in saying all this I must also warn you about those who attribute to the Holy Spirit their own selfish desires and error. The Holy Spirit always works in perfect harmony with the Father and the Son

and therefore never contradicts them or is contrary to the Scriptures which proceed from all three. That brings up the next necessity.

### **The Necessity of Knowing the Holy Scriptures**

The Bible is the revelation of God to man and it proceeds from all three persons in the Triune Godhead. *“Thus says the Lord”* and *“The Lord says”* occur at least 430 times in the Old Testament. In addition, remember that all that Jesus taught was according to the will of the Father because they were what the Father commanded Him to say and speak (John 5:30; 6:38; 8:26; 12:19; 17:8). 2 Peter 1:21 explains that all true prophecy came as *“men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”* The Holy Spirit will not contradict either Jesus or the Scriptures for He is *“the Spirit of Truth,”* Jesus is *“the way, the truth and the life,”* and Jesus said of the Scriptures, *“Thy word is truth.”* Despite the claims in our post-modern world, the reality is that truth exists in harmony and is not contradictory.

As already stated, the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches believers by enlightening their minds and leading them into truth. How does He do that? Primarily through the Word of God. Certainly the Holy Spirit brings conviction through the conscience of man resulting in feelings of guilt, but how does a man know that the guilt is from sin against God and how to get right with God? Through the Bible. That is why Paul points out the necessity of the gospel being proclaimed in Romans 10. 1 Peter 1:23 points out, *“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”*

It is wonderful to hear stories coming from Islamic lands in which people are having dreams which lead them to Christianity. However, there is a huge caution about these stories. If it is the Jesus of the Bible, praise God! But if it is a different Jesus, they have only traded one false god for another.

In Romans 12:2, Paul calls on all Christians to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they can live according to God’s will. We have already seen that the Holy Spirit is involved in such renewal (Titus 3:5), and in Ephesians 5:25-26, Paul points out that Christ *“loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”* 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.”* 2 Timothy 2:15 commands believers to be diligent to present themselves *“approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”* Hebrews 4:12 states, *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* The Bible is critical in developing discernment for it is able to reveal even our inner thoughts and motives that we would otherwise be blind to.

No wonder David wrote Psalm 119 in praise of the Word of God for through it he could know God and live a life pleasing to Him. He treasured it in his heart so that he would not sin against God (vs. 11) for it was a *“lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path”* (vs. 105).

Psalm 19:7–11 summarizes the nature and effect of the word of God on people,<sup>7</sup> *“The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”*<sup>8</sup> *The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.*<sup>9</sup> *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.*<sup>10</sup> *They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*<sup>11</sup> *Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.”*

If you are going to be discerning, you must learn the word of God. Consider the commendation that Paul gave to the Bereans in Acts 17:10-12, *“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.”*<sup>11</sup> *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.* <sup>12</sup> *Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.*” That is quite a recommendation for the Thessalonians were no slouches. Paul commends them in 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 for responding well to the gospel and having 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.

### **The Protection of Discernment**

Even professing Christians face grave dangers if they do not develop the ability to discern truth from error by knowing the Scriptures and walking in the Spirit. And I must emphasize that it takes both. Knowing the Bible without walking in the Spirit results in arrogance, pride and legalism as was exhibited by the Pharisees in the New Testament. Claiming to walk by the Spirit but not knowing and submitting to the Bible is self-deception. That is a major problem for modern Charismatics and the groups that have emerged from them. It also shows up among professed evangelicals that we would assume should know better, but often do not because they are often quite Biblically ignorant. Discernment developed by knowing the Scriptures and walking in the Spirit will protect you from false doctrine that can arise from both self-deception and false teachers. We are to be followers of God, not men.

The Bereans examined everything by the Scriptures. We are to do the same, and 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. You and I are both called to make disciples of Jesus Christ by going, baptizing and teaching others to observe whatsoever things He has commanded (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, for 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 to become more discerning and stronger in their Biblical convictions, yet they will also become more humble. They will recognize errs in their earlier works and the vulnerability to err in the present, and so will desire to be corrected as David expressed in Psalm 141:5, *Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it. . .*”

Please recognize that the opposite also happens. Many start off well and then veer off course or finally write or speak enough that their errors get exposed. Those may be just quirks and aberrations, but it may 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*. If you are a follower of men instead of Christ, you can easily follow them down the path of aberrant theology or even into apostasy.

This is even more serious that it may appear because God states that He tests people to see if they will love and follow Him. He tested Abraham (Gen 22:1). He tested the generation coming out of Egypt multiple times (Exodus 15:25; 16:4; Deut. 8:2,16). He tested Israel from the time of the judges on by leaving in the land some of the nations that they were supposed to drive out (Judges 2:22). He tests the righteous and the wicked (Psalm 11:4; Prov. 17:3). God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able (1 Cor. 10:13), but He does allow your faith to be tested so that it matures (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9). He specifically states in Deuteronomy 13:1-4 that this will include false prophets, and 2 Peter 2:1 cites this as the reason for false teachers in the present age.

There has not been any fundamental change since those ancient times. The many false religions and cults that have developed since then test people whether they will love and follow God or not. It is still a

two fold test. First, what is the truth about what God has revealed and commanded. Second, will you be obedient to Him.

Other religions and the major cults should be fairly easy to recognize as false, yet many professing Christians adopt ideas from them to incorporate with their own beliefs. They lack discernment to recognize 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. Millions think Mormons to be a sect of Christianity, but their Jesus is a glorified resurrected man who is the brother of Lucifer. They are also polytheistic teaching that you can also become a god over your own planet. The Jesus of the Jehovah Witnesses' 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.

The heretical tentacles of theological liberalism has not only gripped the main line denominations, but also extend into 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.

Many who identify as evangelicals have been led astray by aberrations such as has occurred in the seeker sensitive movement that became more concerned about offending sinners than offending God. Out of that came the emergent church movement that has sought to accommodate post-modern thought and quickly splintered into many factions depending on the mystical practices enjoined, aberration taught or rank heresy accepted. There is currently an effort to subvert evangelicals with the political correctness of critical race theory and intersectionality based on a false hermeneutic of interpreting scripture according to your own culture instead of the culture, language and historical setting of the Scripture passage itself.

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. You can develop that discernment by learning God's word and walking in His Spirit. He has given us one additional protection which I will mention before I close.

According to Ephesians 4:11-16, the church, the body of Christ, is also a protection against deceptions as the spiritual gifts of every member work in harmony to bring the whole body to maturity and therefore able to withstand the winds of doctrine, the trickery of men and the craftiness of deceitful scheming. 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. As each of us exercises our spiritual gifts and uses our area of discernment, we help those who are weak by our areas of strength and in turn are helped in our areas of weakness by their strengths.

## **Conclusion**

Godly discernment is the ability to distinguish between the things that are of God and the things that are not, between right and wrong, between good and evil. The lack of discernment shows up in everyday aspects of life such as shopping and politics, but its most serious consequence is spiritual ignorance. Discernment requires knowledge and wisdom and both of those begin with the fear of the Lord. Godly discernment requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit and understanding of the word of God. Discernment is a protection against false religions, cults, heresy and doctrinal aberration. A mature church is an additional protection. In light of these truths, be diligent to learn the Scriptures, walk in Spirit and be active in church life where you can help others grow and they can in turn help you mature also.

Sermon Notes - March 1, 2020  
Developing Discernment - Selected Scriptures

**Introduction**

God is the creator and \_\_\_\_\_ in all respects and far beyond man's ability to comprehend  
God created everything for His own \_\_\_\_\_, including man in His own image  
Man's sin has \_\_\_\_\_ the image of God in him, but God will still glorify Himself in man  
Man's priority: 1) Love \_\_\_\_\_ with all his heart, soul, mind & strength, 2) Love others as himself  
God saves people from sin so that they will be \_\_\_\_\_ & blameless before Him: Positional, Practical, Perfect  
These \_\_\_\_\_ enable the Christian to be discerning in a different way than non-Christians

**Defining Discernment**

Discern: "*to separate, \_\_\_\_\_ between.*" It is to "*recognize and identify as separate and distinct.*"  
The Hebrew word, בִּיָּן / bin, similar in meaning, often used in \_\_\_\_\_ to distinguish right from wrong  
Godly discernment distinguishes between what is from \_\_\_\_\_ & what is not. Proverbs 1:2, 2:3, 5, 9; Heb. 5:14

**The Need for Discernment**

The inability to determine truth and error results in a \_\_\_\_\_ of discernment about even practical matters of life  
A wise purchase requires determining if a product meets an actual \_\_\_\_\_ & which product best does so  
A lack in discernment can result in wasting resources and could even be \_\_\_\_\_ - homeopathy  
Politicians rely on your lack of discernment to get your vote based on sound bites and \_\_\_\_\_ pleas  
A lack of discernment about truth claims about spiritual matters can result in eternal \_\_\_\_\_  
Discernment has diminished as rejection of the \_\_\_\_\_ as the source of truth has increased

**Man's Faulty Wisdom**

Intelligence helps, but a faulty education will result in believing \_\_\_\_\_  
Natural man is \_\_\_\_\_ by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) & worldly wisdom does not lead to God (1 Cor. 1:19-26)

**The Necessity of the Fear of the Lord**

Discernment requires both knowledge & wisdom and both begin with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10)  
God fearing non-Christians can develop some discernment based on \_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 2) & culture  
Discernment increases or decreases to the degree the people fear the Lord & are influenced by the \_\_\_\_\_  
The God-fearer will have more discernment & live a better life, but \_\_\_\_\_ Christ, they are still condemned

**The Necessity of Holy Spirit**

Spiritual wisdom is dependent on the Holy Spirit, the things of God are \_\_\_\_\_ to the natural man  
The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin, righteousness & judgment: all \_\_\_\_\_ needed to bring repentance  
Reformation without \_\_\_\_\_ is ultimately of little value for it leaves the person still condemned  
Discernment develops as the Holy Spirit does His ministry: \_\_\_\_\_, convict, enlighten, teach  
The Holy Spirit always works in perfect \_\_\_\_\_ with the Father & the Son

**The Necessity of Knowing the Holy Scriptures**

The Scriptures proceed from the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, and Holy Spirit, Jesus, & Scriptures are \_\_\_\_\_  
The Holy Spirit teaches & enlightens the mind leading to truth primarily through the \_\_\_\_\_



Transformation occurs through a \_\_\_\_\_ renewed by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God

The \_\_\_\_\_ is critical in developing discernment - 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12

Psalms 119 praises the Word of God for through David could \_\_\_\_\_ and live a life pleasing to Him

Acts 17:10-12, The Bereans were more noble because they evaluated \_\_\_\_\_ by the Word of God

### **The Protection of Discernment**

It takes both knowing the Bible and walking in the Spirit to \_\_\_\_\_ truth from error

Be a Berean and always examine everything by the \_\_\_\_\_ - follow Christ, not men

Follow other people only to the degree they \_\_\_\_\_ Christ (1 Cor. 11:1)

People who start well can end poorly or even as apostates - follow \_\_\_\_\_, not men

God tests His people to see if they will \_\_\_\_\_ and follow Him (Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:25; Judges 2:22; Ps 11:4)

Testing \_\_\_\_\_ God's people (James 1:2-4), & He allows false prophets (Dt. 13) & teachers (2 Pet 2) for it

The heresy of other religions & cults should be \_\_\_\_\_ to discern, but many incorporate their beliefs anyway

\_\_\_\_\_ discernment, many embrace theological liberalism and / or experientially based belief systems

Professing evangelicals are led astray by aberrant theological movements because of Biblical \_\_\_\_\_

If you know the word of God and walk in His spirit, you can \_\_\_\_\_ the tests of false religions, cults & heretics

Ephesians 4:11-16 - the \_\_\_\_\_ is also a protection against deception as each member does his part

### **Conclusion**

Develop discernment by being \_\_\_\_\_ to learn the Scriptures, walk in Spirit and be active in church life

### **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** - 1) Count how many times "discernment" is mentioned. 2) Talk with your parents about what it means to have godly discernment and how you can develop that in your own life.

### **THINK ABOUT IT!**

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What is discernment? How is that term applied in Proverbs? What evidence is there that discernment is lacking our society? What is the danger of a lack of discernment: when shopping? using homeopathy treatments? in politics? in spiritual matters? What is the relationship between discernment and Biblical knowledge? Why can't godly discernment be built on human wisdom? What is the relationship between the fear of the Lord and discernment? What is the source of conscience and how does that affect discernment? Why is being just be a God-fearer not enough? What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to a non-Christian? What must He do before someone will repent? What is the Holy Spirit's work in salvation? What is His work after someone becomes a Christian? Why is reformation without conversion of little ultimate value? How does the Holy Spirit develop discernment in a believer? Will the Holy Spirit ever contradict the Bible? Why or why not? What about those who claim the Holy Spirit is leading them to do something contrary to the Bible? What is the origin of the Bible? What is the relationship of truth, the Holy Spirit, Jesus and the Scriptures? What is the relationship between the Bible and someone being saved? Being sanctified? Maturing in Christ? Becoming discerning? How does Psalm 19:7-11 describe the nature and effect of the Word of God? Why were the Bereans more noble than the Thessalonians? What is the danger of knowing the Bible and not walking in the Spirit? Of claiming to walk by the Spirit while ignorant of the Scriptures? What is the danger of following people - even good ones? Why does God test His people? How does He do it? What should it produce? What is the threat of false prophets and teachers to unbelievers? To believers? How does the church increase discernment and offer protection against false doctrine & heresy?