

Spiritual Discernment

Introduction

We have been in a series called What is Truth? We are working our way through John MacArthur's teaching on truth. Pilate asked Jesus that question not realizing that truth was standing right in front of him. We have examined the modern and post modern world and how it impacts truth. We have identified apostate preachers and looked at the Scriptures warning about them. But how did we get here?

We have discussed that the church has failed to guard and protect the truth of the gospel. Since the 1970's the church, particularly in America, has changed dramatically. We have lost or failed to develop Spiritual Discernment. One of the most important Spiritual Gifts that we have been given by God.

Today we are going to discuss Spiritual Discernment.

What is spiritual discernment?

Spiritual discernment is the God-given ability to perceive and distinguish between truth and error, good and evil, and divine guidance versus human or deceptive influences. It is closely linked to wisdom and understanding, enabling believers to walk in alignment with the will of God and to guard against deception. Scripture describes it as an essential element of the Christian life, rooted in obedience to God's Word and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Embrace it All

Our society is exposed to more religious ideas than any other in History. Religious broadcasting, the print media, the podcasts, social media, group chats, AI, bombard people with all kinds of deviant teachings that claim to be truth.

It demands that now, more than ever, we must have discernment. A person without discernment has no means of determining truth and they are baffled by the variety of options.

Lack of discernment leads to the universalist church. People thinking that there must be some good in all of it. They treat faith in God as a buffet where they can choose and pick which part of a theology that they want to embrace. If they choose something and don't like it, they can go back to the buffet and make another choice.

Their religion becomes...their religion...and God calls it an abomination.

Meanwhile, evangelicals who once were known for a very prudent and biblical approach to doctrine are becoming doctrinally clueless and look just like the unchurched people that they are trying to please and entertain.

For the last five decades evangelical leaders have been deliberately downplaying doctrine and discernment in order to attract the unchurched. Many previously solid churches are full

of people and leaders who lack any ability to differentiate the worst false doctrines from the truth.

Now they barely recognize much less run from even the most profound lies that they hear from cultists, apostates, or other sources of false doctrine.

But the issue is not simply the loss of discernment....something has occurred that is just as worrisome.

Five Challenges to Discernment

1. The Rise of Extreme Tolerance

Our churches and their leaders are not just reluctant, but outright refuse, to take a definitive stand on any issue.

The postmodern culture, that says that there is no truth, is more than just hostile to discernment and clear definitions. Pronouncing anything true and calling the opposite error is a severe violation of the postmodern's central unchangeable dogma. The one truth that they embrace is that there is no real truth.

Nothing is more offensive to them than voicing strong, unwavering opinions with absolute conviction on spiritual, moral or ethical matters. Certainty about anything is offensive and all who refuse to equivocate on any point of principle or doctrine are intolerant and somehow racist. They express a tolerant climate but are completely intolerant to biblical discernment.

We have been bombarded with the bizarre and told to call it normal. They have paraded in front of our society the most bizarre and extreme advocates of every perverted life style imaginable. We have become numb to it and are supposed to not be shocked.

We are told to embrace every aberrant subculture in an effort to broaden our minds and our level of tolerance. The culture mind washes our children and unsuspecting adults to the point that you cannot criticize anything a human thinks to do. And if you do so with religious beliefs as your standard, you are held in the highest contempt.

Let's face it, our culture has declared war on all biblical standards...just as Jesus warned us.

And the voice of truth....what was previously the church...has embraced this madness. The church has opened the door for a whole generation to embrace postmodern relativism deliberately and enthusiastically. All the while, thinking that they are following Jesus.

They don't want to go where the truth is presented in black and white clarity. They want issues of right and wrong, true and false, good and bad to all be presented in shades of gray. Any certainty, even coming from the church or bible sounds offensive to post modern ears.

Sometimes people tell me that I seem a bit nicer in person than in my sermons. To our culture today, someone who is loving and nice would never be emphatic, critical or zealous

for the truth. Yet Paul told the Corinthians that love is patient, love is kind....and love rejoices in the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:6 (ESV) 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

That is why post moderns don't like sermons...they prefer dialogues or sharing...because the truth is not what is important...the experience of being validated is most important.

In 2004, they held the Emergent Church Convention. Some 1100 pastors and leaders of this movement gathered to reinvent the church. Doug Pagitt the pastor of Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis addressed the crowd and to a roaring ovation said...preaching is dead.

Instead, he suggested that it be replaced with an open dialogue where all are seen as equals and all ideas have equal merit. "Why do I get to speak for 30 minutes and you don't? A sermon is a violent act toward the will of the people who have to sit there and take it. "

Rudy Carrasco a Pasadena emergent pastor said that preaching is simply too one-sided, too authoritative, and too rigid for today's church experience. "When people come across as having answers, I am turned off. Period. I am just turned off and I think that is not unique to me"

What was the outcome of their convention? Compromise....compromise will drive the post modern church. Compromise is rich with positive thoughts, ideas and interactions. Compromise works in every other societal interaction, why not the church?

So emergent and many evangelical churches have embraced compromise as the central doctrine of the church and as a tool for church growth. In fact, it has become a standard or test of "true" Spirituality.

Take an uncompromising stance on almost any doctrine or biblical issue and a resounding choir of voices will call you unkind, obstinate, heartless, contentious, and unloving no matter how you frame your argument.

Wait...did I say argument? Christians should never argue they say. We are told to state "supposed truths" in positive terms and ignore any ideas that you don't agree with. Let's steer clear of controversy, forget the negatives and find a positive way to present everything. That way no one gets their feelings hurt or feel judged.

That is why, in church, it is no longer permissible to deal with biblical issues in a direct and uncompromising fashion. Anyone who dares to take an unpopular stand, declare truth in a definitive way- or worse believe me- express disagreement with someone else's teaching- will be marked as troublesome.

In the Postmodern world, compromise has become a virtue and devotion to truth has become offensive. They promote the idea that as long as we are all Christians all is well regardless of what we truly believe. Let's not argue about doctrine, let's just all be together and talk about the Love of God. Let's not argue and debate these deeper issues.

But the Bible is full of arguments and debates about truth. No one can read even a verse of Jesus' teaching or a chapter of Paul's letters without realizing that he had a zeal for truth that was not only worth debating about but was worth dying for.

We are not talking about arguing for the sake of arguing as many do on social media. We are not talking about indulging someone's prejudices...we don't argue for the sake of arguing and we do so in love. We always regret that we have to argue at times but it is a necessity.

Some issues in Scripture give us leeway because some issues are not specifically addressed. For example, there is no list of holidays or holy days that we are to observe or avoid celebrating. Paul told the Romans...

Romans 14:5–6 (ESV) 5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

He speaks similarly on dietary restrictions.

Romans 14:2–3 (ESV) 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

However, most of God's principles are black and white. Most of the truths of God's word are contrasted with opposing ideas and are clear and precise without wavering. But many of the issues that are rock solid and clear are now being compromised in the American church.

For example, Scriptures are crystal clear against homosexuality and sexual relations of any kind outside of marriage. Not even a degree of doubt or an inch of room to waver.

No room for discussion about adultery...it too is crystal clear and solidly within the foundation of God's word. The question of a believer marrying a non-believer is equally clear throughout Scripture. There is no room for a Christian to take another Christian to court. Selfishness and pride are explicating and repetitively defined as sins in all of Scripture. These are not gray areas and there is no room for compromise.

Unless...you walk into many of the American Churches who have walked away from God. The same happens on Christian television, radio, books and social platforms. It is a failure of Christians Pastors to follow the commands of our Lord.

Today, many pastors hesitate to speak with authority on matters where Scripture is plain. They have sinfully blurred the lines of distinction between truth and error, wisdom and foolishness, church and world.

Which brings us to Biblical Truth.

All truth by definition sets itself against error. Where Scripture speaks, God does so with authority. He speaks definitively, decisively and with absolute conviction.

James 4:7 (ESV) 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 John 4:5–6 (ESV) 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 Peter 3:11–12 (ESV) 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Proverbs 14:12 (ESV) 12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Matthew 7:13–14 (ESV) 13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Isaiah 55:8–9 (ESV) 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 1:24–25 (ESV) 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

1 John 2:21 (ESV) 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

Psalms 1:1–2 (ESV) 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalms 1:6 (ESV) 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

I could choose thousands...Where God does speak He is direct and crystal clear. And Discernment requires that where Scripture speaks with clarity, a hard unmovable wall must be built.

Moral principles, theological truth, divine revelation, and other spiritual absolutes should never be compromised in any culture, any place at any time now or ever in history. The church seems to have forgotten why we exist. We are here to protect and teach the Word of God without a hint of compromise.

Christ is against human philosophy, against empty deception, against human tradition, against human opinions on truth, against human pride, against human arrogance...and against the principles of this world.

Colossians 2:8 (ESV) 8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

None of these things can be integrated with true Christian belief. They must be called out as lies and destroyed. God demands so...

1 Kings 18:21 (ESV) 21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word.

Joshua 24:15 (ESV) 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We must know where we stand.

Both Scripture and church history show the dangers of compromising biblical truth. God uses people who will hold on to His truth no matter what circumstances they are in. They hold strong convictions, forged in abiding, chiseled through hours of prayer and engraved on their heart through time in the Word.

David refused to waver in front of Goliath. He saw Goliath as an affront to God's truth. Everyone else cowered behind him, but He stood on the promises of God.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego all refused to compromise and stood unwavering on God's truth. Even faced with death they never wavered.

Where are the people in the American churches who have the courage to stand alone? Instead of destroying lofty arguments against God's truth, Christians today are obsessed with finding areas of agreement.

The goal of many churches today is integration rather than confrontation. As the church embraces the values of the post modern secular culture, it is losing its ability to discern between good and evil.

What would the church be like today if Martin Luther had decided to compromise?

The pressure was heavy on him to tone down his teaching, soften his message, and stop poking his finger in the eye of the papacy. Even many of his friends and supporters urged Luther to come to terms with Rome for the sake of harmony in the church.

Luther himself prayed earnestly that the effect of his teaching would not just be divisive—but that the truth would triumph. When he nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the church door, the last thing he wanted to do was split the church.

But sometimes that is exactly what God commands. When the visible church is full of counterfeit Christians, it is right for the true people of God to declare themselves. There is no room for compromise.

Discernment demands that we hold biblical convictions with absolute tenacity. God through Paul demands it of church leaders.

Titus 1:9 (ESV) 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

We are to rebuke..not compromise. It is mandated by God that we fight error fervently. We must refute those who compromise or we will not fulfill our divine calling. A true minister of the Word must hold truths to be absolute. If the bible speaks plainly we are not to compromise in any way.

Sound doctrine divides, confronts, separates, judges, convicts, reproves, rebukes, exhorts and refutes error. Regardless of the postmodern lies, marketing strategies, compromises, and tolerance the health of a church depends upon holding firmly to the truth.

2. Refusal to Shun the World

Another factor that is part of the decline of discernment in American Churches is a preoccupation with image and influence.

The church has bought the lie that in order to win the world to Christ, we must first get the world to like us. If they like us..if we are more like them and less like Jesus, they will embrace our Savior. We need to make Jesus more presentable.

If the truth cannot be fearless proclaimed in the church, what place is there for truth at all? How can we build a generation of Discerning Christians if we are terrified at the thought that non Christians may not like hearing the unwavering truth?

The prevailing philosophy of the church is that we should make uncomfortable sinners feel comfortable with the message of Christ. The church, they say, should be completely non threatening where nonbelievers feel they naturally belong. Sounds nice doesn't it? Until you actually open the Bible.

That approach directly contradicts Scripture. Compromising with the world on clear truths in His Word is to deny Christ himself. He is the Word incarnate. James called it Spiritual adultery.

James 4:4 (ESV) 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

In the seeker church, preaching has been replaced with entertainment. In the emerging church truth has given way to skepticism. Any pastor who takes a stand for truth and the biblical doctrines is likely to be asked to leave. I know because it has happened to me. Pastors who preach truth become a problem...and embarrassment...an offense to non-Christians and these so called churches.

God through John reminds us...

1 John 3:13 (ESV) 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

Why? Jesus tells his unbelieving brothers that they world loves them....but not Him. Why because He testifies to truth.

John 7:6–7 (ESV) 6 Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

More importantly Jesus Himself told us.

John 15:18–21 (ESV) 18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Not seeing room for compromise here. Paul said...

1 Corinthians 4:12–13 (ESV) 12 and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Charles Spurgeon said it clearly..."I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it. The moment the church of God shal despise the pulpit, God will despise her."

3. Failure to Interpret Scripture Correctly

One of the most important classes in Seminary is Hermeneutics- Biblical interpretation. It is an exacting science with very specific processes and applications. Good preaching depends upon careful hermeneutics.

But today pulpits are full of preachers who are unwilling to do the hard work necessary to interpret Scripture properly.

Without the true meaning of Scripture, you don't really have Scripture at all. There is no magic in the words themselves that gives them power apart from the meaning that God has placed within them. Proper interpretation is crucial.

Some however have said, just get up there and let the Holy Spirit tell you what to say...said by no one who has ever had the responsibility of teaching God's truth. We spend 30 hours each week with the Holy Spirit preparing and praying through sermons. They have even said that Pastors should focus on applying it rather than explaining it.

To attempt to apply the Word without understanding it first is ridiculous. We are instructed to be diligent students.

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV) 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

I literally cringe when I hear a pastor rip a verse out of context and apply it in a manner that was never in the Scriptures. But today, pastors can twist a scripture beyond recognition and no one seems to notice.

Bible interpretation is a skill that requires diligent and dedicated work. You need to have an understanding of the original language, a knowledge of grammar and logic, a grasp of the historical setting, competence in theology, and a broad understanding of the whole of Scripture. If you lack expertise in Greek or Hebrew you must be even more careful to check sources to analyze the text as carefully as possible.

Many of the pastors of today are completely untrained in hermeneutics. It is becoming the norm for pastors not to attend seminary or bible college. In the emergent church they argue that those teaching may have no more insight than a novice reader... and sadly that is becoming true. Many preachers are seriously untrained.

Many pastors no longer use commentaries or bible study tools. Rather they just rely on their own uninformed first impression. They say, "I don't read commentaries and books about the bible, I just study the Bible itself." Sounds pious right?

Sounds arrogant to me. The Scriptures have been studied by godly men for 2000 years. Their views and the collective views of scholars are of great value. No one can know about Tyre, Zidon, Moab, Michmash, Nob, Gallim, or Carchemish without an external source of study. It is arrogant and insulting to suggest that objective study is not necessary.

But they get away with it because most who attend church have no idea what God says in the Bible either. They don't study and abide in the Word of God and instead operate by emotion or feelings.

Only diligent students of God's word can be an accurate interpreter of it. Those without that skill should be ashamed....

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV) 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

The Scriptures demand that we do the opposite of the shoot from the hip, ad lib, let the Spirit tell you what to say that takes place in many pulpits on Sunday. You see it on TV with televangelists...they make up novel doctrines on the fly.

That process perverts the truth, and keeps people from being able to discern sound doctrine from error. We can't tell people how to apply God's truth until we understand it.

The movement to accommodate the world has diminished the Confidence of Christians in divine truth. People are being misled by the example of some of their church leaders. They are buying into the lie that faithfulness to the Word of God is optional.

Combine that failure to teach God's truth from the pulpit and the ignorance of Scripture grows.

Christians should have learned by now that we cannot avoid being an offense to the world and still remain faithful to the gospel. The gospel message itself is offensive. Christ Himself is offensive to unbelievers. He is an offense to everyone who is in error. He is an offense to all who reject the truth.

1 Peter 2:7–8 (ESV) 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

The message of the Cross is an offense....

Galatians 5:11–12 (ESV) 11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Paul says that if I did what the Jews wanted instead of what Jesus commands...the offense of the cross would be removed.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV) 18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Galatians 6:14 (ESV) 14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Authentic Christians have always recognized that truth is unchanging. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is truth and thus truth never changes. Malachi tells us that God Himself never changes. So how could His truths be adaptable?

Right thinking and right living demand careful discipline and an unyielding commitment to truth. Discernment will never survive if we compromise with the world.

4. Neglect of Church Discipline

Churches universally seem to ignore Matthew 18 or they abuse it. Jesus gave us direct instruction on how to handle sin in the church. Including the sin of false teaching.

Matthew 18:15–17 (ESV) 15 “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

If you see a brother in sin, go to him. Confront him. Try to lift him up, build him up, strengthen him. Urge him to repent. If he refuses to repent, he must ultimately be put out of the church. Paul said not even to eat with such a person (1 Corinthians 5:11). This is not to suggest you should treat him like an enemy, but rather that you love him enough to seek his repentance by whatever means possible. But Paul says to deliver such a person to Satan.

1 Corinthians 5:5 (ESV) 5 you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

The church must hold up a high and holy standard. A clear line must separate the world and the church. Known and open sin, including false teaching, cannot be tolerated. As soon as the church ignores discipline, the church starts impersonating the world. That is why Christians are not supposed to go on sinning without being challenged by other believers.

Ananias and Sapphira lied about their tithe and God dropped them dead. Why? God tells us in Acts 5. So that the rest would be fearful of sinning. That is not a seek sensitive strategy.

It is a fine goal to make seekers feel welcome but we never want to give them the impression that the church of the Word of God has no objection to their sins. Christ was a friend of sinners but never condoned anyone's sin. Instead he called it out so that they could repent.

Too many churches today have deliberately downplayed God's hatred of sin and have refrained from even addressing politically polarizing sins like homosexuality, abortion and sexual confusion.

The primary message of the church should not be, "We are a nice place. You will like us" Instead the message should be "This is a Holy Place where sin is despised"

The church must purge, discipline, sift and purify.

1 Peter 4:16–17 (ESV) 17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God;

1 Corinthians 5:11–13 (ESV) 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

The church that fails to discipline fails to discern. How can you help people draw clear lines without establishing them? If tolerance and compromise take center stage, there is no room for discernment.

Discipline by its very nature requires discernment. Where discipline is ignored or neglected, discernment becomes non-existent.

5. Lack of Spiritual Maturity and Discipleship

When people have not been discipled and do not know the truths of the word of God, they begin to operate in feelings and experiences. They hunger for miracles, healings and spectacular wonders. They chase personal comfort and success.

The Barna Group surveyed self-described born again believers and half of them had no idea what John 3:26 means. A higher percentage could not explain the Great Commission or the Gospel message.

Clearly spiritual ignorance and biblical illiteracy are common in many who profess to follow Jesus today. That level of spiritual maturity is a direct result of shallow teaching. Solid preaching with deep substance and sound doctrine are essential for Christians to grow from believers to disciples.

As a result of shallow teaching, churches are filled with baby Christians who have been in the nursery for decades. The characteristic most obvious in the spiritual infant is selfishness. Babies are completely self-centered. They scream when they don't get what they want and they can't really contribute anything. They are totally dependent upon others to grow. It is fine when you are an infant, not so much when you have attended church for thirty years.

You can see it in many churches today. They are totally preoccupied with self. They want their problems solved, their issues resolved and their comfort elevated above all else. They are not developing spiritually because they are in a state of perpetual selfish helplessness.

People who remain spiritual infants do not have the ability to discern. Like babies they will crawl along and ingest any teaching not knowing what is good for them or not. Immaturity and lack of discernment go together because they are virtually the same thing.

Paul appeals to Christians repeatedly to grow up spiritually.

Ephesians 4:13–15 (ESV) 114 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

How do we grow spiritually? By “speaking the truth in love” to one another. We grow under the truth. It is the same truth by which we are sanctified, conformed to the image of Christ, made to be mature spiritually

Hebrews 5:12–6:1 (ESV) 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. 1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity,

Those who have the power to discern thrive on the solid food of the Word of God. Discernment comes from a mind that has been carefully disciplined. It is not a matter of feelings nor is it some mystical gift.

Psalms 119:66 (NASB95) 66 Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments.

Proverbs 2:2–7 (ESV) 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

The path to discernment is the way of spiritual maturity. The only means to spiritual maturity is mastery of the Word of God. That is why I am so adamant about discipleship...it takes discipline and it is hard. People are disciplined about the things that are important to them.

People are very disciplined about their diets, their exercise regimen, their stock market studies, fishing tactics, their fantasy football team, their musical performances, their politics. They show a keen interest in these things. They analyze and pay close attention. They are alert, attentive, thoughtful and desperate to see the truth. So we know how to do it.

Yet I have no real explanation for why contemporary Christians are so undiscerning, but their lack of it reveals a spiritual apathy that is deadly evil. They have chosen not to be disciplined. We can't develop discernment overnight or through some mystical experience. Discernment comes from us training our minds to understand the truth of God's word and then to have an unwavering commitment to apply it skillfully to our lives...no matter what.

Closing

Jesus said that He would build His church and the gates of Hell could not prevail against it. Yet sometimes it seems as if the church is losing. The only way the church can fail is if we fail to guard the truth. Throughout the Scriptures, God always saved a Remnant. A group of people who held on to His truth no matter what the world or culture did.

A church more concerned about purity than prosperity. A church focused on doctrine and discipleship rather than entertainment and ease. A church more concerned about spiritual

growth than attendance. A church that looks nothing at all like the world we live in. A church willing to be politically incorrect so that we can be scripturally correct.

A church hated by this world but Loved by Jesus. A church willing to be intolerant to tolerance. To shun those led by Satan in the name of Jesus. To engage in the hard work of interpreting scripture with accuracy....to honor, defend, and teach truth... as a form of worship to the One who is truth .

A church willing to engage in church discipline because the alternative is unacceptable and the potential damage too great. And a church that is laser focused on discipleship and spiritual growth because spiritual babies were never meant to live their lives in the nursery and battle stations can't be manned by those who need a diaper change.

At Remnant our mission is from Jesus, our focus is on Jesus and our success is in Jesus. With God's help may we always be known as unwavering Defenders of the Faith. Lets pray.