

Discernment

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[0:00] 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 22.

! He's talking about discernment.

Discernment. Paul says here, prove all things. Test everything. Try everything. Examine everything. All things. I want to exhort you today as God's people to use that ability of discernment. To use that exercising of discernment.

And we're going to explore discernment. What it is, why bother and how can we exercise discernment. Vital, important truths.

[1:07] Prove all things it says. It's a command. It's a command that we prove all things. So number one, what is Biblical discernment? What is it? What is this discernment?

Discernment here is speaking of that ability to distinguish truth from error. To discern truth from error. But even more importantly than that, to discern truth from half-truths.

Truth from half-truths. Discernment is the ability to think Biblically. To recognize right from wrong. And to recognize truth from error.

Truth from half-truths. In Philippians 1, Paul prayed for the Philippians that they would learn this skill of exercising discernment. He says, this I pray that your love may abound, yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.

In all judgment. Judgment or discernment. He prays that they will exercise discernment. And he prays the same for the Philippians too. As he prays for the Colossians.

[2:17] He prays for the Philippians that they will grow in their knowledge. In their ability to recognize, to judge, to discern. And for the Colossians he says the same in Colossians 1. Verses 9.

He says, we do not cease to pray for you. Desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will. In all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

And being fruitful in every good work. And increasing in the knowledge of God. The knowledge of his will. In all spiritual understanding. In all wisdom.

That you might increase in the knowledge of God. One of these things are wrapped together in this thing. Which is discernment. Biblical discernment. Biblical discernment. Is connected with some vital things.

The knowledge of his will. Wisdom. And spiritual understanding. And the knowledge of God. Biblical discernment. It's very important in the world today.

[3:17] As it always has been. To discern the truth. And discernment is when we measure. What things are taught. And we test them. We test them. We try them.

Just like metals are tried in a fire. To see whether they will stand the test. And really measure up. And the test for us. As God's people. Is where the teaching lines up.

With the infallible standard of God's word. This is the plumb line. That the prophet sets for us. The plumb line. Has God said. Has God said. So we see.

What discernment is. We test. What the teaching is. Does it line up. And secondly. Why. Why do we discern. Why should we discern. Why should we. Why should we bother. With discernment.

In 1 John 4 verse 1. John writes to the readers. He says. Beloved. Believe not. Every spirit. Believe not. Every spirit. But. Try the spirits. Whether they are of God.

[4:13] Because many false prophets. Are gone out. Into the world. It's a command for us. As Bible believers. Try the spirits. Test the spirits. Why. Because many false prophets. Are gone out. Into the world.

The ministry of truth. The ministry of truth was really a lie. And it's like that today in some quarters of Christendom today. I know I was watching some footage that's on the internet called the False Fire Conference. Strange Fire Conference. You might want to check that out. Do a search for Strange Fire Conference.

And you can see many broadcasts that enlighten people about what is going on today in Christendom at large. Millions of Christians are endangered by this movement of today.

Why do we need discernment? Because Satan is the master of camouflage. In 2 Corinthians 11 verse 13. It says, of such, they are false apostles. False apostles. They call themselves apostles but they are false.

They are deceitful workers. Transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it's no great thing that his ministers are also transformed as the ministers of righteousness.

[11:30] Whose ends shall be according to their works. Ministers of righteousness. Now I'm not saying holist, boldist. But I'm saying be discerning, brothers and sisters, about the TV pictures you tune into.

Exercise discernment is absolutely vital. Why is discernment needed? Because false doctrine is dangerous. False doctrine. False teaching.

What's wrong with false doctrine? False teaching leads to an unbiblical mindset. It affects your whole way of thinking, your pattern of thinking. And then it affects your pattern of life.

It leads to a disobedient life. It leads to unfruitful living. And it gives you a false hope. Because you've believed a lie. Why should we exercise discernment?

Because without it we're like a ship without a rudder. We're like people buffeted by cyclonic winds. Like leaves blown in the wind. No substance. No certainty.

[12:29] No stability. Because there's no foundation. Ephesians 4.14 it says that Now I've been a Christian for numbers of years and I've seen, especially in the circles of churches I used to be in, that it was like it was a new fan every so often.

A new fan. A new wave. A new trend. A new experience. A new manifestation. Would come along. And then that would call the old hat.

And there'd be something new would come. Something new would come. Some new wind. Some other wind of doctrine. Some other wind of teaching. And you end up being thrown around like a boat on a choppy sea.

That's what many Christians are like today. Because they've lost the foundation. They've gone astray from the foundation. False teaching takes us away from the pathway that God wants us to take.

And leads people to destruction. The Lord Jesus said, discern the times. Discern the seasons. Understand the times. We need to be steadfast in these shaky days.

[13:46] We need the truth of God to hold us rock solid. To receive what the word of God says. What it really says. Now some people think that Bible based churches like this one are missing something.

They're missing something because the emphasis is not on the hype. It's not on the hoo-ha. It's on the word. It's on the word. They think we're missing something by that.

But truly discernment leads us to the Bible. And discernment leads us to a greater worship. To a deeper faith. To a more founded and stronger spiritual life.

It helps us be healthy and stronger Christians. Titus 2 verse 1. It tells us of things which become sound doctrine. In other words, things that are fitting or proper that are becoming of sound doctrine.

Where the way of life matches the faithful teaching. Things which become sound doctrine. Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 verse 6. Of urging him.

[14:49] Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.

Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine. I want to urge every believer here today.

Develop your discernment muscles. Be that one who will be nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine. There's a nourishment here.

There's a nurture in the word. In the sound doctrine. There's a nourishment. It's healthy for you.

This is soul food. Soul food. And so to recap thus far.

Firstly we've seen what discernment is. It means to discern. To tell the truth from error. And half truth. It's wisdom.

It's the knowledge of God. It's the ability to think biblically. And secondly we've seen why we need it. Why do we need it? Because God commands us to discern. God commands us to try the spirits.

[15:48] False prophets abound. Grievous wolves threaten the flock. Even today. The arch deceiver of God's people is still active today. And his deceitful workers. And false doctrine is still a dangerous threat in the now.

Damnable heresies are still ultimately destabilizing and destroying people. Why do we need discernment on the positive side? On the positive side sound doctrine will do you good.

Sound doctrine will nourish and deepen your spiritual life. It will strengthen your relationship with God. It will revitalize your worship. Because it will be worship that is in spirit and in truth.

It will be a discernment that brings a good fruit from your life. As a discerning Christian you'll have a healthy diet for your soul. And it will do your soul good.

So we've seen what it is. Why we need it. Thirdly. How can we discern? How can we discern? What does the Bible tell us as to some critical pointers as to how we can be discerning Christians?

[16:58] How can we discern? Acts 17.11. Is that familiar one? I'm sure you're very familiar. They were more noble. Speaking of the Bereans. The people from Berea.

They were more noble than these in Thessalonica. In that they received the word with all readiness of mind. And searched the scriptures daily. Searched the scriptures daily.

Whether those things were so. The things that Paul was speaking. They received with all readiness of mind. And they searched the scriptures. Does it match up?

Does it line up? Does it measure up? I'm glad to be amongst folk this morning. Who are truly noble Christians. You won't take everything that you're spoon fed.

And just swallow it. You won't hear what I'm saying without scrutinising it. Without examining it. Without checking it. And cross referencing it. And understanding.

[17:55] Does it line up? You must do that with whoever is the preacher. To be a noble Christian. Examine the scriptures. Be like the Bereans.

Led by the scriptures. Examine everything. Test everything. In the light of scripture. Let the word of God govern your thinking and your practice.

Because there's counterfeits all around us. You know. The police force are always getting these reports of counterfeit currency. Counterfeit currency.

Looks pretty. A pretty good imitation of the real thing. But it's worthless. Worthless. And so too there's counterfeits today. In the church.

It's important that we watch out for false doctrine. False prophets. And false teachers. We must take a stand. We will not associate with them. Because by doing so we give them legitimacy.

[18:55] We must reject the counterfeits. And you know there's many who claim to be Christians. Including in the government. They may be claiming to be Christians. We don't know. We don't know whether they are or not.

If they're trained by the Jesuits. Then the good chances are they're not a Christian. But we don't know. For sure. Only God knows. I'm not God. I'm not God. I don't know.

But we need to exercise discernment. Friends. Honestly. Not everyone who says they're a Christian. Is a Christian. And so we must be very very careful. Guard it.

Judge righteous judgment. I'm not knocking anyone who might think slightly differently from me on this. And my plea to you. To everyone here today. Is discern.

Discern. Don't take what people say without checking it out. And the important place to start is humility. It's humility. I've come across people who just shut off.

[19:51] You try to help them see something. And they just shut off. You know. The blinkers go down. The blah blah blah. I'm not listening to you. You aim to help them.

And they'll immediately say something like. I cannot do my mind. My experience. That's my experience. I had this happen to me. I had a warm and fuzzy feeling inside.

How dare you deny my experience. Well friends. I will deny your experience. If it's not biblical. If it's not biblical. Then no. It's wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong.

And you must question your experience. One thing I've noticed. When someone has a humility of heart. They will be willing to receive correction. Amen. And exhortation.

It takes humility. It takes humility. They will test everything. Including their experience. For myself I can say. That I've had to humble myself. And see that some of my Christian experience.

[20:48] Some of the long cherished beliefs. That I held dear. Were wrong. And I had to come to acknowledge that. And I want to continue to humble myself.

And recognise pride in myself. Pride in myself. When it rears up its ugly head. I'm not infallible. No one is. It's a key part of being teachable.

That we humble ourselves. It's a key part. In Psalm 25 verse 9 it says. The meek will he guide. In judgment. And the meek will he teach his way.

If you want to be led. Guided by the spirit of God. If you want to be instructed in God's way. Then be meek.

Be meek. Be humble. Humble yourself. Paul wants to think of some who teach otherwise from God's word. If any man teach otherwise. And consent not to wholesome words.

[21:46] Even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ into doctrine. Which is according to godliness. Teaching otherwise. Consenting not to wholesome words. Paul wants to such.

We need wholesome words. 1 Timothy 6 verse 3. This same word wholesome. It's what you read on your weekdays bottle. This is wholesome.

It's what you read. It's the good stuff in the food that you eat. It's wholesome. It will do you good.

Whether it's Weet-Bix or Corn Flakes. Or your brand of bread that you buy.

There's a nutrition value to it. It's wholesome. It's good. This is the sense of this word. Wholesome words. Wholesome words. It's the same word that we use when it says sound doctrine.

Sound doctrine. It means healthy. It means wholesome. It's the same word that's used in Luke 7 verse 10. Where it's translated. As they returned to their house.

[22:45] They found the servant whole. They found the servant whole. That had been sick. And in Matthew 12 verse 13. There's a like word. Where the Lord Jesus says. Stretch forth thine hand.

And he stretched it forth. This is the man with the arm that was frail. The Lord Jesus says. Stretch forth thine hand.

And he stretched it forth. And it was restored whole. Like as the other. This word sound. Means whole. Wholesome. Healthy. If the opposite of sick.

So. It stands to reason then. You've got sound doctrine. And you've got sick doctrine. Some doctrine's sick. It's sick. It's not healthy for you.

It's not wholesome. It's. Actually. Going to damage your health. So. We. Must look at this question then. How can we discern?

[23:40] Another vital part. As well as humility. Is. To be receptive. To the leading of God's spirit. In John 16. 13. Where does the Holy Spirit lead us?

Into all truth. How be it when he. The spirit of truth has come. He will guide you. Into all truth. The Holy Spirit will guide us. Into.

All truth. So it's vital that we show. A true reverence for the Holy Spirit. I know. Again. Harking to this. Conference. And. I don't necessarily endorse.

All of it. But some of the footage I've seen. Of this strange fire conference. They actually. Alert. The people of God. To. The real danger. Of actually.

Offending. The Holy Spirit. With counterfeit worship. It is possible to. Offend. The Holy Spirit of God. With counterfeit. Worship.

[24:37] That's what we see. Back in the Bible. In the strange fire. When we see. Um. Uh. That attempt. Uh. Of David. With the. Uh. The new way. Of leaving the car.

You know. There was something that was. Wasn't according to God's order. And pattern. And plan. It was out of order. And it was spiritually. Wrong. And so. It's very important.

In these days. When there's so many. Variety of beliefs. And ideas. And. Some newfound idea.

Every. So often. Comes along. And. Uh. Uh. Preachers that think.

It's. Uh. It's the anointing. To kick people in the face. Or. Or to. Uh. Uh. Do all manner of. Outlandish things. Wacko stuff. And people are just swallowing that. Thinking that's the latest.

And greatest. Move of God. Well. Spiritual things. Are spiritually discerned. We've got to use the guide book. We've got to be led by the spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2. 13.

[25:31] It says. We compare spiritual things. With spiritual. It says. They are spiritually discerned. And he that is spiritual. Judges. All things.

So it's very critical. Friends today. To exercise wise judgment. Judge me. Please. Judge what I say. Examine it. Scrutinize it.

Question it. Be critical of it. In a good way. Because we're in the midst of a truth war. And that's what's happening. We're in a world that's imprisoned by a belief system.

That is contrary to God. And his truth. We've got a media. And a popular opinion. That's godless. And contrary to God.

Ungodly. There are constructs that. The word of God tells us about. A construct. In people's imagination. Strongholds that people are framing in their minds.

[26:26] Powerful thought patterns. That are captivating. And holding people captive. Imprisoned. Binded. Bound. Without them realising it.

There's a construct. There's an imprisonment of many people. And 2 Corinthians 10 speaks of this. Verse 5.

There's a deliberate deconstruction process that is needed. And a rebuilding process. Where truth is the foundation stone. That's what we need.

How do we do it? It says casting down imaginations. And every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

So when you see someone who says. Who claims. I've got spiritual authority. And they might put the name apostle in front of their name. Or prophet in front of their name.

[27:22] Or a reverend doctor. Or pope in front of their name. We must be careful. And we must be cautious. And we must be discerning. When people are claiming a spiritual authority.

When many are claiming to be apostles. Here's a good little quote. That would be good for you to remember. Before we can trust. We must test. Before we can trust.

We must test. Test them. Test them. Test the fruit. Test the truth of what they're saying. There's a wholesale neglect to sound doctrine. I know Julie and I.

As many of you. Go down to the local Christian bookstore. And friends. Friends. The shelves are dominated. Dominated. By teachers and teachings.

That are very doubtful. And dubious today. And the masses lack it up. They love it so. Why? Because it sells books. It draws a crowd.

[28:21] They're like the people at Mars Hill in Athens. In Acts 17. 21. Some weeks ago I was at this very spot. Acts 17. 21.

Where Paul spoke to the Athenians. And it says of them. They spent their time in nothing else. But either to tell. Or to hear. Some new thing. They wanted to spend their time.

Telling. Or hearing. Some new thing. And as I walked that hill. As I saw that place. And we saw the remains of the ancient marketplaces. And the ancient streets.

And the ancient temples. And I walked that place. And I could see. There was altars to this and that. And temples to this and that. All manner of gods and goddesses.

And Paul says. Even as he saw this. Monument to the unknown god. He could see. That they were all about some new thing.

[29:17] And it's the same today. Brothers and sisters. The unregenerate heart. Wants a flesh appealing message. Of health. Of wealth. Of prosperity. And people are easily swayed.

By this glossy gospel. That panders to their felt needs. It's still the same today. People want some new thing. So they go church hopping. Wanting to find some new thing.

Some new teaching. Some new anointing. The Bible says that if you're a Christian. You're anointed. Every one of you are anointed. Every one of you has the anointing.

You don't need to go and look for it somewhere else. Or go to some special place. Or some special person. Or go and hear someone talk about supposed trips to heaven. You need the living word of

God.

The sound doctrine. The natural inclination of all of us. Is to veer for that which catches our ear. And that which is showy and worldly. People are drawn to that.

[30:13] It's the natural inclination. To go to where the atmosphere is there. To where the emphasis is on the music. On the emotion. On the freedom. Where there's promises of health and wealth.

Where we can tune into some ecstatic experiences. And such like. And the mantra goes on. I can't deny my experience.

I can't deny my feelings. I can't deny my emotions. It's as if experience and emotion. Has been elevated above divine revelation.

Divine revelation must be our guide. It must be the plumb line. The Bible warns us brothers and sisters.

I'm speaking strongly because I care. And because it's important today. The Bible warns us. It's not all warm and fluffy in here. It says that some things rebuke.

[31:11] Reprove. Exhort. With all long suffering. And doctrine. Speak the truth. In love. Speak it. We dare not trifle with this book. This book is sufficient.

The Bible warns us of heresies. Heresies. And we must be sure that there's a biblical basis. There's biblical parameters that define the truth.

That hold us true. Let us turn our ears to this book. In Proverbs 2 verse 2 it says. Incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding.

Incline thine ear to wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding. It's the fundamental responsibility of every professing Christian to be discerning.

The word of God must be steadfastly held. In Titus 1 verse 9 it says. Holding fast the faithful word. Don't loosen your grip.

[32:11] Hold it fast the faithful word. That he may be able by sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. We need a return to a biblical faith.

A biblical faith. I haven't knocked any particular individuals I don't think this morning. I'm not naming names in this message. I could do. There's websites that say it pretty plain.

Please. Being a discerning Christian. Being a Christian whose biblical faith is founded on the centrality of the scriptures. The word of God is perfect.

And sure. Psalm 19 verse 7. The law of the Lord is perfect. Converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure. Making wise the simple.

This is perfect and it is sure. The written word of God. It's our absolute source. Of doctrine and teaching. So. There's a great danger today. Some.

[33:12] Glippely say. And honestly say. God told me this. God told me that. How does God speak to us? God has made things plain.

And known to us. Here's a quote from. One of these preachers I was listening to lately. He says this. Justin Peters. He says. If you want to hear God speak to you. I can guarantee.

There is one way. That you will hear God speak. Read your Bible. If you want to hear God speak.

To you audibly. Read it out loud. That's right. Amen. Amen. Amen. The audible voice of God. Amen. Thus saith the Lord.

Amen. That's what you need people. That's what you need man of God. That's what you need women of God today. Read it. Read it. Read it. I promise you. You will hear him speak.

[34:08] Read and study the word of God. Obey it. End quote. That's what we need. If you want to hear God speak. He's written it here. In black and white. Read it.

Let's hold fast to the Bible. When it comes to a choice between divine revelation. And human speculation and opinion. We must stand with divine revelation.

An old time preacher. Ryle says. The principle laid down is this. Prove all things by the word of God. All ministers. All teaching.

All preaching. All doctrines. All sermons. All writings. All opinions. All practices. Prove all by the word of God.

Compare all with the standard of the Bible. Weigh all in the balances of the Bible. Examine all by the light of the Bible. Test all in the crucible of the Bible.

[35:11] That which can abide the fire of the Bible. Receive. Hold. Believe. And obey. That which cannot abide the fire of the Bible. Reject. Refuse. Repudiate.

And cast away. When it's contrary to the Bible. We know what we have to do. It's important that we learn to think biblically.

How can we discern? The writer to the Hebrews in 5 verse 14 says in part of those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

They have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. In other words their mind, their perceptive powers, their understanding, their judgment capacity is exercised.

Now this has the sense of exercised vigorously. Or trained by practice. It's where we get the original word. It's where we get the word gym from.

[36:12] Gymnasium. It's that sense of exercising your senses. Have a workout. A spiritual workout. Some of you haven't been to the gym for a long, long time. I don't think I've ever been to the gym.

But some of you need to get into the gym as it were. To get into the spiritual training regime. To have your senses exercised. To have your spiritual discernment powers trained and sharpened. Friends we need to hold fast the exceeding great and precious promises. God brings much blessing and truth. His absolute holy standard.

Must be the guide for us. And we dare not trifle with this message. Or try to readjust it. Make it fit. Our lifestyle.

We must not dilute or neglect it. Or try to refashion it. But rather hold it fast. Grasp it squarely and strongly. Proclaim it soundly and loudly.

[37:12] We love the Lord Jesus. We'll love his word. It says of those that follow him. They'll know him. They'll hear his voice. And they'll follow him. We must honour him.

And that means honouring his word. Studying it. Prove just about everything. Or prove all things. It says prove all things. Prove all things.

Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. I plead with you today.

If you are not a Christian. There is one. Who can take your sin. And save your soul. Only one.

There's only one. Here's the truth. The way. The life. Here's the. Saviour. Of the world. And he can. Cleanse the foulest. And make them clean.

[38:09] Inside and out. Friends. I urge you today. To turn to him. Receive him. Be regenerated. By God's spirit. It's not a working of your own.

But a total. Heaven sent work. And I plead with you today. To trust him. Trust him. And Christians here. Today. Be a lover of the truth.

Be a lover of the truth. Such that. You can then. Know what is wrong. When new fans come. And go. You won't be.

Tossed to and fro. Like. A boat in the. Choppy sea. You won't be blown around. Like a leaf. Down the street. But you'll be grounded. Firm and squarely. You'll have.

A biblical understanding. That's why we have. Bible studies in this church. That's why we. We put an emphasis. On the Bible. That's why we want. Everyone to. Have a love for the Bible.

[39:10] I pray. Let that be refreshed in you today. All right.