

"Secrets Of Discernment"

In his book *What God Wants to Know*, author Bruce Larson tells about being at a family reunion and hearing a true and humorous story from his daughter. Her sister-in-law is a conservationist who actively promotes the preservation of the natural environment and wildlife. While she, her husband, and young son were driving up the coast of Florida on a vacation, they noticed a sign advertising a Nudist Camp just ahead. Assuming it was the same as a naturalist camp, they decided to visit the camp in hopes of meeting new friends who shared a common passion. They drove in, parked their car, and wasted no time heading toward the beach. However, it did not take but a few moments to realize that this nudist camp was actually a nudist camp. The first group of people they came upon were all stark naked as they were cycling along the beach. Their five-year-old son stopped and stared in amazement. "Look, Mom and Dad," he said pointing, "they're not wearing safety helmets." He was so captivated by that one detail that he missed the obvious.

Ours is a society that prides itself on brilliance and creativity. High levels of education have given us incredible medical breakthroughs and unimaginable technological advancements. However, in our pursuit of education and information, we are being lulled into a false sense of security that is disarming us of a characteristic we desperately need in these last days and that is sharp, accurate discernment. We are told in 1 Chronicles 12:32, "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding (discernment) of the times, to know what Israel ought to do..." Where are the lives that can still maintain a clear perception amidst the fog of problems, pressures, and powers? Seventeenth-century French essayist Jean de la Bruyere said, "After a spirit of discernment, the next rarest things in the world are diamonds and pearls." In uncertain times like these, the body of Christ is struggling to impact the world due to the inability to separate truth from error, light from darkness, and the genuine from the counterfeit. The great dilemma for our generation is not doing what is right as much as it is knowing what is right. We may be growing more intelligent in our world, but we are losing sanctified common sense! How do we discipline our lives to ensure our discernment is trustworthy?

Accurate discernment **demands a consistent exposure to light**. In Hebrews 4:12, the author writes, "For the Word of God...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word "discerner" means "to judge, to discriminate between." Those who live applying biblical truth and principles to their daily walk of life are never left to hunches, feelings, or guesswork. The psalmist said, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." The longer we stay in the light of truth, the clearer and more instinctive God's perspective on a matter becomes to us. Scuba divers often go down to depths where the darkness is so thick they cannot see their hand in front of their face. The darkness can be disorienting, and to combat their fears and panic, the divers are taught to feel the bubbles from their regulator. The bubbles can always be trusted because they only go in one direction -- upward. In similar fashion, the truth of God leads in only one direction -- rightly. If Adam and Eve had felt the bubbles of

truth they would have been buoyed amidst temptation. If Samson had felt the bubbles of truth he would have been preserved from captivity. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right." The man who lives in the light is never hidden, and makes the discovery that little is ever hidden from him.

Accurate discernment **depends upon a clear evidence of leading**. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul noted, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The wisdom of man enables us to see things, but the wisdom of the Spirit enables us to see through things. While medical doctors are trained to recognize many outward symptoms, there are times when their perception is limited. In such moments, they order an x-ray, MRI, or C.T. scan which enables them to see through the symptom to make a more definite diagnosis. When life presents us with deep mysteries, only God has knowledge of that which lies beneath the surface. Oswald Chambers said, "God does not exist to answer our prayers, but by our prayers we come to discern the mind of God." Left to his own logic and reasoning, man will always go with what feels right or looks best on paper. If Isaac had not trusted his intuition alone, he would have seen through the camouflaged hands and recognized the voice of Jacob. If Joshua had not trusted his intellect alone, he would have seen through the disguise of the weary travelers and recognized his enemies the Gibeonites. The decisions of life are never more confidently made than when we have the knowledge of God's full perspective.

Accurate discernment **draws from the collected experiences in life**. In Hebrews 5:14, the writer notes that a mark of spiritual maturity is "...those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Those who are sharp in their perception have lived life with their eyes wide open, and have learned valuable lessons along life's journey. When I was age 3, I overheard my father mention going fishing. I was merely trying to be helpful when I volunteered to gather some "big worms" I had seen in my grandmother's garden. No one was any more surprised than me to discover the jar I thought I had filled with worms was actually garden snakes. I assure you I know the difference today! The farther we go in our walk with the Lord, our life should be progressing from weakness to wonder to wisdom. American journalist Sydney J. Harris said, "Knowing your own strength is a fine thing. Recognizing your own weakness is even better. What is really bad, what really hurts and finally defeats us, is mistaking a weakness for a strength." A person who never learns from their mistakes will struggle being obedient, and a disobedient life will never mature with discernment.

In Matthew 16, the religious leaders asked Jesus for a sign. Jesus answered their request, "...ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" The things that should have been most obvious were the things that were most missed. Discernment is not as much about spotting a

sign as it is seeing with the eyes of God. Those who remain focused on seeking a sign will most always be found without a stitch of discernment!

Your Most Proud Pastor,

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