



LEARN-DISCERN-LEAD
Conference – Kenya 2019

Session 1 - Dare to DISCERN

Introduction to the process and practice of biblical discernment

Recognize the wrong and false principles and teachings that result in dangers to the health and growth of the church

Teach and Lead with biblical power and authority

Dare to Discern - Part 1

Introduction to the process and practice of biblical discernment

An Example from History

- Brief retelling of the Joseph Smith story
- New prophet
- New Scriptures
- New concept of God

Results Today

- 16 million members
- Africa one of fastest growing areas
- Estimated 7 billion dollars annually

It is big and rich; it must be from God, correct?

Discernment

How do we detect and avoid deception?

Discern:

- To perceive or to recognize
- To distinguish by sight or other senses

Discernment:

- The ability to judge well.
- In a Christian context, being able to see well with the goal of having spiritual direction and understanding.

Introduction – Main themes

- Principles and priorities
- Avoiding and correcting errors
- The biblical warnings
- Examples and excesses
- Future consequences for the church and ministry

Principles and Priorities

- The importance of a biblical hermeneutic
- Priority of the Scriptures
- Over tradition and culture
- Over experience
- Over our own preconceived ideas

Example of Jesus and the NT writers

- Jesus: "It is written; I say unto you."
- The Bereans- "more noble - examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."

How we honor God and our leaders

- God has given us leaders - pastors, teachers, bishops, overseers - to guide and help His church
- We are to honor and respect these leaders and the authority they exercise in the church
- Yet, each believer has the ability and the responsibility to know the truth
- We have the Word of God and the Spirit of God
- When we study the Words of God, we honor God who gave them to us

We have an example of the noble Bereans

The Noble Jews of Berea - Acts 17:11

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Avoiding and correcting errors

Model of biblical interpretation and application

Their village

My village

Example - Genesis 15

- Abraham and God- Abrahamic Covenant
- Very strange story
- Altars
- Animals
- Torch and Pot
- Meaning - Unilateral covenant
- God will make the promises happen
- Abraham trusts God and believes God

Example - Malachi 3:9-10

"you have robbed me... you are cursed ... Bring the full tithe, put me to the test ... You will be blessed"

- Context: Nation of Israel, after the exile.
- God rebukes the priests for blemished, imperfect sacrifices
- Why is this happening? Because the people were not tithing the priests were having to work in the fields. (See Nehemiah 13:10-12)

Malachi 3:9-10 – cont.

“you have robbed me... you are cursed ... Bring the full tithe, put me to the test ... You will be blessed”

- God is rebuking the nation of Israel for not bringing their full tithe to the temple.
- The tithe was God’s economic plan for his people.
- It reflected a bi-lateral covenant
- New Testament Context: The church is now the body of Christ.
- 2 Corinthians 9:7-10 - Every one should give as he has decided in his heart: not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver.
- Yes, providing for needs, but a “harvest of righteousness.”

Example - Romans 11:29

“For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable”

- This is often used to say if God has given you a gift or a calling he will never take it back – no matter how sinful or disobedient your life.
- Because of this, very often leaders are left in positions of authority and leadership even when they fall into serious sin.

Yet, in 1 Timothy 1:18-20 the Apostle Paul writes:

“Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme”

Example - Romans 11:29 cont.

- Broad Context (Rom 9-11)
- The Jews had rejected the Messiah but one day would be restored and would turn to him.
- Immediate Context (Rom 11:11-32)
- Jews continue to be a part of God’s plan, and after a time of Gentiles hearing the gospel and being grafted in also as God’s people, the Jews would again return – because “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”
- The context of these verses has nothing to do with calling to ministry or spiritual gifts.
- Using the passage this way contradicts Matt 25:14-30 and the parable of the talents.

Important Truths

- Taking a passage of scripture out of context is to violate God's intent in revealing it to us.
- To incorrectly apply Scripture is to risk teaching error.
- Using a passage of Scripture out of context to manipulate the church is abusing the Bride of Christ.
- Jesus and his apostles took this very seriously as we can see by the multiple warnings they gave.

We've heard the warnings...

"Matthew 7:15-16

"Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them."

Biblical Need for Discernment

- False Prophets (Matt 7:15)
- Sheep's clothing
- Known by their fruit
- Deceptive Appearances (Matt 7:21)
- They will use the name of Jesus
- Prophecy and produce signs
- "And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." Matt. 24:10-12
- "Fierce wolves will come in among you. (Paul - Acts 20:29-30)

Biblical Need for Discernment – cont.

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1-3)

"and many will follow them ..."

Biblical Need for Discernment – cont.

- *I charge you ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound[a] teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (2 Tim 4:1-5)*
- Test the spirits (1 John 4:1)
- Contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jud 3)

Biblical Discernment

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9-10)

Historical pattern of false teachers

- Often begin inside the church
- Unbalanced approach (tongues, healings, material blessings)
- Loss of priorities
- Scripture
- Experiences
- Emotions
- Application and non-biblical development
- Lack of interest in accountability
- Assume a position of spiritual superiority over others

What are the devil's goals?

- Confuse
- Kill, steal, destroy, devour
- Divert - from the truth of the Word
- Cheat
- Split the church
- Entertain
- Keep the man away from God

What have been some results of false teachings?

- Divisions
- Immaturity and spiritual selfishness
- Subjective experiences with precedence over objective truth of the Bible
- Introduction of non-biblical beliefs and practices
- Confusion
- Ridicule the church in the eyes of the world
- People with zeal and experiences but without salvation

What prevents discernment?

- So many people hear heresy or application or interpretation errors and say nothing.
- Why?
- Our tendency to conform.

How does discernment develop?

- Passion for Christ
- Know your heart
- Want intimacy with God
- Submit our will to God's will

Passion for the Word

- Know the context
- Want to apply it correctly
- Want to apply it consistently
- Commit to the process of developing it

Do You See Scripture as a Picture or a Window?

- Beach - Lake Michigan - picture
- Beach - Lake Michigan - video

Where and how to discern

- In the study of the Word of God
- Context, context, context
- A text without context is a pretext for interpretation out of context
- Application that avoids exaggeration, distortion and misrepresentation of the passage
- A doctrine or teaching is never based on a single verse, much less a word.
- This can happen to anyone - let's see an example.

What does Hebrews 11: 1 teach?

- The text: "Now, faith is the guarantee of what is expected, the certainty of what is not seen." (NIV)
- (NKJV) Thus, faith is the certainty of what is expected, the conviction of what is not seen. "
- "Now faith is the assurance / substance of things hoped for"
- Context: Hebrews 10: 32-39
- Previous days, struggles, suffering, afflictions, gladly accepted when they confiscated their assets, aware of a better and permanent heritage - the righteous will live by faith
- We are of those who have faith
- What question arises from this?
- Hey, faith is important, because we live and persevere and succeed if we have it.
- What is the faith? What does it consist of?

Answer: Hebrews 11

- "Now faith is the guarantee of what is expected, the certainty of what is not seen." (NIV)
- (NKJV) So faith is certainty
- Faith is the confidence to act without having seen or received what is expected.
- "Now faith is ..."
- The word "Now" is a verbal sign indicating that an additional conclusion or explanation will be given.
- It could have been used:
- "Then faith is ..."
- "It is then faith"
- "Notice that faith is ..."
- It is not a time indicator as in "Not now, but tomorrow it is."

"Faith is Now"

- What happened here?
- False Affirmations:
- "It's a lazy translation"
- "That is not what the original says."
- "Faith has a time zone"
- The text of the Word of God is not your priority
- It's how he took it by surprise
- Why reject a faithful translation of the Word of God?
- The answer is later in his preaching

"Faith is Now" - 2

Theological Errors as a Result

- Faith has a "time zone"
- Faith is now
- Faith is a heavenly substance
- Faith is the ability to do in the now what time says to wait
- You can control when what you want comes
- His parents did not get for lack of faith
- You do not have to wait
- It doesn't depend on God - it depends on you
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All those statements are biblically wrong

Questions for reflection

- What awakens this teaching in people?
- How much place is there for patience?
- If a person had humble parents, consecrated to God who paid for their house in 30 years - what should they think of them?
- How does Maldonado react when there is no enthusiastic response to his false teaching?
- What do you use to encourage people?

Important Precautions

- We never have the luxury of not discerning
- We must take care of "revelations of the moment"
- If it's new - it's suspicious

Remember:

"All things that belong to life and godliness have been given to us by his divine power through the knowledge of him who called us for his glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1: 3)

Conclusions

- Those who have put their faith in Christ and are under the influence of a false apostle or teacher are our brothers in Christ
- Everyone must be treated with respect and compassion (2 Tim. 2: 24-26)

As leaders we seek progress on two fronts:

- Our own discernment
- The discernment of those for whom we are responsible.

Conclusions - continued

- A true and mature faith demonstrates balance in the objective and subjective aspects of the Christian life
- We must be firm in the order of how we hear from God:
 - Word of God
 - Spirit of God
 - People of God
- We must evaluate all teaching and experience with the Bible - taking into account the historical and grammatical context - and firmly reject all errors.

Consequences of Not Discerning

- Dependence on men and not on God and His Word
- Priority of experience and emotion
- Opening to non-biblical practices
- Opening to non-biblical teachings
- Confusion inside the church
- Rejection of the church message on the outside