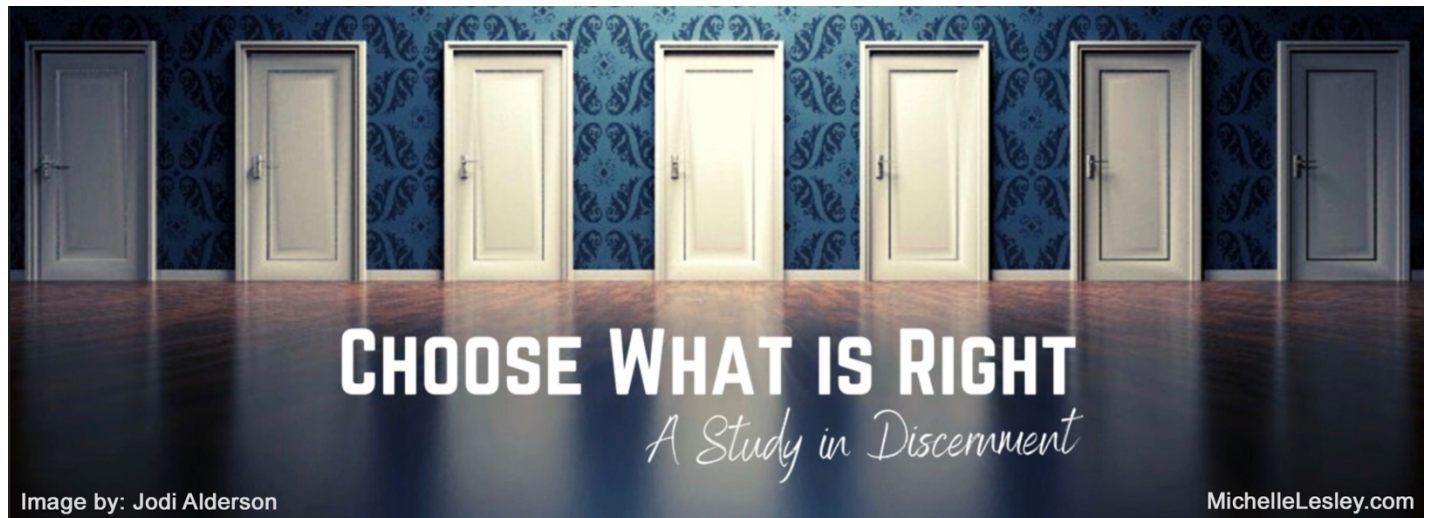


# Choose What Is Right: A Study in Discernment

## Lesson 1- Introduction



**W**elcome to our new study, **Choose What is Right: A Study in Discernment!**

Discernment has various connotations in various contexts, but for the purposes of this study, we're going to keep the focus narrow and define discernment as being able to tell the difference – from rightly handled, in context Scripture – between sound, biblical doctrine and false doctrine.



What does the Bible say about discerning between true and false doctrine? How does God regard false teachers, and how are we to deal with them in our personal lives and families, and as the church?

Have you ever read the book of Job? When we think about Job's story, our minds usually turn to the theme of suffering, and how to suffer well as Christians, but did you realize another major theme of the book of Job is discernment? Job's three friends come to him in his suffering and comfort him with ... false doctrine. Job is well on his way to believing them when his true friend, Elihu, steps in and, though he's not perfect, does his level best to correct them.

The theme verse for this topical study in discernment comes from Elihu's speech in Job 34:



“ Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know; for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. Let us **choose what is right**; let us know among ourselves what is good.

**JOB 34:2-4**

This 11-15 lesson study will help us to be wise women who pay attention to what God says about discernment and how to avoid false doctrine. It will show us how to test words as the palate tastes food. It will teach us to know what is good, so we can choose what is right.

The striking title image for our study was designed by Jodi Alderson. To me the doors represent the idea that we are often presented with several options of teachers or doctrines that all appear, on the surface, to be equally good and biblical. We must use our discernment skills to find out which ones actually match up with Scripture.

Another aspect of the image I like is the use of light and darkness. We live in a world of darkness. Some of the doors we're presented with are obviously dark and will only lead to more darkness. But some of the doors *appear* to shine forth the light of truth. (It reminds me of [2 Corinthians 11:14-15](#), which is a verse we'll tackle later in this study.) Which ones *really* lead to truth? We have to know what is good so we can choose the ones that are right. Great job, Jodi!

If you're new to using my Bible studies, just a few housekeeping items and helpful hints:

The studies I've written (you can find all of them at the **Bible Studies** tab in the blue menu bar at the top of [my website](#)) are like “training wheels”. They're designed to teach you **how** to study the Bible for yourself and what kinds of questions to ask of the text so that, when you get the hang of it, you won't have to depend on other people's books and materials – even mine – anymore. To that end, I do not provide answers for the study questions in the studies I've written.

My studies are meant to be extremely flexible and self-paced so that you can use them in the way that works best for you. You can do an entire lesson in one day or work on the questions over the course of the week (or longer). You do not need to feel obligated to answer all (or any) of the questions. If the Holy Spirit parks you on one question for several days, enjoy digging deep into that one aspect of the lesson. If He shows you something I haven't written a question about that captures your attention, dive in and study it! Those are ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us through His Word. This is **your** time to commune with the Lord, not a school assignment or work project you are beholden to complete in a certain way by a certain deadline.

I use [hyperlinks liberally](#). The Scripture passage for each lesson will be linked at the beginning of the lesson. As you're reading the lesson, whenever you see a word in a different color text, click on it, and it will take you to a Scripture, article, or other resource that will help as you study.

You are also welcome to **print out** any of my Bible studies (or any article I've written) for free and make as many copies as you'd like, again, with proper attribution.

## Introduction to Choose What Is Right: A Study in Discernment

Part of my philosophy of Bible study is that our main “diet” should be systematic, expositional study of the text. In other words: pick a book of the Bible, start at the beginning, and study it through to the end. Then, pick another book and start again. This method of studying helps us understand passages in their context and correctly apply them to our lives, and helps us avoid [eisegesis](#), (\*\*\*)see link at end of lesson) taking passages out of context, and incorrectly applying them.

However, there is a place for the study of a biblical topic such as peace, sin, the family, God's wrath, or biblical womanhood. For example: if you're struggling to trust God because of a sudden circumstance in your life, you don't have time to study through every book of the Bible to learn what the Bible says about trusting God. You may need to spend some time in focused study on passages from various books that deal specifically with the topic of trusting God, and that's OK. My goal with this study is not only that you learn what the Bible has to say about the topic of discernment, but also to demonstrate **how** to do a topical study properly so you can do topical studies on your own when the need arises.

Normally, in the introductory lesson to my studies, we take a look at the author of the book of the Bible we're studying, the audience he wrote it to, the historical setting of the book, and other “backstory” issues. But because this is a topical study, and we'll be examining passages from various books of the Bible, we'll have to briefly address those issues as needed in each lesson.

So in the introduction to *this* study, I'd like to address two items in **your** “backstory.”

### Salvation

If you're not saved, this study isn't going to be very helpful to you, because, as we'll soon learn, lost people are naturally drawn to false teachers and false doctrine, and are incapable of truly embracing the things of God.

This week, before we tackle discernment, I'd like **everyone** – even if you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you're saved – to work through the Scriptures and materials at the [What Must I Do to Be Saved?](#) (\*\*\*)see link) tab in the blue menu bar on my webpage (and while you're there, let's do a little social media evangelism – share the link for that page around to your friends and followers!).

Do you understand the **biblical** gospel? Have you truly repented of your sin and trusted Christ as Savior? Spend some time alone with God [examining your heart and life](#) (\*\*\*) against these Scriptures. If you're unsure whether or not you're genuinely saved, I would encourage you to put this study aside and work through my study [Am I Really Saved?: A First John Check Up](#) (\*\*\*) first. You cannot be discerning if you don't belong to God.

## **Expectations and Presuppositions**

What do you expect out of this study? What kinds of ideas or preconceived notions are you carrying into this study? Take some time to answer the following questions.

1. When you hear the word “discernment,” what do you think of?
2. **Without looking in your Bible**, jot down five or ten things you **think** the Bible teaches about discernment.
3. What does your church teach about discernment? Is your church careful about its doctrine and the materials it uses? Is there someone in your church that you look up to as a good example of discernment?
4. What Scriptures come to mind when you think about discernment?
5. Why are you interested in a study about discernment, and what do you hope to get out of this study?
6. What are your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to discernment? What are some things you’d like to improve on?

Take some time in prayer between now and our next lesson to begin preparing your heart for this study. If there’s a specific issue you struggle with when it comes to discernment, ask God to teach you the truth of His Word about that issue and strengthen you in that area. Write down your prayer and review it when the study is over to see how God answered you through the study of His Word. I’m excited to have you join me in this journey of discovering what God’s Word has to say about discernment!

<https://michellelesley.com/2023/03/01/choose-what-is-right-a-study-in-discernment-lesson-1-introduction/>  
<https://www.gotquestions.org/exegesis-eisegesis.html>  
<https://michellelesley.com/what-must-i-do-to-be-saved/>  
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