

Choose What Is Right: A Study in Discernment

Lesson 2- What Is Discernment?



Discernment is being able to tell the difference – from rightly handled, in context Scripture – between sound, biblical doctrine and false doctrine.

[Read These Passages](#)

Job 34:2-4, Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:18-22, Acts 17:10-12

Questions to Consider

1. Quickly read or skim [Job 1:1-34:37](#), especially chapters [32-33](#), so you'll have the major points of the story line fresh in your mind. Summarize the story of Job to this point in your own words in a few sentences.
2. Why does Elihu feel the need to speak his piece here (ch. 32-34)? What was the false doctrine with which Job's three friends were counseling him? What was Job's position in response to them ([32:2](#))? Meditate on Elihu's words in [34:2-4](#). What does each phrase of this passage teach us about discernment? How does the passage as a whole explain discernment? In your own words, what is this passage saying to us as 21st century Christians? Be sure to explore the concepts of wisdom (2), "testing words," (3) and the corporate nature, unity, and fellowship (4) of discernment.
3. Carefully examine the [two Deuteronomy passages](#) (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:18-22). Which [genre of biblical literature](#) (***)see link at end of lesson) is the book of Deuteronomy (law, history, wisdom, poetry, narrative, epistles, or prophecy/apocalyptic)? Generally speaking, were the laws of Deuteronomy laws that governed the Old Testament nation of Israel or New Testament Christians and the church?

Do these two passages in Deuteronomy center on our (vertical) relationship with God, our (horizontal) interpersonal relationships (with friends, family, neighbors, etc.), or maintaining an orderly society (similar to our modern-day traffic, liability, tax, etc. laws)?

Which parts of these laws no longer apply to New Testament Christians? (13:5, 18:20) Why? Carefully explain the biblical principles underlying the remainder of these passages:

- What is God telling His people about our relationship with Him?
- What is God telling us about how He relates to His people?
- Why is He telling us the things in this passage?

What do these passages teach us about the nature, character, and attributes of God, and [how](#) (John 4:23-24) He desires to be worshiped? Why is it vital that our worship, beliefs, and doctrine are based on truth? What were the two ways God's people in the Old Testament could "test the words" of these prophets "as the palate tastes food"? (13:2-3a, 18:21-22) How does this relate to the fact that God used miraculous signs and wonders to authenticate and endorse the message of His *true* prophets (e.g. [Moses](#) (Exodus 4:1-9), [Elijah](#) (1 Kings 18:36-39), [Jesus](#) (Acts 2:22) and the [apostles](#) (Acts 14:3)? In what ways do false teachers of today say, "Let us go after other gods."?

How many times could a prophet prophesy falsely before the death penalty was to be imposed? (Hint: Notice the words "sign," "wonder," and "word" in 13:1-2 and 18:20. Are those words singular or plural?) What does this, and the fact that false prophecy/teaching was a capital offense, tell you about how seriously God takes false prophecy/teaching? Does the absence of the death penalty for false teachers in the New Testament indicate that God has [changed His mind](#) (Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29, Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, John 8:58), "gone soft" on false teaching, or no longer takes it seriously?

Explain what "God is [testing](#) you" (Deuteronomy 8:2, John 6:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5, James 1:3, James 1:12, 1 Peter 1:7) means in 13:3b. Does God test us because He doesn't know our hearts and needs to find out whether or not we'll pass the test?

4. Did you notice that, as we begin to address the concepts of discernment, false doctrine, and false teachers – for Christians – that we've started in the Old Testament rather than the New Testament? Many [theologians believe](#) (***)see link) the events of the book of Job took place chronologically sometime between the [tower of Babel and Abraham](#) (Genesis 11). Can you think of any instances of false teachers and false doctrine that took place [before](#) Genesis 11 (Genesis 3:1-5)? What does all of this tell you about the longevity of false doctrine and false teaching?

5. Examine the [Acts 17](#) passage. To whom did Paul and Silas first go with their message – God’s people or the pagans? (10) Upon hearing Paul and Silas’ message, what was the Berean Jews’ initial response? (11) Their subsequent action? (11) The result of their action? (12) Which came first, believing the teachers’ message or examining the teachers’ message against Scripture? Why is this order important? How can we imitate the Bereans’ response>>action>>result when we encounter a new teacher today?

What word does God use in verse 11 to describe these Jews due to their discernment? Many professing Christians today characterize discernment and discerning Christians as “critical,” “negative,” “devoid of love,” “divisive,” and so on. How does God characterize discernment and discerning Christians?

Homework

- Consider Job’s story. How can suffering make us [vulnerable](#) (***)see link) to believing false doctrine, and why is it especially important that we believe sound doctrine during times of suffering? Do you know a sister in Christ who is currently in a season of suffering? How can you help her avoid being deceived by false teachers and false doctrine? Pray for her, and how you might encourage her with the truth of God’s Word, this week.
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- How do each of today’s passages fit with the definition of discernment in the image at the beginning of this lesson?
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Suggested Memory Verse



(Every week of our study, you'll see a suggested memory verse like the one above. You are welcome to [grab the memory verse pic](#) to use as your screensaver or wallpaper on your phone or computer, print it out and stick it somewhere you'll see it frequently, or use it in any other way you wish to help you memorize the verse.)

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