



The
FLOW
Adult CURRICULUM

#44

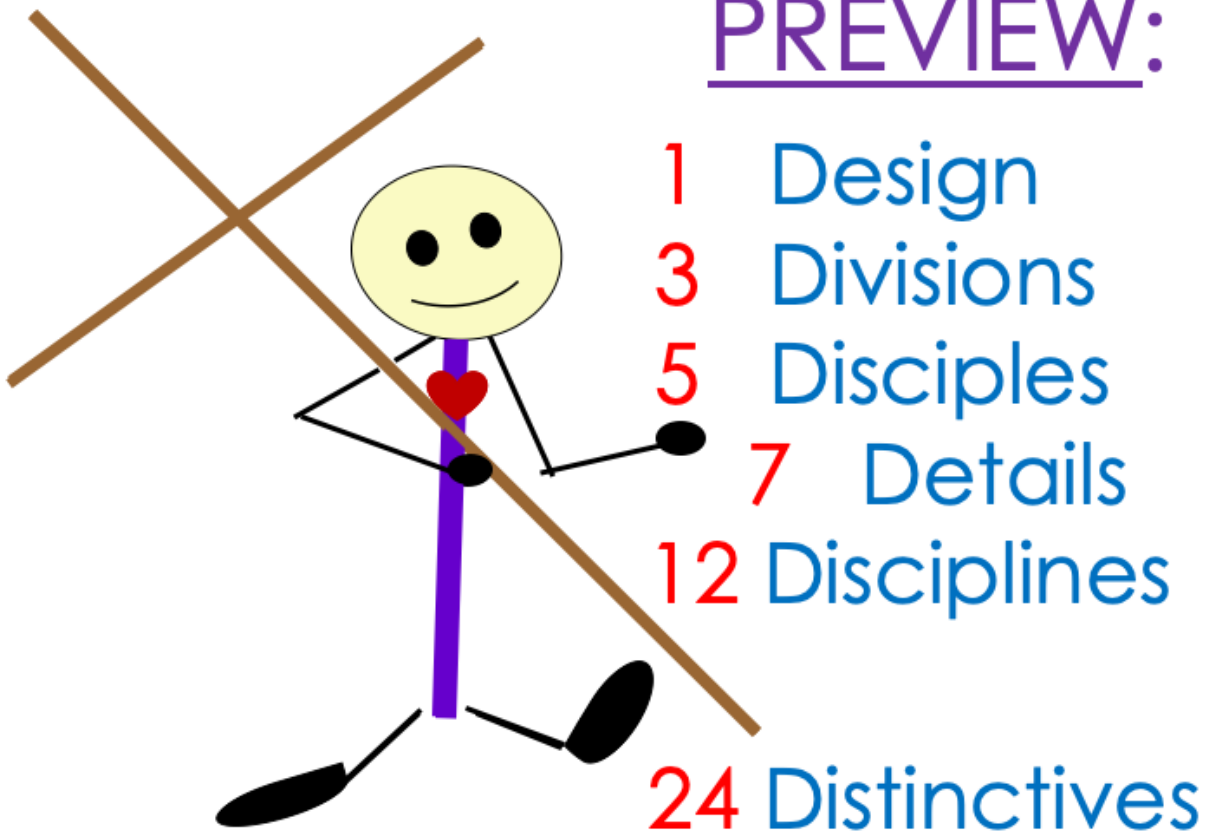
Discerning Matters Shrewdly

Matthew 10:16

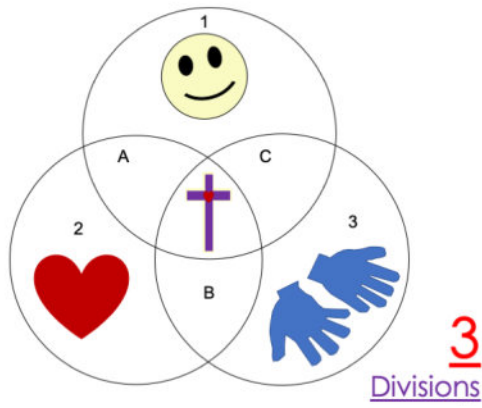
(Come And See Christianity book pages 105)

The FLOW

PREVIEW:

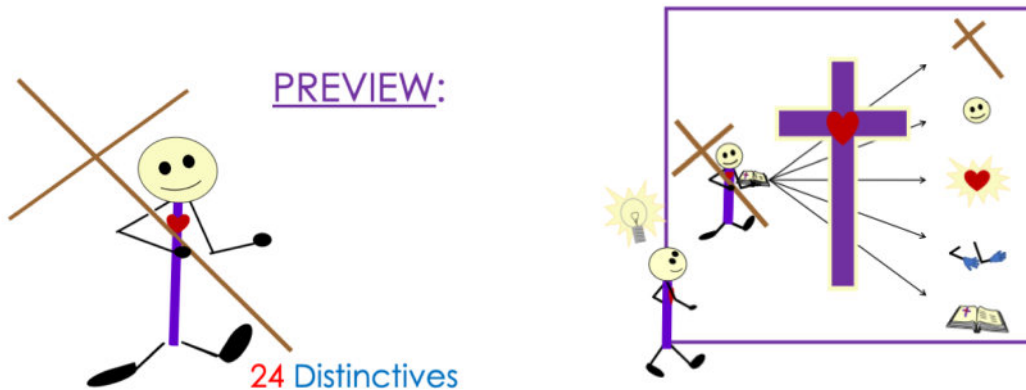


SECTION SIX: 12 Disciplines



The Disciple's "Hands" put into **action** the **truth** & **love** of God's Word, God's will, & God's ways. In short, when **each Christian's Head, Heart, & Hands** are united in purpose & power, the family of God is **living** as the **Body of Christ!**

24 Family Distinctives:



24 DISTINCTIVES:

The “distinctives” are a family portrait... When you add God’s Word, God’s Spirit, God’s Truth, God’s love, and God’s people all together, the distinctives are what we look, love, & live like :-)

We are...

Discerning



INTRO:

As we begin to **see the beautiful, biblical portrait of Christ's faith-filled family** defined and described by God's Word, will, and ways, it is critical to remember that the Holy Bible is to ALWAYS BE our ultimate source, authority, and interpreter in ALL things pertaining to one's understanding of reality and application of truth in love.

Remember,
The biblical Church is Christ's missional family...
Moreover, God's Word reveals our Father's will and His family's ways.

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Here are ***24 defining & describing HANDS-on DISTINCTIVES of Christianity:***

True Christians are biblically, miraculously, intentionally, missionally, and imperfectly...

1. *Responding to grace*
2. *Repenting of sin*
3. *Trusting the Bible*
4. *Obeying God's Word*
5. *Growing in Christ*
6. *Living Spirit-led*
7. *Praying for guidance*
8. *Following by faith*
9. *Dying to self*
10. *Carrying our cross*
11. *BE-ing The Church*
12. *Loving one another (truly loving one another)*
13. *Equipping the saints*
14. *Exemplifying supernatural unity*
15. *Ministering as ambassadors*
16. *Discerning matters shrewdly*
17. *Worshipping God vertically*
18. *Experiencing Him horizontally*
19. *Proclaiming the Gospel (no matter what)*
20. *Fishing for men*
21. *Making disciplined warriors*
22. *Winning spiritual warfare*
23. *Loving our King*
24. *Serving His kingdom*

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

CONTEXT:

Macro

This lesson marks another major transition point in our curriculum's eye-opening explanation of Christianity. By way of review, we began in Section One with the reality of Almighty God having 1 Divine DESIGN (also known as a biblical worldview and the eternal application of Jesus Christ's Gospel). In Section Two, we addressed the 3 DIVISIONS (Head, Heart, and Hands) that make up the "being" in every human being. Next, in Section Three, we demonstrated how Christianity accounts for, defines, and describes all of humanity, every person, past, present, and future. We noted that all people can be identified as one of the 5 DISCIPLES – Lost, Lover, Learner, Leader, or Lifer. Moving forward, Section Four revealed, engaged, and explained the 7 fundamental DETAILS of God's Divine DESIGN... because **we all need to know what we need to know**. To be more specific, those seven truths are: The Foundations, The Framework, The Facts, The Fight, The Faith, The Family, and the truth about Forever.

Then, in Section Five, which we just completed, our focus shifted from HEAD based truths to 12 HEART shaping exercises or disciplines - each having the potential to strengthen one's personal relationship with Christ, His Church, and their collective mission: bringing God glory by finding & growing more glorifiers.

We used the acronym **J.E.S.U.S.'S. P. S.W.O.R.D.** to outline and harmonize a biblical, missional, and intentional methodology for growing in God's love - & His loving witness. The 12 HEART DISCIPLINES are: **J**ournaling... **E**ating-nothing (fasting)... **S**cripture-intake... **U**nderstudy of Scripture... **S**tewardship... **S**olitude... **P**rayer... **S**erving... **W**orshipping... **O**utreach... **R**elationships... and **D**evelopment.

Now, our curriculum and study will transition to The HANDS. This is where **Christians demonstrate to the world that Christ is in their worship & witness**. Whereas our time spent in the HEAD sections (1-4) focused on the truths that Christians need and seek to LEARN, and our concentration on the 12 HEART DISCIPLINES of section 5 helped us to grow in God's LOVE, our sixth and final section will **walk through the 24 DISTINCTIVES, which explain & exemplify how Christians are to faithfully LIVE... and fully BE The Church... together** – all by God's grace & ALL for His glory!

God's Word puts it this way:

"Let us not love with word and tongue but in action and truth." – 1st John 3:18

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47](#)praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2:46-47

I. **DISTINCTIVES are FRUIT:**

It is important to realize that God’s miraculous and authentic **Christian DISTINCTIVES are the FRUIT of saving grace and faith** (Ephesians 2:1-10). As Jesus described in John 15, people can do nothing outside of their abiding in Him and obeying His Word, will and ways. In short, there will be no fruit unless one remains attached to and provided for by the true Vine and divine Root. With that said, a cautionary note is worth sharing here, beware the counterfeits that abound around the world. ***Plastic fruit is deceptive vs. DISTINCTIVE!***

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

II. **DISTINCTIVES are FAMILY:**



DISTINCTIVES, by definition, are those “distinguishing characteristics that are notable for having a special quality, style, and/or attractiveness” (Dictionary.com).

When it comes to God’s family, the true Church, each Christian and their individualistic DISTINCTIVES are as unique as their potential. At the same time, in the same way that a billion unique snowflakes can be combined to make a single snowstorm, or countless swatches of scrap fabric can be sewn together to make a single quilt, so it is with God’s family. The LORD creates His Christian family with a both/and combination of DISTINCTIVE uniqueness, as well as DISTINCTIVE love and defining unity.

Christianity’s DISTINCT family (ecclesia) has a DISTINCTIVE unity (koinonia).

“By this all people will know that you are My disciple, if you have love for one another.”
– John 13:35

“The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

III. **DISTINCTIVES are WITNESS:**

The most biblical and healthy understandings of Christianity will include an embrace of two overarching and DISTINCTIVE purposes. Namely, per God’s Word, will, and ways, every Christian has received miraculous, saving grace, as well as the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to:

1. Bring glory to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.*

2. BE Christ’s witness.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, **and you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem (locally), and in all Judea and Samaria (regionally), and to the end of the earth (globally).”*

God’s DISTINCTIVE people have been filled with His Holy Spirit for the express purpose of living DISTINCTIVE lives. When the world sees the LORD’s loving family living out their divinely empowered and God-honoring worship, work, and warfare, the resulting fruit will serve as a faithful witness, built with supernatural, grace-based, and missional DISTINCTIVES.

“God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life.”

- John Piper

The Christian Distinctive

What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that it is a *revealed* religion. Christianity is not about our search for God or our means of finding him. Christianity is not a religion that works its way upward. It is all about God coming to us — God in grace making himself known to us and making a way for us to enjoy fellowship with him.

And so, at the very heart of Christianity is, simply, a message — a message from God to us about what he has done to bring us to himself.

If Christianity is distinctively revealed religion, then it is also uniquely *authoritative*. It does not offer itself as the best and highest of human thinking about God or even the best or most successful of human efforts to know God. It professes to be nothing less than the unique word from God, his very own self-disclosure and the record of the actions he has taken in Jesus Christ to bring us into fellowship with himself.

One of Rudyard Kipling's characters declares, "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone; He don't obey no orders unless they is his own." That is to say, human religions lack authority — they form their own ideas and "discover" their own beliefs.

By contrast the Christian is "under orders," because unlike human religions, Christianity is a revealed religion — divinely revealed. We Christians are not our own touchstone of truth, and we do not confuse our ideas about God with His own self-revelation. We learn truth about God not from "inner lights" within ourselves but from God's own objective Word.

And apart from this external authority, there is no Christianity. This, at bottom, is Christianity's leading distinctive.

And so, we **Christians prize Scripture as God's Word. We joyfully submit to it. And we enthusiastically proclaim its message of grace in Jesus Christ to the world.**

- Dr. Fred Zaspel

Micro

Jesus is LORD and His COMMAND says it all!

John 7:24

*“Do not judge according to appearance,
but **judge with righteous judgment.**”*

This is a no-matter who, what, where, when, or why command
that declares the divine how.

Message

**What does it mean to be shrewd as serpents and
harmless/innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16)?**

In sending out the [Twelve](#), Jesus said to them, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore shrewd as serpents, and harmless as doves” ([Matthew 10:16, KJV](#)). The NIV says, “shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”

Jesus was using similes (figures of speech that compare two unlike things) to instruct His disciples in how to behave in their ministry. Just before He tells them to be shrewd as serpents and harmless as doves, He warns them that they were being sent out “like sheep among wolves.”

The world, then as now, was hostile to believers—not *incidentally* hostile, but *purposefully* hostile. Wolves are intentional about the harm they inflict upon sheep. In such an environment, the question becomes: “How can we advance the kingdom of God effectively without becoming predatory ourselves?” Jesus taught His followers that, to be Christlike in a godless world, they must combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness/innocence of the dove.

In using these similes, Jesus invokes the common proverbial view of serpents and doves. The serpent was “subtle” or “crafty” or “shrewd” in [Genesis 3:1](#). The dove, on the other hand, was thought of as innocent and harmless—doves were listed among the “clean animals” and were used for sacrifices ([Leviticus 14:22](#)). To this very day, doves are used as symbols of peace, and snakes are thought of as “sneaky.”

Most people don’t mind having their character compared to a dove’s purity and innocence. But some people recoil at the image of a serpent, no matter what the context. They can never see a snake in a good light, even when used by Jesus as a teaching tool. But we should

not make too much of the simile. We cannot attach the evil actions of [Satan](#) (as the serpent) with the serpent itself. Animals are not moral entities. The creature itself cannot perform sin, and shrewdness is an asset, not a defect. This is the quality that Jesus told His disciples to model.

The serpent simile stands in Jesus' dialogue without bringing forward any of the serpent's pejoratives. It is a basic understanding in language that, when a speaker creates a simile, he is not necessarily invoking the entire potential of the words he has chosen—nor is he invoking the entire history and tenor of the linguistic vehicle. Rather, the speaker is defining a fresh relationship between the two things. A quick look at [Matthew 10:16](#) shows that Jesus was invoking only the *positive* aspects of the serpent. There is no hint of His unloading Edenic baggage upon His disciples. He simply tells them to be shrewd (and innocent) as they represented Him.

When Jesus told the Twelve to be as shrewd as serpents and harmless as doves, He laid down a general principle about the technique of kingdom work. As we take the gospel to a hostile world, we must be shrewd/wise (avoiding the snares set for us), and we must be innocent (serving the Lord blamelessly). Jesus was not suggesting that we stoop to deception, but that we should model some of the serpent's famous shrewdness in a positive way. **Wisdom does not equal dishonesty, and innocence does not equal gullibility.**

Let us consider Jesus as exemplar: the Lord was known as a gentle person. Indeed, Scripture testifies that He would not even quench a smoking flax ([Matthew 12:20](#)). But was He always (and only) gentle? No. When the occasion demanded it, He took whip in hand and chased the moneychangers out of the temple ([John 2:15](#)). Jesus' extraordinarily rare action, seen in light of His usual mien, demonstrates the power of using a combination of tools. This "dove-like" Man of Innocence spoke loudly and clearly with His assertiveness in the temple.

In His more typical moments, Jesus showed that He was as shrewd as a serpent in the way He taught. He knew enough to discern the differences in His audiences (a critical skill), He used the story-telling technique to both feed and weed ([Matthew 13:10–13](#)), and He refused to be caught in the many traps that His enemies laid for Him ([Mark 8:11](#); [10:2](#); [12:13](#)).

Jesus showed that He was as harmless as a dove in every circumstance. He lived a pure and holy life ([Hebrews 4:15](#)), He acted in compassion ([Matthew 9:36](#)), and He challenged anyone to find fault in Him ([John 8:46](#); [18:23](#)). Three times, Pilate judged Jesus to be an innocent man ([John 18:38](#); [19:4, 6](#)).

The apostle Paul also modeled the "shrewd as serpents, harmless as doves" technique. Paul lived in dove-like innocence in good conscience before God ([Acts 23:1](#)) and learned to deny his carnal desires so as not to jeopardize his ministry ([1 Corinthians 9:27](#)). But Paul also displayed serpent-like shrewdness when he needed it. He knew his legal rights and used the legal system to his advantage ([Acts 16:37](#); [22:25](#); [25:11](#)). He also carefully crafted his speeches to maximize the impact on his audience ([Acts 17:22–23](#); [23:6–8](#)).

In [Matthew 10:16](#), Jesus taught us how to optimize our gospel-spreading opportunities. Successful Christian living requires that we strike the optimal balance between the dove and the serpent. We should strive to be gentle without being pushovers, and we must be sacrificial without being taken advantage of. We are aware of the unscrupulous tactics used by the enemy, but we take the high road. Peter admonishes us, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” ([1 Peter 2:12](#)).

- [GotQuestions.org](#)

BIG IDEA: **DISCERNING MATTERS SHREWDLY is an all-inclusive, Spirit-led, Christian mandate... an ambassador’s virtue which brings God glory by righteously assessing with/per God’s Word, will & ways.**

PREVIEW:

1. DISCERN-ING
2. MATTERS
3. SHREWDLY

TEXT:

Matthew 10:16

*“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves;
so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.*

1. DISCERN-ING

Illustration:

*“Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.
- C.H. Spurgeon*

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Explanation:

*What is discernment? **Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying God's Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong.***

– Tim Challies

What Is Discernment?

Most of us doubtless want to distance ourselves from what might be regarded as “the lunatic fringe” of contemporary Christianity. We are on our guard against being led astray by false teachers. But there is more to discernment than this. True discernment means not only distinguishing the right from the wrong; it means distinguishing the primary from the secondary, the essential from the indifferent, and the permanent from the transient. And, yes, it means distinguishing between the good and the better, and even between the better and the best.

Thus, discernment is like the physical senses; to some it is given in unusual measure as a special grace gift ([1 Cor. 12:10](#)), but some measure of it is essential for us all and must be constantly nourished. The Christian must take care to develop his “sixth sense” of spiritual discernment. This is why the psalmist prays, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge” ([Ps. 119:66](#)).

The Nature of Discernment

But what is this discernment? The word used in [Psalm 119:66](#) means “taste.” It is the ability to make discriminating judgments, to distinguish between, and recognize the moral implications of, different situations and courses of action. It includes the ability to “weigh up” and assess the moral and spiritual status of individuals, groups, and even movements. Thus, **while warning us against judgmentalism, Jesus urges us to be discerning and discriminating, lest we cast our pearls before pigs** ([Matt. 7:1, 6](#)).

A remarkable example of such discernment is described in [John 2:24–25](#): “Jesus would not entrust himself to them . . . for he knew what was in a man” (NIV).

This is discernment without judgmentalism. It involved our Lord's knowledge of God's Word and His observation of God's ways with men (He, supremely, had prayed, "Teach me good judgment . . . for I believe Your commandments," Ps. 119:66). Doubtless His discernment grew as He experienced conflict with, and victory over, temptation, and as He assessed every situation in the light of God's Word.

Discernment is learning to think God's thoughts after Him, practically and spiritually; it means having a sense of how things look in God's eyes and seeing them in some measure "uncovered and laid bare" (Heb. 4:13).

Jesus' discernment penetrated to the deepest reaches of the heart. But the Christian is called to develop similar discernment. For the only worthwhile discernment we possess is that which we receive in union with Christ, by the Spirit, through God's Word.

The Impact of Discernment

How does this discernment affect the way we live? In four ways:

1. It acts as a means of protection, guarding us from being deceived spiritually. It protects us from being blown away by the winds of teaching that make central an element of the gospel that is peripheral or treat a particular application of Scripture as though it were Scripture's central message.
2. Discernment also acts as an instrument of healing, when exercised in grace. I have known a small number of people whose ability to diagnose the spiritual needs of others has been remarkable. Such people seem able to penetrate into the heart issues someone else faces better than the person can do. Of course, this is in some ways a dangerous gift with which God has entrusted them. But when exercised in love, discernment can be the surgical scalpel in spiritual surgery that makes healing possible.
3. Again, discernment functions as a key to Christian freedom. The zealous but undiscerning Christian becomes enslaved—to others, to his own uneducated conscience, to an unbiblical pattern of life. Growth in discernment sets us free from such bondage, enabling us to distinguish practices that may be helpful in some circumstances from those that are mandated in all circumstances. But in another way, **true discernment enables the free Christian to recognize that the exercise of freedom is not essential to the enjoyment of it.**
4. Finally, discernment serves as a catalyst to spiritual development: "*The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning*" (Prov. 14:6, NIV). Why? Because **the discerning Christian goes to the heart of the matter. He knows something about everything, namely that all things have their common fountain in God.** Increase in knowledge, therefore, does not lead to increased frustration, but to a deeper recognition of the harmony of all God's works and words.

How is such discernment to be obtained? We receive it as did Christ Himself—by the anointing of the Spirit, through our understanding of God’s Word, by our experience of God’s grace, and by the progressive unfolding to us of the true condition of our own hearts.

That is why we also should pray,
“I am your servant; give me discernment”
(Ps. 119:125).

- *Sinclair Ferguson*

Application:

What is biblical discernment and why is it important?

Discernment is the process of making careful distinctions in our thinking about truth. In other words, the ability to think with discernment is synonymous with an ability to think biblically.

First Thessalonians 5:21-22 teaches that it is the responsibility of every Christian to be discerning: "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." ...According to the New Testament, discernment is not optional for the believer-it is required.

The key to living an uncompromising life lies in one's ability to exercise discernment in every area of his or her life. For example, failure to distinguish between truth and error leaves the Christian subject to all manner of false teaching. False teaching then leads to an unbiblical mindset, which results in unfruitful and disobedient living - a certain recipe for compromise.

Unfortunately, discernment is an area where most Christians stumble. They exhibit little ability to measure the things they are taught against the infallible standard of God's Word, and they unwittingly engage in all kinds of unbiblical decision-making and behavior. In short, they are not armed to take a decidedly biblical stand against the onslaught of unbiblical thinking and attitudes that face them throughout their day.

Discernment intersects the Christian life at every point. And God's Word provides us with the needed discernment about every issue of life. According to Peter, God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3). You see, it is through the "true knowledge of Him," that we have been given everything we need to live a Christian life in this fallen world. And how else do we have true knowledge of God but through the pages of His Word, the Bible? In fact, Peter goes on to say that such knowledge comes through God's granting "to us His precious and magnificent promises" (2 Peter 1:4).

Discernment -- the ability to think biblically about all areas of life -- is indispensable to an uncompromising life. It is incumbent upon the Christian to seize upon the discernment that God has provided for in His precious truth! Without it, Christians are at risk of being "tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14).

2. MATTERS

Illustration:

Anything and everything that matters is "MATTERS."

Explanation:

This word, "MATTERS" is the perfect catch-all to have between the two protective pillars, "DISCERNING" and "SHREWDLY." Why? Because when it comes to both, DISCERNING and living SHREWDLY, one needs to understand that an intentional specificity is required, a degree of focus that is capable of attaching to every individual circumstance and scenario. At the same time; however, "SHREWDLY DISCERNING" should, in principle, be virtuously applied across the broadest of interactive dynamics and environments.

To that end, Tim Challies, in his excellent book, *The Discipline Of Spiritual Discernment*, has here highlighted and addressed a healthy, working combination of the “both/and” principle. The reader would be well served to consider some of the author’s observations and recommendations...

The Discipline Of Spiritual Discernment

“Spiritual discernment is good for more than just making monumental decisions according to God’s will. It is an essential, day-to-day activity that allows thoughtful Christians to separate the truth of God from error and to distinguish right from wrong in all kinds of settings and situations.”

*“God honored Solomon's request because he was pleased with what Solomon had asked. This teaches us that **God values discernment and honors those who seek after it.**”*

*“We live in an age where too many who profess to be Christians rarely consider their spiritual maturity - an age when many consider spiritual immaturity a mark of authenticity, and when **people associate doubt with humility and assurance with pride. Far too many people consider sound theology the mark of a person who is argumentative and proud.**”*

*“When we have rejected the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, we allow Christians to depend on things other than the Bible as their guide to matters of life and faith. In particular, **people begin to depend upon mysticism, upon ways of supposedly knowing God apart from the Bible. They look inward for intrinsic wisdom rather than outward to the Bible for its extrinsic wisdom. They forsake biblical reason in favor of feelings, voices, visions, or other subjective means of supposedly knowing God. This is a deadly error, for spiritual discernment must be founded upon God's objective revelation of himself in Scripture.** We can only judge between what is wrong and what is right when we know what God says to be true. We can know this only from Scripture.”*

*“The Bible places great emphasis on spiritual maturity because, like children, **immature believers are prone to sample anything. They are attracted to what looks good to their untrained eyes.** Only as they grow in maturity are they able to differentiate between what pleases God and what does not. Because of this there can be no growth without discernment.” “As we seek after discernment, a good and godly desire, **our sinful natures will fight against us.** We will soon discover a part of ourselves that does not want to make clear distinctions between what is good and evil, and a part of ourselves that does not want to be committed to what is good and right and true. And so **the first enemy we must overcome in our discipline of discernment is ourselves.**”*

“With discernment comes division. A person who seeks to be discerning must be willing to suffer the effects of this division. It will divide not only believer from unbeliever, but it may even divide a discerning believer from one who is undiscerning. It will separate the mature from the immature, the naïve from the prudent.”

“We have truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the Spirit to guard us. We have the Word of God to battle for us. Through it all we pray to the Spirit to protect and guide us against the schemes of the devil. In this way we can fight against and overcome the spiritual forces that are set against us and committed to our downfall. We can wage war against and defeat the spiritual forces that seek to lead us away from discernment by offering a clever and subtle counterfeit of the truth.”

*The Bible teaches there is a clear relationship between spiritual discernment and spiritual maturity. For a Christian to be mature, he must also be discerning. **Those who are not discerning must be immature, backsliding, or dead. Conversely, those who exhibit discernment must be alive, growing, and mature.** It is clear from Scripture that all Christians are expected to pursue discernment, for the Bible cries out repeatedly for us to do so. It is the responsibility of each Christian to heed and to answer the call and so to guard the deposit God has entrusted to us.”*

Because discernment is a good and noble pursuit, it is one that has been opposed on all fronts. It will continue to be opposed by our sinful natures, by satanic forces, and by cultural influences. As Christians we must stand firm against all of these forces, trusting in God to equip and to sustain us, for while discernment is a difficult calling, it is one with ultimate benefits.”

— Tim Challies

Application:

Without exceptions... seek to bring SHREWD, biblical discernment to EVERY aspect & moment of your life.

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

3. SHREWDLY

Illustration:

We must learn how to discern the difference between those who are gold... and those who are gold-plated.
- *Anonymous*

Explanation:

BE SHREWD

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be as wise/shrewd as serpents and as innocent/gentle as doves (Matthew 10:16, ESV).

Know any people who are “**wise as serpents**” or, in some translations, “**shrewd as snakes**” (NIV)? Who comes to mind...? Jesus wants us to be shrewd.

Shrewd means astute, sharp, clever, discerning, rigorous in practical matters. Some Christians can be described as “so heavenly minded they are no earthly good.” In other words, we lack shrewdness. Jesus was noticeably worked up about this problem. “**For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light**” (Luke 16:8, ESV). He did not mean this as a compliment to His followers. He expects us to be wise and shrewd in our dealings with this world.

Jesus commands both shrewdness *and* innocence in our daily living.

When you consider those two desired traits, how would you assess yourself? Are you a shrewd, wise-as-a-snake person who needs to work on your dove (love) trait? Or are you more of a loving, caring person who needs to work on your snake side (shrewdness)? **Both are required.**

In essence Jesus was saying, “The majority of My kids are on the dove program—strong in the love thing. But I get tired of seeing them run over by people. I want them to turn up their shrewdness.”

So how do we up our shrewdness?

...Whatever you have, use it for the Lord. Someday, you may meet some friends in heaven who will say, "I've been waiting for you to get here! You used what you had and it enriched my life. You're part of the reason I'm here."

This isn't optional. Jesus expects us to be wise and shrewd stewards of everything we have, to help others and forge relationships—with His kingdom in mind.
– James MacDonald

Application:

At all times, in all ways, in every set of circumstances... by God's grace and for His glory, learn to DISCERN how to SHREWDLY love and live within the guardrails of God's Word, while BE-ing perpetually led by His Spirit.

CLOSE:

To the LOST soul... you need this! To the SAVED soul... you got this!
To ALL... this is a MATTER that needs to be DISCERNED SHREWDLY.
What you choose to do with this lesson could & should help you to DISCERN where you stand on MATTERS of SHREWDNESS...

For What?

Man with all his shrewdness is as stupid about understanding by himself the mysteries of God, as an ass is incapable of understanding musical harmony.
John Calvin

Never teach your child to be cunning or you may be certain you will be one of the very first victims of his shrewdness.
Josh Billings

So What?

*Theology bores today's Christians,
which is a way of saying that we are bored with God Himself.
- Richard Philips*

*Every spirit makes its house,
& we can give a shrewd guess from the house to the inhabitant.
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Now What?

*"The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him... The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried... An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered...Do not be so open-minded that your brains fall out.... The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man....
Let your religion be less of a theory and more of a love affair."
G.K. Chesterton*

Hebrews 5:14 - But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Philippians 1:9-10 - 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,

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

1 Kings 3:9 - Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

"An Ordinary Ordination"
Matthew 10:16
February 23, 2020
Sermon Series: Gospel Gardening