

Discern the Dangers of 'Discernment'

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Discernment is not simply a matter of telling the difference between what is right and wrong; rather it is the difference between right and almost right."

Discernment is a powerful gift of the Spirit. It allows believers to unravel false teaching, make accurate judgments quickly, spot demonic counterfeits and expose the plans of the enemy.

In 2014, our culture calls evil "good" and good "evil" (see Isaiah 5:20). Human sexuality has lost all sacredness. All sorts of self-indulgence and violence is justified in the name of "rights." False gospels fill church pews with inch-deep believers.

Plainly stated, we need discernment now more than ever.

We need to discern good from evil in our entertainment choices, morality, theology, church services and daily conversations. We need the Spirit to reveal the enemy's deception to us. We need to strive for the "holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Knowing all this, allow me to preach to the choir for a moment—to those who already have a decent amount of discernment.

Remember the Spurgeon quote. Many of us are very good at discerning outright perversion from godliness, but can we also discern good from not good enough in our own lives?

Pitfalls to Avoid

One need not look very far in Western culture to see the

widening chasm between the sacred and the secular. The outward, moralistic American religion of Judeo-Christian values is on its way out. Spiritually lost people are becoming easier to spot, and true Christians stand out more easily. For instance, I live in a town where, if you are under 30 and married, there is perhaps a 90 percent chance of me accurately guessing if you are a Christian. The “mushy middle” is dying; true Christianity is beginning to stick out like a sore thumb.

According to Russell Moore in a recent interview, there are several bad responses we can have to our changing society: denying the problems, compromising or retreating on the truth, or withdrawing from the world, to name a few.

The dangers in such reactions are obvious. But Moore also draws out another pitfall: the “siege mentality.” Anger. Fear. Hostility. A constant state of outrage. Spending precious hours venting to other Christians who can *already* discern the truth, rather than sharing the Word with undiscerning believers or the lost themselves.

In all honesty, how much “discernment” does that attitude require?

As the outward appearance of Christ-honoring lifestyles and worldly lifestyles are becoming more divergent, it will become easier for Christians to hide selfish living behind right thinking. And while the cost of discipleship will increase in our culture, so will the temptation to simply “appear” Christian simply by holding the right stances on social issues. Fleshly attitudes hidden behind sound doctrine will be an increasingly alluring alternative to the Calvary road.

If you have been a Christian for many years, or if you live among other strong believers, it will *always* be easier to decry the evils of the world than the evils in your own heart.

It will *always* be easier to vent about gay marriage than to honestly evaluate your own holiness.

It will *always* be easier to fume at the news than crucify the flesh—after all, at least you aren't as sinful as that other guy or gal, right?

True Discernment

True discernment is not afraid to discern the pattern of one's own living, in addition to discerning the surrounding culture.

True discernment is able to spot *subtle* errors that *other Bible-believing Christians* may not easily see—not just major sin issues that are clear to anyone who reads Scripture.

True discernment can see the spiritual needs of *both* those flaunting their sin on television *and* those who keep it hidden under a crooked smile at the grocery checkout or across the street.

True discernment relies on the Word and not the tenacity of one's own wit.

True discernment is a gift of the Spirit.

Do you have it?

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