



Principles of Spiritual Discernment

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Principles of Spiritual Discernment

- ▶ *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.**” (Hebrews 5:12–14, NASB95)*

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*“Does not the ear **test words**, As the palate tastes its food?” (Job 12:11, NASB95)*

Principles of Spiritual Discernment

- ▶ *“The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” (Matthew 6:22–23, NASB95)*

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- ▶ *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”*
(Ephesians 1:18, NASB95)

Principles of Spiritual Discernment

- ▶ *“So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kings 3:9, NASB95)*

Principles of Spiritual Discernment

- ▶ *“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.” (1 Corinthians 2:14–15, NASB95)*

How does Spiritual Appraisal take place?

- ▶ An appraisal is an “examination or investigation...to interrogate” (Strong's)
- ▶ “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures** daily to see whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11, NASB95)
- ▶ “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, **combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.**” (1 Corinthians 2:12–13, NASB95)

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- ▶ “*But solid food is for the mature, who **because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.***” (Hebrews 5:14, NASB95)
- ▶ Let’s begin the practice of training our senses to discern!
- ▶ Senses: αἰσθητήριον [aistheterion] n. AV translates as “senses” once. 1 **faculty of the mind for perceiving, understanding, judging.** (Strong’s)

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- ▶ Look for the “declarations”
 - ▶ Typically preceded by a story or other anecdotal evidence. **Try to find the assumption first.**
 - ▶ Anecdotal evidence can rarely be verified, is often not complete, and is never a solid basis for making a “normative” declaration.
- ▶ Does any scripture state the declaration to be true?
 - ▶ Is the Scripture in context?
 - ▶ Is the declaration saying more than Scripture?
- ▶ Is the statement logical?

Question the Assumption



- ▶ The assumption is the “hidden” statement within the declaration.
- ▶ Everything built on the assumption can be perfectly true and unquestionably logical, but a flawed assumption will lead to a flawed conclusion.

How to Question the Assumption

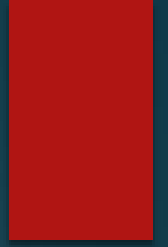
- ▶ Is the specific of the generality true?
- ▶ Is the supporting fact—
 - ▶ Existent?
 - ▶ Verifiable?
 - ▶ Relevant?
 - ▶ True?
- ▶ Is there an agenda behind the assumption, such as an intended outcome?
- ▶ Is the assumption contradicted or contradictable?
- ▶ Is the assumption based on a secret formula or secret knowledge?

Assumptions to Question from *The Circle Maker*

*Two-thirds of praying hard is listening
and looking. pg. 115*

- ▶ Is the specific true?
 - ▶ The model prayer
 - ▶ The high-priestly prayer
 - ▶ The Gethsemane prayer
 - ▶ Paul's recorded prayers
 - ▶ Daniel's prayer—Daniel 9:4-19
 - ▶ Your prayer?

Assumptions to Question from *The Circle Maker*



*It is not our man-made plans
that move the Almighty; the
Almighty is moved by big
dreams and bold prayers. Pg.
63*

Assumptions to Question from *The Circle Maker*

I am confident that you are only one prayer away from a dream fulfilled, a promise kept, or a miracle performed. pg. 15

Questioning the Assumptions of Mark Driscoll

“Let’s just say this: right now, name for me the one **young**, good Bible teacher that is **known** across Great Britain. You don’t have one – that’s the problem. There are a bunch of cowards who aren’t telling the truth.”

--*Christianity Magazine*, Jan 2012

Questioning the Assumptions of Steven Furtick

“And even when you can’t get seem to get your act together, your identity is secure and completely intact. Because in Christ, who you are matters infinitely more than anything you do or cannot do.”

—*Crash the Chatterbox*

Questioning the Assumptions of John Ortberg

“But if you get out, I believe two things will happen. The first is that when you fail—and you will fail sometimes—**Jesus will be there to pick you up**. You will not fail alone. You will find that he is still wholly adequate to save.

And the other thing is, every once in a while **you will walk on the water**.”—*If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get out of the Boat*, 28.

Questioning the Assumptions of Jimmy Carter

“This prescription of *equal* love between husband and wife was a startling improvement...but for too long, and among all too many Christians, these and a few other verses have been selectively quoted by men to prevent equal opportunities for women to serve our Savior. Paul’s admonition to women to “submit” is an anomaly...” *Living Faith*, 192

Summary

- ▶ Jesus warned of days of deception.
 - ▶ Matthew 24:4-11
- ▶ Paul gives the antidote to deception.
 - ▶ 2 Timothy 3:13-17
- ▶ A believer should be very cautious in accepting spiritual teaching, and should “test every spirit.”

Questions?

