

Discerning God's Will

Eph 5:1-17

- Acting (or not) on bad information
 - Foolish impulsiveness -> regret
 - Fearful paralysis -> regret
- Life, relationships, faith – all can be complex and confusing.

First Things First: Discerning Discernment's Main Objective

- The first thing discernment wants to do is not sort out the acutely troubling details of your life.

"The plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things." -**Alistair Begg**

- There is no way to live a godly life in this world without discernment.

Eph 4:17-25

1 Thess 4:3 "For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor... For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness."

- Discernment doesn't begin with gray areas. It brings us back to what is most clear and then enables us to push clarity outward from there.

Discernment Principle #1: *Be imitators of God.*

- Implicit in this call to imitate God is a call to pursue the knowledge of God in the Scriptures.

"Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you."
-**J.I. Packer**

Eph 5:7 – clarifying God's will for Christian relationships

Discernment Quiz: *The Christian's Relational World*

- Paul qualifies the *attitude* that should mark our imitation of God (“as children”).

Discernment Principle #2: *Walk in love.*

What does “walk in love” mean in the context of Ephesians? How might that look for us, today?

- Obsessing over where God wants me to work while pushing *these* things aside reveals a lack of biblical discernment.

“The life of discernment is, therefore, a Word-focused and Word-directed life, which develops a Word-saturated mind.” -**John MacArthur**, quoted in *Let's Study Ephesians*, p. 134

- Flagrant disobedience kills discernment

Discernment Quiz: *The Sermon*

The Gospel in Ephesians 5

- Be imitators of God *as beloved children*.
- Walk in love *as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*.

“The Jew who knew God’s will was to ‘approve’ what was essential on the basis of the law (Rom 2:18). Christians, however, have ‘learned Christ’. They have responded to the gospel and received further instruction about him (4:20,21) from those specially equipped by the ascended Lord Jesus (4:11; cf. 2:20; 3:5). Thus, their lives are shaped *in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus* (4:21). This Christ-centred instruction, which focuses on the truth of the gospel, is the yardstick by which believers are to discern in specific situations what pleases the Lord.”

-Peter O’Brien, *PNTC: Ephesians*, p.369-370

Discernment Training

- Focusing on what’s most clear and growing in grace and knowledge through God’s Word, enables us to go back to the questions of relationships, vocation, and personal conviction, and make wise decisions.

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

“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.” -Sinclair Ferguson, *In Christ Alone*, p.163