

## Discernment, one of our most useful tools for Spiritual warfare



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[www.livelifebymthebook.com](http://www.livelifebymthebook.com)

## Why Discernment is so important

- ▶ You can't fulfill God's purpose on earth for you without it
- ▶ What is that purpose?
- Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matt. 28:18-20



## Beyond salvation—beyond the faith of demons

- ▶ *"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder."* James 2:17-19
- ▶ Deeds are not deeds FOR salvation, but deeds should be the EVIDENTIAL FRUIT of salvation. Not individual checklists as much as a whole different life orientation.

## The Important Process of Discipleship (quote intro)

- ▶ Coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ **launches us** into
- ▶ **a process** of spiritual transformation
- ▶ that is called **discipleship in the gospels**
- ▶ and **sanctification in the epistles**.
- ▶ The ultimate goal of that process is to be remade into the likeness of Christ himself.
- ▶ *C.S. Lewis explains it well:*



The process (of discipleship, of becoming like Christ) explained by Lewis:

*We can only do it for moments at first. But from those moments the new sort of life will be spreading through our system: because now we are letting Him work at the right part of us. It is the difference between paint, which is merely laid on the surface, and a dye or stain which soaks right through. He never talked vague, idealistic gas. When he said, "Be perfect," He meant it. He meant that we must go in for the full treatment. It is hard; but he sort of compromise we are all hankering after is harder—in fact, it is impossible. It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad. . . . This is the whole of Christianity.*

[http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm\\_send/232](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/232)

## A disciple reflects his Master

- ▶ We reflect Jesus as he did his Father
- ▶ But that doesn't happen automatically
- ▶ We need discernment (how to live, what to do) to grow in discipleship
  - In the daily disciplines of life
  - Purpose of spiritual disciplines (define, list) not for themselves
  - But to strengthen our walk with Christ
  - To prepare us for the overall big decisions of life
- ▶ Next few weeks we'll talk about how discernment and discipleship work together **in practical ways**



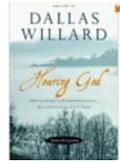
## Questions growth in discipleship will answer these questions

- ▶ Question #1 Discernment in God's will for our life:
  - Some areas I struggle/am struggling with: discerning if I am at the right place (could apply to school, job, church) discerning God's purpose for our life.
- ▶ Question #2 Discernment on a theological system:
  - God knows who is going to be saved and who isn't. So were some people selected for salvation or predestined for salvation and others weren't? And as one person commented "then why are we going out and evangelizing?" And another said "she has a problem with predestination".
- ▶ Question #3 Discernment in evangelism
  - Jesus said, "Don't cast your pearls before swine." On one level I understand this, but on another level, what are pearls? What are swine? How do we discern our "pearls"? How do we determine who is a "swine"? I know we are admonished to look at the "fruit" of people, but some people are "nice" and "good" and "charming" as much as we can see. What do we look for to discern? What kind of fruit? What does it mean to "cast pearls" anyway? Does it mean we are not to share the good news with swine? What is the deeper meaning of Our Lord's words here?

## Question #1 about God's will for our job, school, church—Conclusion first

(from *Hearing God*, by Dallas Willard)

"If we are *living in sincere devotion to the fulfillment of God's purposes* in us, we can be sure that the God who came to us in Jesus Christ will not mumble and tease and trick us regarding any specific matter he wants done. . . . . *the perfect will of God may allow, for a particular person, a number of different alternatives.* . . . Several different courses of action may, then, each be God's perfect will in a given circumstance. We should assume this is so in all cases *where we are walking in his general will, are experienced in hearing his voice, and on seeking, find no specific direction given.* In these cases there are usually various things that would equally please God."



## Examples from Scripture

- ▶ In the Bible, major emphasis on character, not specifics
- ▶ Godly people in many areas, many jobs, many kinds of education or not
- ▶ Changes for specific calling, e.g. Abraham
- ▶ Seldom given otherwise
- ▶ Jesus
  - No formal education
  - One place whole life
  - Unemployed



## If location, schooling and job are not critical, what is?

- ▶ "*Living in sincere devotion to the fulfillment of God's purposes in us.*"
- ▶ HOW do we do that?
- ▶ It's work, it is intentional
  - Are you taking every opportunity you have NOW to learn the Word and practice what it teaches you?
  - No matter where you are or what you are doing, this is primary
  - No Bible, no breakfast!
  - Also read Christian books, listen to tapes, go online
  - No matter where you are, you'll be ready to do what God requires



## It is a walk, not a sprint

- ▶ Immediate obedience to commands, small promptings
- ▶ *Good and evil both increase at compound interest. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible.*
- Author: C. S. Lewis, Source: *Mere Christianity*
- ▶ What are you working on now?



## The time to be obedient in little things is now

- ▶ Big problem with making all kinds of decisions: "until"
- ▶ Until I have more money
- ▶ Until I have stability in....
- ▶ Until my relationships change
- ▶ Until I'm in this or that location, or job or whatever it is



Never too late!

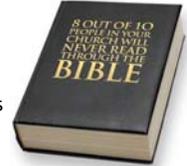
## Honesty check

- ▶ Do we really want God's will in specific areas?
- ▶ Deception often:
  - What will make me happiest so then I can serve God?
- ▶ Instead:
  - ***Ad maiorem Dei gloriam***
  - **For the greater glory of God**
- ▶ Use that as your means of evaluation
- ▶ Examples of how it might work out



## Conclusion

- ▶ We discern the decisions of life, big and small as a result of our continual walk with God
- ▶ Confusion in decision-making usually means a we need to grow in our spiritual maturity or relationship with God
- ▶ Work on that
  - In the Word
  - Christian books, multi-media
  - Prayer, quiet
  - Discussion with fellow Christians
  - Take a step and repeat above



<http://www.mybibledevotional.com/2008/06/essential-100-e100.html>