

Small Group Guide

Introduction to Developing Christian Discernment

Overview

This guide is based on an introductory sermon on Christian discernment. The pastor used a personal experience — his wife's car accident — to illustrate four key elements we need when navigating difficult situations: checking our motives, seeking information, receiving encouragement, and pursuing prudence. These natural principles point toward a deeper spiritual reality about how God calls us to perceive and respond to the world around us.

Ask group members to read 2 Timothy 2:1-15 before gathering. Encourage them to read it slowly and note any words or phrases that stand out to them.

Key Takeaways

- Christian discernment is defined as the Spirit-empowered capacity to perceive reality through God's truth, distinguishing truth from error and good from evil in order to align decisions and actions with God's will.
 - Discernment involves four practical elements: checking our motives, seeking sound information, receiving encouragement from others who have walked similar paths, and pursuing prudence to avoid pitfalls.
 - Discernment is not purely intellectual. It also flows from an encounter with God's holiness and beauty, which shapes our affections, motives, and actions.
 - Something can be extra-biblical — not explicitly mentioned in Scripture — without being unbiblical. Christian discernment helps us apply biblical principles to situations the Bible does not directly address.
 - Natural discernment and Christian discernment should not be separated. God's truth is meant to inform every area of life.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

- Think of a recent situation where you needed wisdom or guidance. What was your first instinct — who or what did you turn to first? What does that reveal about where you tend to look for discernment?
- The pastor described the moment after the initial urgency of the accident passed as a time to check his motives. Have you ever had a moment like that, where the dust settled and you had to ask yourself, "Why do I really want what I want?" What did you discover?

Going Deeper

- The pastor outlined four elements of navigating a difficult situation: checking motives, seeking information, receiving encouragement, and pursuing prudence. Which of these comes most naturally to you? Which one do you tend to skip or neglect?
- The pastor said, "My belief is that Christian discernment should not be separate from natural discernment." What do you think he means by that? Do you tend to compartmentalize your faith from your everyday decision-making? Why or why not?
- The sermon defines Christian discernment as perceiving reality through God's truth. What are some things in your own life — past experiences, family patterns, disappointments, fears — that have distorted your perception of reality? How has God's truth corrected or is currently correcting that distortion?
- The pastor referenced Hosea 4:6, where God says His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. In what areas of your life do you feel most in need of greater knowledge or understanding right now — spiritually, relationally, or practically?
- The sermon draws a distinction between things that are unbiblical and things that are extra-biblical. Can you think of an example from your own life where you had to apply biblical principles to a situation the Bible does not directly address? How did you navigate that?
- The pastor connected Christian discernment to an encounter with God's holiness and beauty, referencing Isaiah 6. How does an awareness of God's holiness change the way you approach decisions? When is the last time you were genuinely moved by the beauty of God — in worship, in nature, in Scripture, or in another person?

Reflection

- The pastor mentioned that people often come to him asking for a check on their motives — "Am I praying out of anger? Am I wanting revenge rather

than justice?" Is there a current situation in your life where you need someone to help you examine your own heart? What would it look like to invite that kind of accountability?

- The pastor described mercy as binding yourself to someone during the most difficult times in their life. Who in your life right now needs that kind of presence from you? What is one concrete step you could take this week to walk alongside them?

Practical Applications

- Set aside time this week to read 2 Timothy 2:1-15 slowly and prayerfully. Write down two or three observations about how Paul is shaping Timothy's discernment.
- Identify one decision you are currently facing. Run it through the four elements from the sermon: What is my motive? What information do I need? Who can encourage me from experience? What pitfalls should I be aware of?
- Ask a trusted friend or fellow group member to help you examine your motives in a situation where you feel strong emotion. Give them permission to ask honest questions.
- Spend time this week in worship, Scripture, or in nature with the specific intention of encountering the beauty and holiness of God. Come to the next group meeting prepared to share what that experience was like.

Closing Prayer Focus

Ask the Lord to give your group clarity of motive, humility to seek wise counsel, gratitude for those who walk alongside you, and a growing sensitivity to His voice. Pray specifically for each group member to develop a discernment rooted not just in knowledge but in a living encounter with God's holiness.