

# 'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' - Knowing Jesus More! August 9th, 2020

*Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team, and whole Church Family,*

*"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him"*

**Colossians 2:6 (NIV)**

*"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ."*

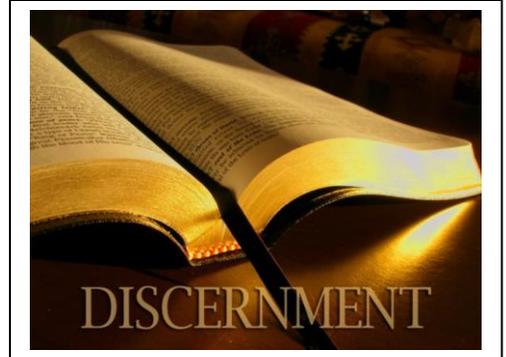
**Colossians 2:8 (NIV)**

*"Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk."*

**Colossians 2:8 (MSG)**

*"Don't let others spoil your faith and joy with their philosophies."*

**Colossians 2:8 (The Living Bible)**



You've heard the saying, "You can't always believe everything you see or hear?" Doesn't that seem truer today than ever before? The voices, messages, opinions, and advertising of what we should do in life was always imposing themselves. Paul in Chapter 2 of Colossians, was warning them to be discerning because of false teachers. They needed to be discerning. Paul calls us to be the same.

Remember the Gnostics? It was an error of his day that Paul was trying to protect and inform these believers from Colosse against with its incorrect views of Christ. Gnosticism, with its Greek pantheistic influence, evidently intruded on these believers.

Three of its major tenets:

1. The name comes from the Greek word "epigenosko" which means "super-knowledge." These people boasted that they had "superior" and "secret" insight to the mysteries of Christ. They were "know-it-alls" who with aristocratic and exclusive piety tried to be better than every believer. If one met them, they would make him feel they were more spiritual and more superior a Christian. They lived for "having secret insight." (Taken from Col. 1:28).

2. They held a speculative view of creation- that Jesus was not fully God. They believed that God somehow created from Himself a lesser creature, who created a creature, and so on, and so on, until one finally created the universe. Christ was considered a "greater" being in the chain of lesser creators in this long series of creations. This was a "sense" of being part of what God is, only as a lesser being that was passed on to us. This caused some to believe that humans were lower than angels, Satan, or any other being, but still had some "god-deity" within them. They also worshiped angels because they were higher up the "godlike" chain. (Taken from Colossians 1:15-

19; 2:18). This of course doesn't make Jesus equal and fully God. This led to further heresy called "Arianism." Arius of Alexandria said that the Lord Jesus Christ was a created being and not fully God. The Council of Nicaea, 325, A.D., answered this heresy: "The Son is very man of very man, and very God of very God!" Through the years we have seen it surface in modern sects which tried to be part of Christianity such as: Unitarianism, Scientology, Jehovah Witnesses, and Mormons. Also New Age and Eastern Mysticism have entertained this thought that Jesus is less than truly God.

3. They believed that the body was not ever going with a person to heaven. So they adopted unrestrained license to do sinful things and made rules that were harmful to the body. (Colossians 2:16, 23, 3:5-9). They avoided certain things such as marriage, foods, and wines. They also didn't believe in the resurrection of this body, and didn't take baths, or use any healthcare improvements.

Why must we be discerning? A good Biblical definition would be: "to examine, prove, or test, to scrutinize!" Discernment is "the ability to judge well." It's distinguishing between the truth and error. Charles Spurgeon said, "Discernment is not a matter of telling the difference between right and wrong; rather, it is telling the difference between right and almost right."



And Sinclair Ferguson said, "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."

Being discerning is a biblical command and a believer's responsibility. Colossians 2:8 says, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." And 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says, "but test everything; hold fast what is good." Here Paul gives us some strong words of warning. "See to it" translates the Greek word "blepo" the present tense, imperative mood, active voice form, which the KJV translates here as "beware." The fact that he used the present imperative means they were already giving in and constantly being fooled to the wrong ideas and messages of that day. Paul's intent here was to give the Colossians and us a warning to "take heed" or "be careful" because of the danger of deceptive teaching pervasive in the visible church. The verb structure makes it clear that this is a command for us to "take heed" or "beware" or "see to it" as a way of life. We must check the way we live, how we walk through each day this way. Of what or whom are we to continually be wary? We are to have this guard up against anyone who would attempt to take us captive through his philosophy, empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world. The words "take you captive" translates "sulagōgeō," which means, "to lead away as spoil" or "seduce." This being a present active participle means that it is relative to the main verb or contemporaneous with it. If we are not careful and are not continually wary we could be led astray and captured by the continual attacks by our enemy and his agents in the world.

Have you ever listened to a radio station only to hear soft static over the music? If you adjust the tuning, you can usually get clear reception. The Christian life works much the same way. We sometimes make decisions and then experience a vague yet nagging sense that all isn't well. I call this "spiritual static."

Most Christians aren't surprised that God wants them to know the difference between truth and error. However, many have not considered that He also equips us to choose between what is good and what is best. Satan at times reveals something that appears good to us just before God sends His best. Too often, we jump at the former and miss the latter. But those believers who cultivate spiritual discernment recognize the Holy Spirit's warning to wait—such "static" says an opportunity might look excellent, but it's not right.

Prayerful, grounded believers will let the good opportunity pass so they can wait on the best. They will pray and trust until their hearts receive God's assurance. Life is full of uncertainty and doubt, but our relationship with Jesus doesn't need to be. He offers spiritual discernment to all who seek His will.

Spiritual discernment is a supernatural ability, which requires supernatural power. In our human strength, we can rely only on what we see, hear, feel, and know in order to make decisions and evaluate circumstances and relationships. But when the Holy Spirit comes to live within us, He opens up

an entirely new dimension of understanding. He shows us things we could never figure out by ourselves.

How do we grow in our discernment? It just doesn't happen to us overnight. It just doesn't happen to us after we pray a prayer or sit in church this week. Discernment is a gift from God. If we want to grow in it, we must ask Him. James 1:5-8 tells us that God delights in such prayers. He will give us wisdom generously and without reproach when we ask in faith. Although God provides a sizeable portion of discernment to some believers (1 Corinthians 12:10), we all have a measure of discernment. And we must train it through constant practice. Here are four ways we learn how:

### **1. Know God's Word!**

The best way to recognize a counterfeit is to know the authentic one well. God's Word is the truth (John 17:17). Therefore, growing our biblical knowledge builds our discernment skills. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." It means we should read the entire Bible, study it directly—not rely on canned studies, learn how to interpret the Bible using principles of hermeneutics, meditating, and memorizing Scripture. As Charles Spurgeon said, "Be walking Bibles!"

### **2. Act like the Bereans!**

Acts 17:11 says, "Now these Jews [from Berea] were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Likewise, we must examine every teaching we hear whether it's from sermons, blogs, podcasts, books, or music, and test it against Scripture. (See *Being Berean- 8 Steps for Comparing Teaching to Scripture* from Michelle Lesley.) Discernment helps us navigate every area of our lives through Scriptural lenses, so we don't conform to the world but the image of Christ. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

### **3. Grow in your grace and knowledge of Christ!**

The more we learn about Jesus and how to follow Him, the closer we get to Him. And as we grow closer to Jesus, we increasingly learn to discern what pleases Him. Philippians 1:9-10 says, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ."

### **4. Learn from others!**

Discernment ministries have a terrible reputation in the evangelical world because they call out popular teachers. But they are necessary. And we should learn from their wisdom and competence. Proverbs 13:20 says, "Whoever walks

with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” So learn by watching seasoned saints practice discernment, but still, compare their teachings with Scripture. Discernment protects the church. When we are mature and discerning, we can come alongside brothers and sisters who are being deceived and bring them to the truth. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual [mature] should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

Take Priscilla and Aquila, for instance. Acts 18:26 says, “He [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Priscilla and Aquila showed this when they took Apollos aside and corrected his teachings (Acts 18:24-28). When members of a local body are discerning, they are a bulwark against false teachings gaining a foothold in their community. This couple’s discernment protected their community from Apollos’ false teachings. Discernment is vital in our spiritual lives. A lack of it means at best, a long term spiritual immaturity, and at worse, a false conversion. But remember that discernment is primarily to conform to Christ’s image and come alongside others. It’s not to go on a witch hunt.

Here is my principle that if you miss everything else, please don’t miss this:

***“Listen carefully to the one who is teaching and look closely at those who are following. Be prayerfully and Scripturally discerning!”*** What is this teacher saying? Is it found clearly in the Scriptures? Can you chase down the cross reference of it through the Bible? How is this teacher praying? Are they bringing one to Christ? What is he leaving out? Listen to the implications. Look at those who follow. Do they have their Bibles? Are they following in Scripture? Are they serious about their faith? Are they sharing Christ? Are they in the battle? You will be able to tell! As Corrie Ten Boom said, *“Discernment is God’s call to intercession, never to fault finding. Our fight is not against any physical enemy; it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We must struggle against sin all our lives, but we are assured we will win.”*

Now without sounding like a prophet of doom, I close with six statements that are my credo as your pastor. Or better yet, this is my commitment as I preach God’s Word each Sunday.

**1. We are living in treacherous, perilous times! It’s dangerous!** And there is more false teaching and anti-Biblical truth being shoved at us than ever before and it will not be obvious. It will not be easy to spot. But it is dangerous. Jesus said to the religious people of His day, “And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time” (Luke 12:55-56 NKJV)?

**2. Discernment plays a vital role in surviving these end times coming.** I'm not worried about the method by which other Christian pastors preach, as I am concerned that pastors today don't water down the truth. We must not take time or attention away from the Word of God. We must also not take attention in our lives from living for Christ. "We walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). "Just as you received Christ, walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6).

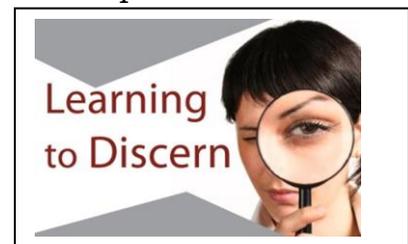
**3. Remember, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).** John continues to say that if we are from God, we will recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirits of falsehood (vs. 6). What that reminds us is that because the Spirit of God indwells in us, and we know Christ as our personal Savior, we have the greatest force more than any other force on the face of this planet in us. We alone represent a greater force of Christ's divine power more than a whole room full of the world's unbelieving experts, scientists, academia, and political leaders. Those who don't know the Lord speak from the world's view and those unbelieving will listen. We have the truth of Christ in us and as one individual with power in us more than all those college doctorates and experts who are in the world. And we can see and discern the truth. Don't let the wrong people do it for us!

**4. In these times, historical roots and doctrinal truths must continue to be valued and embraced.** We see so much of the past being erased and re-written today. We can't deny it. We can't stop it! But we can be discerning. Those protests and symbols and statues can all be torn down and stricken from history, but what we must never let happen is for our Biblical thinking and Scriptural truths to be stricken or stolen from our lives. We allow that to happen when we don't stay rooted and grounded in Christ and His Word. Times will change, not truths. Methods will change, not history.

**5. Each generation of believers has a serious responsibility.** To do what? To forge out its beliefs and be anchored in the unchanging doctrines laid out in the Scriptures. The Scriptures do not change and do not lie (1 Timothy 3:16). I pause for a little application: are you forging out yours? If you have, do your children know it? If they do, do their children know it? God has no grandchildren. Maybe you blew it with your family; well it's time to try to help your grandchildren. Maybe you don't have a family anymore, but there are friends for whom have a heavy burden who need the truth of Christ. Forge out what you believe each time you hear a message come at you. Or every time someone wants to debate a belief.

**6. It is the job of the church's leadership to guide and to guard this ministry!** I take this very seriously, though you may never hear me say it often. We guard it by making sure that PCBC is moving in the right direction, we are maintaining a balance between intake and output, we are reaching out to the lost, we are feeding the saved saints like today, we are modeling lives of

Christ-like character, we are dealing with those who must be dealt with, we are facing error whenever it arises, and it's our job to guide this church in that direction. That has been so real and essential during these days of Covid-19 where God has stripped our churches of all the "programs" and "extra ministries" and even the regular free expression of meeting. We are asking ourselves the question of "Is this life of Christ real in me, and do I want to get to know it more?" Why? Because this 21<sup>st</sup> century church of America is all about consumer driven selfish "meet my needs" and we are being easily led astray from the scriptural foundations and teachings of God's Word now more than ever! We watch over what is being taught, who teaches what, what our worship team sings and conveys. We stand against those who would sabotage the church. We don't hesitate to stand against them! It may be an unhappy or unpopular discussion we as leaders have to make, but we've got to do it. We endeavor to react wisely and forthrightly when we encounter spiritual predators. That is my job! That is the job of our elders! That is the role of our teachers and Bible study leaders! I think of it in the daytime, I dream of it at night! This is my passion 365/24/7 to guard and guide this church in the way of a strong and healthy church. Because a strong and healthy church today is no guarantee of a strong and healthy church tomorrow. So pray for us! You're a patient flock on the rock!



***Will you bow with me!***

***“Our Father in heaven, our hearts are full of gratitude to You for Your Word. We bless You that we have it in our homes and in our laps and in our church family. We thank You, Lord, for every page of this Book, not only for its promises that are inexpressibly sweet, but for its precepts which our souls delight, and especially for the revelation of Your Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We profess and test our hearts in this moment and proclaim: ‘We believe that Jesus is the Deity Son of God and fully man and the fullness of the Godhead!’ We thank You for this glorious Man, the God whom this Book reveals who died for our sins, wiped them from the slate of our hearts, and nailed them to the cross for us. We are dead, and alive in Him! Father, keep us alert to those spiritually defiling ideologies that depend only on the wisdom of man rather than the wisdom of God, however attractive they might appear. Lord, this world is filled with temptations and distractions; we have many opportunities to stray from Your commandments. Help us to focus, not on the things of this world, but on the message of Your Son. Let us keep Christ in our hearts as we follow Him this day and forever. Now we thank You for the blessed Spirit, for ‘greater is He who is in us, than he who is in this world.’ The spirit gives us life (2 Cor. 3:6). Now, Lord, our prayer to You at the mention of your sacred Book is that You would write it upon the tablets of our hearts more fully. We want to know the truth that it may make us free (John 8:32). Make us discerning! We want to***

*feel the truth so that we may be sanctified and changed by it. Oh, bless us Your people today. Bless us by saturating us with a discerning heart. Oh, dear, dear, Savior, what could we do without You? We pray as we ask that all tongues speak the Name of Jesus and all men own Him as Lord and King. We ask in His Name. Amen.”*

***Grace and peace to you!***

***Pastor Corvin <><***

Hymn: by Eliza Edmunds Hewitt (1851-1920)

More about Jesus would I know,  
More of His grace to others show;  
More of His saving fulness see,  
More of His love who died for me.  
More, more about Jesus,  
More, more about Jesus;  
More of His saving fulness see,  
More of His love who died for me.

More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of God my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me.

More about Jesus; in His Word,  
Holding communion with my Lord;  
Hearing His voice in every line,  
Making each faithful saying mine.

More about Jesus; on His throne,  
Riches in glory all His own;  
More of His kingdom's sure increase;  
More of His coming, Prince of Peace.”

