

Basic Principles for Discernment

Class 1 Basic Principles

1. God never contradicts
2. Aligns with God's Word – God speaks through Scripture (Scripture Test)
3. Full Surrender to God's Ways Required (prerequisite).
4. God can speak through other people (always in line with the above).

These are the four basic principles of discernment that I learned at Twin Rocks Friends Camp Samuel School – about 11 years of age. This camp was a weekend designed to train young people to learn to “hear the Voice of God”.

I was elected by the Church elders with one other boy to attend this special weekend course called Samuel School to teach us kids how to hear God's voice.

My expectations were that I would learn some secret methods to hearing God's audible Voice.

As it turned out, the focus was on His Still Small Voice and most of the basic principles they taught us, I had known already. However, this was confirmation of what I had heard and provided a great opportunity to practice being still and listening with an open and surrendered heart: “Speak, for Your servant is listening.” 1st Samuel 3:10

Laying the Foundation with Principles 1 & 2

1) God never contradicts Himself – He is Eternal and unchanging

Malachi 3:6 – God Himself states He does not change.

James 1:17 – God doesn't change.

Isaiah 44:6 – Before Him there was no other- He is the First and the Last.

Revelation 22:13 – He is the beginning and end-first and last.

Numbers 23:19 – God is not a man that He would lie/change what He promised.

Isaiah 40:8 – Grass withers/dries up but the Word of God lasts forever.

Isaiah 40:28 – The Lord does not tire and who can understand His mind?

Psalms 102:25-27 – The Lord is eternal and outlasts all created.

Psalms 90:1 – The prayer of Moses.

Matthew 24:35 – Heaven and earth will pass away but not so His Word.

John 1:1-3 By His Word He created – Jesus is the Word.

Colossians 1:17 – In Him all things are held together.

2) Aligns with God's Word (Scripture Test)

Matthew 7:24-27 – the one who hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice is like a wise builder who built on the rock.

John 12:44-50 – Everything Jesus said was at the direction of the Father.

2nd Timothy 3:16 – All Scripture comes from God.

There is the question about the Old Testament vs the New and Gentiles vs Jews and the various laws like circumcision, avoiding eating certain animals, celebrating certain feasts and following regulations, etc. A meeting to discuss this is recorded in Acts 15:4-31 and explains what was decided. (vs 28-29).

Closing Class 1: 1st Samuel 3:1-10

Homework: Practice sitting in silence daily this week (even starting with just one minute) and invite the Lord to speak, then wait on Him.

Class 2 Basic Principles

4 Basic Principles:

- 1) God never contradicts
- 2) Aligns with God's Word – God speaks through Scripture (Scripture Test).
- 3) Full Surrender to God's Ways Required (prerequisite).
- 4) God can speak through other people (always in line with the above).

3) Full Surrender to God's Ways

This is logical – unless we are willing to go fully go either way with the choice before us, we cannot be sure between God's "Still Small Voice" and our own. – Jeremiah 17:9-10

If we really want to hear from God and follow Him- we cannot shy away from these tests.
Hebrews 4:12-13

Psalms 66:18 – If we harbor sin, He will not hear our prayers. Ephesians 4:30-32 – Do not grieve God's Spirit.

James 5:16-17 The prayer of the righteous – Elijah's prayers.

1 Kings 19:11-13 – Elijah discerning God's Voice and presence.

The following are some challenging tests. We all likely struggle currently or have with these, so there's no need to feel hopeless. Convicted, yes, but not condemned. That's why Jesus came:

Ask God to check us for unrepentant sin like unforgiveness. Bear also in mind that forgiveness is a process.

Forgiveness is: releasing the other person from payback.

The unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:1-35); the focus is on payback. Forgiveness is not forgetting like it never happened.

Depending on the extent of the wounds, forgetting may be impossible and unwise especially if the offender is unrepentant and persists in the sin. Keep in mind David's Story. God did not remove all consequences caused by his sin even when He forgave him. (2nd Samuel 11:1-12:14)

Romans chapters 7-8: The struggle with sin and the victory in Christ. (Whole book is great!)

Homework: go through Romans 7-8 and examine where you are, honestly. Note Verse 1 of Chpt. 8, victory is in the understanding of this truth and standing in it.

Follow-up study verses: Galatians 5:16-26 Older translations John 3:21

4) God can speak through other people – but always apply the Scripture test in light of Principles 1 - 3

Through Pastors, Teachers, spiritually discerning friends with years of experience, and Elders.

Currently we are in an era where there are a lot of things we need to test.

Example: Can't trust everything marked with a "Christian" or "Biblical" label, especially online, to be accurate or sound. If using a digital bible, make sure to have a print copy as well. I have noticed that the NIV digital online version has some unnecessary changes that lessen, if not change, the meaning of one of my favorite passages: John 3:31. In the older version, this passage explains the whole gospel in a nutshell. The word choice of the newer makes it less clear.

Remember the Enemy's Craftiness (Genesis 3) we should not assume we can dialogue with Him. We need to resist.

James 4:7 and Ephesians 6:10-18 the armor. (The Word of God is a sword)

Hebrews 4:12 – scalpel

1 John 4:1-3 – Test the spirits.

Matthew 10:16 – Jesus said to be as cunning as serpents and as innocent as doves.

Know the Word – Acts 17:11 Bereans.

Use multiple reputable translations for study and memorization.

Check out reviews on different translations which provide a grounded basis for their critique.

Example: to train for catching a counterfeit – you study the real thing. Cashiers have been trained by handling real money so that they can tell even by the feel in their hands that something is not right when counterfeit bill comes along.

Be encouraged to study the Word! Read it during breaks, lunch, first thing in the morning, last thing before going to sleep – Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

I think God knew we would be “busy” so it makes sense that He gave these descriptive instructions.