

# BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

## **TEXT: HEBREWS 5:11-14**

### **Introduction:**

1. I would like to preach tonight on the subject of Biblical discernment (cf. Hebrews 5:14).
2. Today we hear much talk of tolerance and pluralism and compromise, etc.
3. We are told to be “open-minded,” especially when it comes to religion. Those who take the Bible literally are criticized and labeled “narrow-minded.”
4. I heard a preacher say that an open mind is a narrow mind lying down.
5. Have you noticed that liberals are very tolerant of criminals, homosexuals, Muslim terrorists, and communists, etc. but they happen to be very intolerant of fundamental Christians?
6. We are supposed to tolerate just about everything – homosexuality, abortion, pornography, sex-change operations, transvestites, etc.
7. We are told no one is to say what is good and what is evil.
8. We are told that all religions are basically the same. A person would have to be very stupid to believe that!
9. Our Lord said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).
10. That is not very politically correct. Some would say it is very narrow. Well, it is narrow. Jesus also said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14).
11. Then in the next verse, our Lord said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15).
12. To recognize a false prophet, one needs Biblical discernment. Biblical discernment is lacking these days, and that is why there are so many false prophets all over radio and television.
13. I do not know enough about this pastor in Florida to identify him as a false prophet, but he is certainly being foolish in putting on a big show and threatening to burn the Koran. Innocent Christians could get killed as a result of his big desire for media attention.

14. To develop Biblical discernment, one needs to study the Bible and be led by the Holy Spirit (cf. I Corinthians 2:9-16).

### **I. MANY CHRISTIANS ARE SPIRITUALLY DULL (5:11, 12).**

1. The word translated “dull” means “sluggish.”
2. The author is specifically writing to Hebrew Christians, who could not understand New Testament teaching about Christ being a high priest after the order of Melchisedec (cf. 5:10).
3. But we can apply this today, because there are many dull and sluggish Christians in churches that cannot grasp Bible doctrine. What is worse, many have little appetite for it.
4. Not long ago, there were many strong Christian publishers and bookstores, but now most of them have disappeared.
5. I am told that most publishers do not want to publish conservative doctrinal books because they do not sell. People would rather buy slop by Joel Osteen and Rick Warren and Joyce Meyer, etc.
6. Furthermore, secular (ungodly) companies now operate most of the big Christian publishers. I could preach all night about this, but let me just cite one big publisher as an example.
7. Zondervan Publishers was founded in 1931 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, by two brothers – Peter and Bernard Zondervan, who were the nephews of publisher William Eerdmans (another big Christian publishing house that went apostate).
8. In their early days they only published good conservative Christian books. Then in the 1960’s, Zondervan started publishing some of these new, inaccurate Bible versions. In the 1970’s Zondervan went into partnership with the International Bible Society (which is now very ecumenical), and published the New International Version of the Bible (NIV). They own the copyright to the NIV.
9. Later on, Zondervan was bought out by Harper Collins, a big secular publisher. Harper Collins publishes the *Satanic Bible* and pornography star Jenna Jameson’s best-selling book, *How To Make Love Like a Porn Star*.
10. Furthermore, both Harper Collins and Zondervan are owned by News Corp, which is owned and operated by Rupert Murdoch, an Australian publisher and pornographer.
11. Murdoch also owns the FOX Network. Some of the sleaziest garbage on TV is on that network. Conservatives have pointed out that there is a disconnect between Fox News, which is fairly

conservative, and Fox network programs, which are among the sleaziest on television.

12. Three years ago, Rick Warren boasted that he was Rupert Murdoch's pastor, but when he was told Murdoch publishes pornography, he changed his story and said that Murdoch attends his church but is not actually a member. Warren is a phony.
13. I should mention that Murdoch publishes and promotes Warren's "Purpose-driven" books. Do not expect to hear Warren speak out against Murdoch's pornography or trashy TV shows.
14. Though they used to be conservative, today Zondervan publishes all sorts of new age books, emerging church books, liberal books, and other anti-Christian books.
15. Most Christians care little about any of this. They read all these junky books, but they do not read much of the Bible. Or if they do take time to read the Bible, they read some inaccurate translation.
16. Consequently most Christians lack discernment, and most churches are very weak and worldly. If a church puts on a worldly show with lots of music and lots of laughs, they can draw a good crowd. But if it is just prayer and Bible preaching – shallow, worldly church members will not come.

## **II. TO GROW SPIRITUALLY WE MUST STUDY THE BIBLE**

1. Here is where many Christians fail. As HA Ironside traveled around the country preaching, he used to ask his audience, "How many have read the Bible through from cover to cover?"
2. Very few hands went up. After a while he got discouraged and stopped asking. And that was well over 50 years ago. It is far worse today.
3. Christians who have been saved for a few years should be teaching the Bible to others, but there are Christians who have been saved for many years who cannot even handle teaching a Sunday School class (cf. Heb. 5:12-14).
4. John Phillips, in his commentary on the book of Hebrews, points out that, "Spiritual babyhood is fostered by ritualism." He is right.
5. He goes on to say, "An elaborate ritual was acceptable in Old Testament times because that was the infancy stage of divine revelation, but with the coming of Christ the nursery should have been left behind. The Hebrew believers had to put away the cramping and inhibiting rituals of their former faith."

### III. DISCERNMENT COMES FROM “REASON OF USE” (5:14).

1. There are no shortcuts to developing spiritual discernment.
2. Note the word “exercised” (5:14).
3. First Timothy 4:8 says, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”
4. We need Christian discipline.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Hebrews 5:14 says, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” It has been pointed out that all five bodily senses have their counterparts in the spiritual realm:

1. Taste – “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (I Peter 2:3).
2. Hearing – “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15).
3. Sight – “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18).
4. Smell – “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).
5. Feeling – The ungodly are said to be “past feeling” and “have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19). We need a touch from God! (Adapted from William R. Newell, *Hebrews*)