



# Light from the Word

## The Faithful Church Uses Spiritual Discernment

*“And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezek. 44:23)*

From the beginning of the ministry of our Lord Jesus, the need for discernment was apparent. As the Apostles established the church in Jerusalem and Judea, the need for discernment continued. And as the church spread to the Gentile world, the need for discernment only grew as Gentile believers had to learn about the living God – beginning with the very basics. But we also see that Jewish believers had numerous erroneous beliefs that needed correction.

If we examine the state of the nation of Israel in the time of Jesus, we find a people who had forsaken idol worship some four hundred years previously. They had recognized the major errors of their fathers and committed to worshipping God alone. To varying degrees they had embraced the Law and the Prophets and developed a remarkable oral commentary on the Law that documented the thoughts of the most respected teachers in Israel. However, several divisions developed, most notably the division between Pharisee and Sadducee – the Pharisees embracing the Law and the Prophets as the Word of God, and the Sadducees denying all but the five books of Moses.

As the time of the birth of Christ drew near, there were numerous other factions within the Jewish people. There were Essenes and Zealots, and within the Pharisees, there were adherents to Rabbi Hillel and others who followed the stricter teachings of Rabbi Shammai. The Hasmonians were descendants of Aaron who held the priesthood and were the nominal power after King Herod. However, the followers of Rabbi Hillel, who was a descendant of David, also held significant power.

In contrast, the Jews, to whom were given “the oracles of God”, were in extreme disagreement – even arguing whether the prophets spoke the word of God or not. Such a divided nation cried out for spiritual discernment. It was into this maelstrom that Jesus plunged when he turned the water into wine and first revealed power beyond human ability. Crowds followed Him everywhere, sensing His wisdom and the presence of God. He brought clarity to discussions that had been contentious for many years. He taught from a spiritual perspective based on full knowledge of the truth rather than the limited perspective of man. (John 1:14 and 3:34)

In some cases, entrenched positions had been at odds with each other for centuries. For example, the woman at the well asked Jesus, *“Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”* (John 4:19-20)

As so often occurs, she had presented only two options. Jesus answered her, *“Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:21-24)

As Jesus presented the Samaritan woman with a truth beyond what she had previously understood, we find several core principles of spiritual discernment:

1. The truth is often beyond what men have considered or been able to comprehend.
2. Jesus is the source of truth.
3. Satan often presents temptation and creates

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# Continued Articles

## Uses Spiritual Discernment

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confusion through logically inconsistent questions (falsehoods) or arguments such as the false dilemma rooted in an “either-or” statement that he put in the mind of the Samaritan woman.

Discernment is the act of sorting through information in order to distinguish the truth. The purpose of discernment is “to be able to determine good vs. evil” such that we can “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” (Rom. 12:9) In order to abhor evil and cleave to good, we must first be certain we have distinguished between them correctly. Discernment brings enlightenment to the believer and glory to God. (2 Cor. 4:6)

The following are some principles of discernment to aid in this correct judgment when evaluating spiritually oriented communication and thinking.

### **Principle #1 - Discernment requires humility.**

- This includes a mind open to the possibility of personal errant thinking and the willingness to follow the evidence of the Word to its

conclusion. (1 Cor. 10:12)

- Humility esteems the understanding of other believers, while acknowledging that no single believer past or present has (or had) a full understanding. (Phil. 2:3)

One of the greatest risks for young and immature believers is to be exposed to ideas contrary to one’s beliefs. Discernment practices caution. In contrast, one of the greatest risks for a mature believer is to isolate oneself and only consider perspectives with which one already agrees. Such isolation prevents biblical correction and can lead to serious error.

### **Principle #2 - Discernment must be built on a solid foundation of truth.**

- Logical fallacies are false by definition. (Ps. 4:2)
- Truth and good judgment cannot proceed from false premises. (Job 21:34)
- Rumors and partial information lead to errant conclusions.

Perhaps all too often one hears that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men and interprets it to justify the foolishness of men. Foolishness is just foolishness. God is true and cannot and will not lie.

### **Principle #3 - Discernment requires full information, often**

### **from multiple perspectives, to gain a complete understanding.**

There is safety in a multitude of counselors. (Prov. 11:14)

Recognizing that God sees and knows all, truth does not fear understanding and welcomes full information. (2 Tim. 1:7)

At times, differences in individual discernment and the need for united (common) application of Scriptures on a matter require that church leadership meet in conference to come to agreement. (Acts 15:6, 28)

### **Principle #4 - Discernment of spiritual issues relies on the Bible and the Holy Spirit as the sources of wisdom and truth.**

- This requires a good knowledge of the Scriptures. (2 Tim. 3:16)
- Understanding the Bible requires a spiritual mind. (1 Cor. 2:10-15)
- The Spirit gives greater discernment to some as it pleases Him for the benefit of the whole Body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:7-11)
- Experience and maturity enable clearer discernment. (Heb. 5:14)

It seems that the devil often uses the Word to plant seeds of doubt and discontent. He put the thought in the Lord’s mind ... “*IF thou be the Son of God ...*” and the Lord had to combat the thought

with other portions of Scripture, saying, *“It is written...”*. It is vital that we accept “all the counsel of God” and do not take any Scripture out of context – as Satan did.

**Principle #5 - Holy Spirit-led discernment fosters the bond of love in believers.**

- In doctrine, the Spirit brings unity. (Isa. 29:24)
- Where God permits discretion, the Spirit brings forbearance. (Eph. 4:1-6)
- In areas of uncertainty, the Spirit brings mutual submission and esteem (Rom. 14:10)

As human beings, made from the dust of the earth, we are woefully limited in our ability to know all the facts, and our motivations are often vilely self-centered. We have a tendency to desire a particular outcome and then look for evidence to support our foregone conclusion. We are horribly predisposed to judging wrongly. Only by looking to Jesus – the author and finisher of our faith – can we find truth and life. Following His example, walking in the Spirit with deep humility, we can learn to discern righteously and avoid the deceptive falsehoods of the devil.

## Garden Grove

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for others who may be called to consider moving here to carry out the great commission of spreading the gospel message of salvation.

### Come and worship

If you are planning a visit to the area, consider stopping at Rathbun Lake which is a 1200-1500 acre lake located approximately one half hour from Garden Grove and offers camp sites, fishing and boating. You may even meet some from the local congregation who also go there for recreation.

Additionally, about seventy miles away is the closest city of Des Moines, which offers a number of attractions for families on vacation.

The church doors are always open in Garden Grove for anyone wishing to visit or consider moving to the area. Visitors are especially welcome as they make Sunday gatherings very special and are a boost to the local congregation. Consult the minister book for directions to the church and times for services.

Apostolic Christian Church  
16021 - 320th Avenue  
Garden Grove IA 50103  
641-443-3625  
(On Hwy R69, 1 mile south of city)

## Int’l Grants

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**Warniwati Fiona** is an orphan, 23 years old and is responsible for herself and her brother’s lives. In early 2013 she received a loan of \$105 to start a traditional in-home shop. She is now able to buy more nutritious food and necessary clothing for herself and her brother. She plans to develop this business so that she can save money for her brother’s schooling and her future marriage.



**Yakub Baranigro Dohudo** is a father of two children and has been renting a becak to provide for his family. After paying his rent each day, he had less than \$3 left to provide for his family. His loan of \$315 enabled him to buy his own becak. This motivated him to work even harder and he has been able to repay his previous debts and is making monthly payments back to the micro-loan program. He is now planning to have another business with his wife to generate more income in the future.

