

Discerning Good and Evil

Introduction:

A. If you were the witness to a crime and were called upon to identify the criminal from among the suspects in a line-up, how would you do it? - identifying characteristics

B. As Christians, we have the grave responsibility to identify sin. - Hebrews 5:12-14

C. How can we discern good and evil?

I. The Realm of Faith - Matthew 28:18; Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:17

A. Two Relationships

1. to God (spiritual) - Matthew 22:34-38

2. to man (morals) - Matthew 22:39-40

a. family - Ephesians 5:22,25; 6:1-4

b. business - Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:22 - 4:1

c. community - Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Romans 12:17-18

d. civil government - Romans 13:1,7

B. Three Principles

1. Is it authorized? - 2 John 9

a. specifically

(1) relationship to God: e.g., kind of music in worship - Ephesians 5:18-19

(2) relationship to man: e.g., husband head of wife - Ephesians 5:23

b. generically

(1) relationship to God: e.g., pitch pipe for leading singing - Ephesians 5:18-19

(2) relationship to man: e.g., husband buy wife flowers - Ephesians 5:25

2. Is it my duty? - James 4:17

a. relationship to God: e.g., assemble to worship - Hebrews 10:24-25

b. relationship to man: e.g., pay taxes - Romans 13:7

3. Is it forbidden?

a. specifically

(1) relationship to God: e.g., sabbath keeping - Colossians 2:14-17

(2) relationship to man: e.g., fornication - Hebrews 13:4

b. in principle

(1) relationship to God: e.g., Christmas as holy day - Galatians 4:10-11

(2) relationship to man: e.g., popular dancing - Galatians 5:19-21

II. The Realm of Opinion (Liberty)

A. Everything we say, do or think falls into one of three categories.

1. required - Matthew 28:20
2. sinful - 1 John 3:4
3. opinion (liberty): allowed but not required - Romans 14:5; 1 Corinthians 8:8-9; 7:38

B. Four New Testament passages tell us how to decide what is expedient (helpful, profitable) in the realm of opinion (liberty). - Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 8:1-13; 10:23-33

1. Before it can be a matter of opinion (liberty, expediency), it must be lawful. -
1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23; e.g., instrumental music in worship, gambling as a means to raise money
2. We should not contend for opinions. - Romans 14:1-2
3. We must not make our opinions a test of fellowship. - Romans 14:3
4. We must not lead one who is weak to violate his conscience. - Romans 14:15;
1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 10:25-33
5. We must not hurt our influence for good. - 1 Corinthians 14:16
6. We should seek peace. - Romans 14:19
7. We must seek to edify others. - Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 10:23-24
8. One should not violate his own conscience. - Romans 14:20,23
9. No one may bind his conscience on another. - Romans 14:22; Galatians 2:3-5
10. We should try to please others rather than ourselves. - Romans 15:1-3
11. We must not be enslaved to anything. - 1 Corinthians 6:12
12. We should do all to the glory of God. - 1 Corinthians 10:31
13. We should always seek the salvation of others. - 1 Corinthians 10:33

C. Four other principles help determine what is expedient in the realm of opinion (liberty).

1. We should not intentionally place ourselves in situations where we are tempted to sin. -
Matthew 6:13; 1 Peter 2:11
2. We must not let things of the world hinder our service to Christ. - Matthew 6:33
3. We should avoid companions who weaken us. - 1 Corinthians 15:33
4. We must not be in relationships that cause us to share in the sins of others. -
2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1; Ephesians 5:11

Conclusion:

- A. Our responsibility is to avoid sin. - 1 Corinthians 15:34
- B. To do this we must apply these principles.