

Lesson 77 - Character of Discernment

1. In addition to teaching people the difference between the holy and profane, what are we also supposed to help people discern as part of our calling? **Ezekiel 44:23**

EGW: Anciently, directions were given to the priests:" And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to My judgments." When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." {3T 195.2}

Here the duty of God's servants is made plain. They cannot be excused from the faithful discharge of their duty to reprove sins and wrongs in the people of God, although it may be a disagreeable task and may not be received by the one who is at fault. But in most cases the one reprov'd would accept the warning and heed reproof were it not that others stand in the way. They come in as sympathizers and pity the one reprov'd and feel that they must stand in his defense. They do not see that the Lord is displeas'd with the wrongdoer, because the cause of God has been wounded and His name reproach'd. Souls have been turned aside from the truth and have made shipwreck of faith as the result of the wrong course pursued by the one in fault; but the servant of God whose discernment is clouded and whose judgment is sway'd by wrong influences would as soon take his position with the offender whose influence has done much harm, as with the reprov'er of wrong and of sin, and in so doing he virtually says to the sinner: "Do not be troubled, do not be cast down; you are about right after all." These say to the sinner:" It shall be well with thee." {3T 196.1}

2. What are we to discern between that God is most concerned about? **Hebrews 5:14**

EGW: We need, in this age of error, of day-dreaming and reverie, to learn the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Let us strive to be able to say with the apostle, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" [2 Peter 1:16]. The Lord calls upon us to follow high and noble principles. {14MR 58.2}

I have been shown that there are those to whom the words apply, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. 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" [Hebrews 5:12-14]. {14MR 58.3}

3. If we discern between good and bad, what will God do? **End of 2 Samuel 14:17**

EGW: David gave Solomon minute directions for building the temple, with patterns of every part, and of all its instruments of service, as had been revealed to him by divine inspiration. Solomon was still young, and shrank from the weighty responsibilities that would devolve upon him in the erection of the temple and in the government of God's people. David said to his son, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." {PP 751.1}

4. What does the Word of God help us discern? **Hebrews 4:12**

EGW: When our minds are controlled by the Spirit of God, we shall understand the lesson taught by the parable of the leaven. Those who open their hearts to receive the truth will realize that the word of God is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. "The entrance of thy words giveth light," the psalmist declares; "it giveth understanding unto the simple." And Christ prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." {RH, July 25, 1899 par. 5}

5. What type of discernment must we have to understand God's teachings that a carnally minded person cannot understand? **1 Corinthians 2:13-14**

EGW: Another dangerous error, is the doctrine that denies the divinity of Christ, claiming that he had no existence before his advent to this world. This theory is received with favor by a large class who profess to believe the Bible; yet it directly contradicts the plainest statements of our Saviour concerning his relationship with the Father, his divine character, and his pre-existence. It cannot be entertained without the most unwarranted wresting of the Scriptures. It not only lowers man's conceptions of the work of redemption, but undermines faith in the Bible as a revelation from God. While this renders it the more dangerous, it makes it also harder to meet. If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the divinity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them,

because they are spiritually discerned.” [1 Corinthians 2:14.] None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption. {GC88 524.2}

6. What should have nothing to do with the ability to discern the good from the bad? **2 Samuel 19:31-35 [Answer in verses 32 and 35]**

EGW: What book can compare with the Bible? An understanding of its teachings is essential for every child and youth, and for those of mature age; for it is the word of God, given to guide the human family to heaven. In the world today there are gods many and doctrines many. Without an understanding of the Scriptures it is impossible for the youth to understand what is truth, or to discern between the sacred and the common. {CT 427.1}

7. What did Solomon request to be given to discern properly between good and bad, even to discern judgment? **1 Kings 3:5-12**

EGW: When the Lord asked Solomon what he should give him, Solomon said: "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that can not be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? {RH, August 16, 1898 par. 10}

8. Even if we give our best effort to discern matters, who is an example of still being tricked? **Genesis 27:23**

EGW: (no comment)

9. On the other hand, we have people that know better and discern the facts, like having prophets (more than just Elijah) being sent. Who was a poor decision maker despite correctly discerning that a man was one of the sons of the prophets? **1 Kings 20:34-35, 41**

EGW: (no comment)

10. Who caused Judah to discern objects of possession to show her to be more righteous than he?
Genesis 38:24-26

EGW: (no comment)

11. In rebuilding the temple, what could they not discern between on that day that shows that it was about half and half as opposed to one side being greater than the other in number? **Ezra 3:8-13**

EGW: But mingled with the music and the shouts of praise ascending on that glad day, was a discordant note of sorrow and dissatisfaction. "Many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice." Among the aged men who had seen the glory of Solomon's temple, there were some who lamented and wept over the inferiority of the building that was now to be erected. {RH, April 11, 1907 par. 13}

It was but natural and right that these aged men should have feelings of sadness because of the results of long-continued impenitence. Had they and their generation obeyed God and carried out his purpose for Israel, the temple built by Solomon would not have been destroyed, and the captivity would not have been necessary. It was because of their former ingratitude and disloyalty, that they had been scattered among the heathen. Through long years of exile they were brought to realize the sacredness of God's law and the sinfulness of disobedience. {RH, April 11, 1907 par. 14}

But conditions were now changed. In tender mercy the Lord had once more visited his people, and had allowed them to return to their own land. Feelings of sadness because of the mistakes of the past should have given place to feelings of joy. In a remarkable way God had moved upon the heart of King Cyrus to aid them in rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, and this should have called forth expressions of profound gratitude. But some failed of discerning God's opening providences. Instead of rejoicing, they entertained thoughts of discontent and discouragement. {RH, April 11, 1907 par. 15}

This spirit of murmuring and complaining, and of making unfavorable comparisons, had a depressing influence on the minds of many. The expressions of doubt and discouragement weakened the hands of the builders. The workmen were led to question whether they should proceed with the erection

of a building that at the beginning was so freely criticized and was the cause of so much lamentation. {RH, April 11, 1907 par. 16}

There were many in the congregation, however, who did not look upon the lesser glory of this temple, as compared with the first temple, with such dissatisfaction. "Many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." {RH, April 11, 1907 par. 17}

12. What is discerned with those who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit? **1 Corinthians 12:10**

EGW: The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." Not all the gifts are imparted to each believer, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised, according to his need for the Lord's work. {ST, March 15, 1910 par. 3}

13. What practice are we to be of a proper age and of a correct mindset to treat respectfully? **1 Corinthians 11:29, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25**

EGW: Paul proceeded to give the order and object of the Lord's supper, and then warned his brethren against perverting this sacred ordinance: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . . He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." {LP 171.2}

14. What can people easily discern? **Beginning of Luke 12:56, Beginning of Matthew 16:3**

EGW: Christ tried to present before the Pharisees their inconsistency. By certain indications in the heavens they professed themselves wise to foretell the weather. "When it is evening," he said, "ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for

the sky is red and lowering.” {YI, March 21, 1901 par. 4}

15. What is more important to discern? **End of Luke 12:56, End of Matthew 16:3**

EGW: God's people must take warning and discern the signs of the times. The signs of Christ's coming are too plain to be doubted, and in view of these things everyone who professes the truth should be a living preacher. God calls upon all, both preachers and people, to awake. All heaven is astir. The scenes of earth's history are fast closing. We are amid the perils of the last days. Greater perils are before us, and yet we are not awake. This lack of activity and earnestness in the cause of God is dreadful. This death stupor is from Satan. He controls the minds of unconsecrated Sabbathkeepers, and leads them to be jealous of one another, faultfinding, and censorious. It is his special work to divide hearts that the influence, strength, and labor of God's servants may be kept among unconsecrated Sabbathkeepers and their precious time be occupied in settling little differences when it should be spent in proclaiming the truth to unbelievers. {1T 260.3}

16. What are the wise able to discern? **Ecclesiastes 8:5**

EGW: The looker-on may discern no difference; but there is One who said that the tares were not to be plucked up by human hands lest the wheat be rooted up also. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then the Lord sends forth His reapers to gather out the tares and bind them in bundles to burn, while the wheat is gathered into the heavenly garner. The time of the judgment is a most solemn period, when the Lord gathers His own from among the tares. Those who have been members of the same family are separated. A mark is placed upon the righteous. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Those who have been obedient to God's commandments will unite with the company of the saints in light; they shall enter in through the gates into the city, and have right to the tree of life. The one shall be taken. His name shall stand in the book of life, while those with whom he associated shall have the mark of eternal separation from God. {TM 234.2}

17. What could 120,000 people not discern between pointing to the population of very little children alone making the whole population much greater in Nineveh? **Jonah 4:11**

EGW: (no comment)

18. What should we be careful to discern in the youth to help them gain instead of allowing them to lack? **Proverbs 7:7**

EGW: (no comment)

19. Those that do not control their appetite, what can they not discern? **Job 6:30**

EGW: (no comment)

20. During the millennium, the thousand years we spend in Heaven, what will we be discerning? **Malachi 3:17-18**

EGW: It is impossible to describe the horror and despair of those who have trampled upon God's holy requirements. The Lord gave them his law; they might have compared their characters with it, and learned their defects while there was yet opportunity for repentance and reform; but in order to secure the favor of the world, they set aside its precepts and taught others to transgress. They have endeavored to compel God's people to profane his Sabbath. Now they are condemned by that law which they have despised. With awful distinctness they see that they are without excuse. They chose whom they would serve and worship. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." [Malachi 3:18.] {GC88 639.2}