

Lifting Up The

STANDARD



“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).

What Do You Think?

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

(Proverbs 23:7)

“Think”

The dictionary says, to think is “to have an opinion, belief, or idea about something or about someone.” The dictionary also says, an opinion is “a judgment about someone or something that may or may not necessarily be based on the truth.” Therefore, it is possible for us to have an opinion about something, or someone, that is not based on the truth.

What Is Your Opinion About...

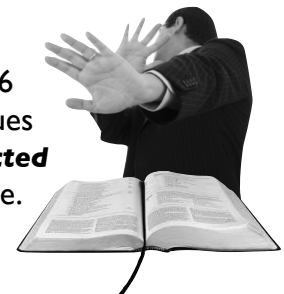
Recently, I asked a lady in our church service what she thought about a hockey game that was played the night before. She said, “I didn’t see the game, in fact I never watch hockey.” I said, “but surely you have an opinion about last night’s game.” She said, “I don’t know anything about hockey; therefore, I cannot give an honest opinion about something I know nothing about.”

Over the years I have asked many unsaved people their opinion about the Bible, and their answer is usually a very negative answer. When I ask them if they have ever read the Bible the usual answer is no. My next question is, how can you have an honest opinion about something you know nothing about?

What Is Your Opinion About Today’s Issues?

Let’s use the issue of music for an example. Take a clean sheet of paper and write down your *opinion* about what type of music is acceptable for use in our church services. Next, write down how you arrived at your conclusion.

In Hosea’s day, God’s people were rejecting knowledge. Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” and the verse continues revealing the fact that they had a lack of knowledge, because they had **“rejected knowledge.”** There are over eleven hundred references to music in the Bible. How many of them have you considered in coming to your conclusion about music?



Knowledge Alone Is Not Enough, We Need Discernment Also

Without discernment we will not know if the information we have accumulated is Scripturally correct. Therefore, as leaders in the home or in the local church, we must teach those we are responsible for, how to discern.

Teaching How To Discern Is A Scriptural Mandate For Spiritual Leaders Ezekiel 44:23,

“And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”

The command is to, “teach my people.” What we are to teach is “the difference between the holy and profane.”

Two Things Are Necessary

First, we need leaders who will teach discernment; and **second**, we need students who are teachable.

It Is A Choice

The question every leader, be he *parent* or *pastor* must answer is: will I take my God-given responsibility to teach discernment to those I am responsible for? Will I teach them how to “discern between good and evil?” For everyone else, the question is: “will I be teachable?”

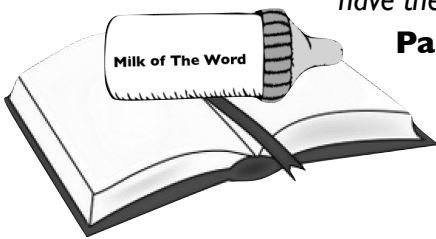
Being teachable is a choice. Christ, the greatest Teacher that ever taught anyone, said, “***If*** any man have ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:23). It was a choice His listeners had to make, and it is a choice we all must make.

It is also a choice concerning feeding on the “strong meat” of the Word, or being bottle-feeders. Romans 10:17 says, “*faith* (what we believe) cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” However, hearing is a choice! Paul said in the last days **God’s people** would “turn away their ears from the truth” (Second Timothy 4:4).

Strong Meat or Baby Bottles?

Hebrews 5:14,

“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.”



Paul rebuked those he was writing to, saying,

“For 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.”

Spiritual Discernment Is Not Mental Discernment

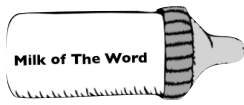
First Corinthians 2:13-14,

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man (which lives within every Christian) 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.”

The Natural Man Lives Within, And Wants To Make The Decisions

We read, “the natural man” which “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” When we received Christ as our Saviour, we received a new nature; however, the old nature is still living within. Paul deals with this in Romans chapter seven. On one hand, he said: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Verse 18), then on the other hand, he said: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Verse 22).

The old nature in the Christian is referred to as, “*the flesh,*” “*the old man,*” “*the natural man,*” and “*the carnal mind.*” The old nature “*receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.*” If we let the old nature have control we are going to remain spiritual babies.



Baby Bottle Believers

Paul rebuked the Christians he was writing to in Hebrews chapter five because after many years, they had chosen to remain baby bottle Believers. Their problem stemmed from the fact that they had chosen to be “*dull of hearing*” (Hebrews 5:11).

We are Without Excuse. Discernment Is Available To All Christians

At least eight times, Paul made statements such as, “*I would not have you ignorant.*” Over a dozen times, Jesus said things such as, “*Thou shalt know*” or “*Ye shall know.*” Ten times, the Lord made statements such as, “*Hear and understand*” and “*By this shall all men know.*” Jesus promised the Holy Spirit “*will guide you into all truth.*”

By far, the majority of fundamental independent Baptist Christians are baby bottle Believers. Before you reject that statement, stop and think about the fact that about 90% of them sit in church week after week and do nothing for the cause of Christ. Most of them spend hours upon hours watching TV, but have no time for the things of the Lord, including studying the Bible from one Sunday to the next.

They have no spiritual discernment, because they are under the control of the natural man and “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.*” Again, the natural man cannot discern spiritual things, because spiritual things “*are spiritually discerned,*” not mentally discerned.

“That Ye May Prove (Discern) What Is Acceptable”

Romans 12:1,2,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove (Translated discern twice) what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The Difference Between Learning And Discerning

Learning is the accumulation of information. Discerning is the God-given ability to determine if the information is Scriptural.

Solomon Had Much Information. He Desired Discernment

First Kings 3:10-12,

“And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.”

Spiritual discernment is the God-given ability to determine truth from error. Discernment makes it possible to “*Prove all things*” (First Thessalonians 5:21), and discernment is only available to those who are determined to “*hold fast that which is good*” (First Thessalonians 5:21).

If the sinful desires of the old nature and the influences of the world are more important to us than God’s will, discernment will not be ours. It is simply a choice.

The lack of spiritual discernment has led to an unscriptural thinking that image and influence is important to evangelization. We think we must win the lost to our favour before we can win them to Christ. As a result, preaching repentance has been dropped, because we don’t want to offend anyone or make them uncomfortable.

We now market the church, and market the Gospel, with our new non-offensive heresies. As a result, we are filling our churches with people who are no more saved than would be a computer that voted for Christ.



We can put the right information in a computer and it will vote for Jesus, but it won’t go to Heaven.

The Cause of A Lack of Discernment

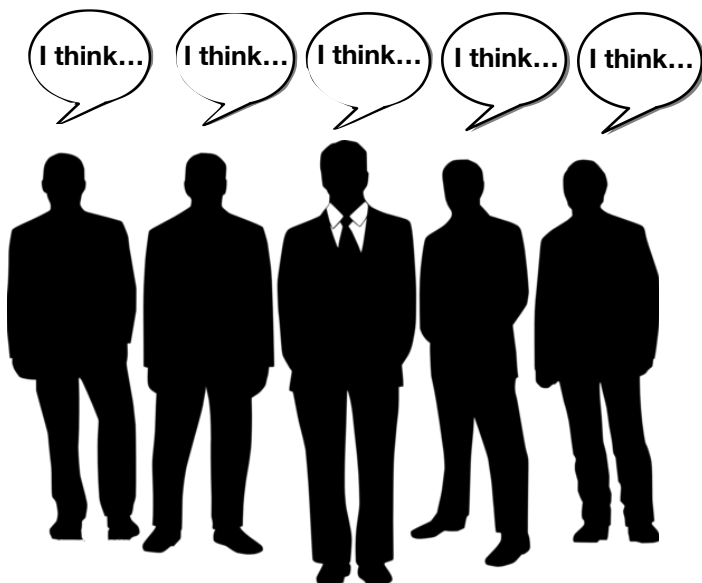
The Influence of False Teaching

Jude, commanded us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." In verse four he continued, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul also warned us concerning "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Galatians 2:4).

“Deceiving Your Own Selves”

First Timothy 3:13 refers to “being deceived,” and James 1:22 warned, if we are not “doers of the Word,” we would be “deceiving your own selves.” Many sit week after week hearing the Word of God being preached, yet never do anything about what they hear. Everything in the Bible is there for us to apply to our lives. As we hear the Word of God preached, we should be constantly asking God how it applies to our life.

Someone who sits in church every week deceives himself into thinking he is spiritual, because he went to church. James said this person “deceives himself” and in seven different verses, he referred to that person’s faith as being dead. **Dead faith can discern nothing!**



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“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

(John 17:17)

