

Teach Your Children to Discern by Teaching Them to Divide

I. God commands righteousness.

- See episode 401 . . . and the content of the whole Bible. :-)

II. God commands that we flee sin.

- Romans 6:15; I Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 4
- In order to discern whether something is righteous or sinful, we're going to have to make a divide between them.

III. God commands unity in Him.

- When we discover those who live and promote righteousness, we must embrace them and unify with them.

IV. God commands that we flee from those who advocate sin.

- We are not to fellowship with the world.

- Psalm 1:1; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15, 17; Ephesians 5:11; I Corinthians 5:9-10
- Fellowship refers to participation that like objects have with each other. Water mixes with water. Light can be added to light without diminishing each other. But light can't mix with darkness just like water can't mix with oil just like Christ can't mix with Satan. They can't have fellowship. They can't participate together. They can't commune on a spiritual level. We could put it this way — they have nothing in common when it comes to the most important part of who they are.
- The Christian should be living for God, but the unbeliever will be living for self. They don't understand each other's worlds.
- So, why did Jesus spend so much time with unbelievers? He didn't do it to fellowship with them. He wasn't bearing His soul to them like He often did with the disciples. He was there to reveal to them their need for a relationship with Him.
- The key is, He wasn't fellowshipping with unbelievers, and neither should we. Of course that doesn't mean that we completely ignore them and hide from them. Too many foolish people and false denominations have encourage professing Christians to cloister themselves from the world.
- We need to spend time with unbelievers, but we do so to reach them for Christ, to shine the light of the Gospel into their lives. And then when they are born again, then we can fellowship with them as we sharpen each other and confess our sins to each other and pray for each other and bear one another's burdens and rebuke, exhort, encourage, admonish, and reprove each other. That is fellowship.
- We could put it this way — discipleship is fellowship. We can't disciple unbelievers. We can evangelize them, but we can't fellowship with them.

- We are not to associate with professing believers who blatantly sin.

- Matthew 7:13-23; Proverbs 13:20; II Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10; Matthew 18:15-20
- It's possible that we won't be able to fellowship with that professing believer because they're not actually a believer, but it's also possible we can't fellowship with a genuine believer because — for a time — they are living like an unbeliever.

- Not all division is wrong. Division that God commands — division that is in line with the Scriptures — division that rejects unrighteousness — is expected. But division that refuses to unify with God's will is a sin. Therefore, we are to righteously divide from those who unrighteously divide.
- This is actually really easy as long as we allow God to decide what righteousness and sin are. The moment we take that upon ourselves or trust the government or expect the church to draw their own lines, that's the moment we complicate everything.
- If a professing believer divides from righteousness, we should seek to reunify him through reconciliation. But if he refuses to be reconciled, he's acting like an unbeliever.
- Our unification must be done in His name — His character.
- **We are not to associate with professing believers who advocate false doctrine.**
 - I Timothy 6:3-5; Acts 20:28-30; I John 4:1-6; II John 9-11; Romans 16:17-19; II Timothy 3:1-5; Galatians 1:8-9
 - In God's eyes, there is no one more diabolical and wicked than someone who claims to speak for God, but who deceives people into living an evil lifestyle.
 - In the Matthew 18 passage, before talking about how to find reconciliation with a sinning believer, Jesus says, "*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*"
 - God's people are definitely supposed to divide from false teachers. This is why Jesus spent time with unbelievers who were willing to know Him better and shunned those who claimed to speak for God even though they rejected Him.

V. The Doctrine of Separation

- *Doctrine*
 - These are the commands and clear teachings in Scripture.
 - This requires that we know God's Word. This is so important. Ignorance of the Scriptures is one of the thickest roots of sin.
 - Too many Christians are painfully ignorant when it comes to embracing anyone who makes any kind of claim — veiled or not — that they may possibly believe in God. This is foolish.
 - That person with whom we're unequivocally trying to fellowship may not even be born again. They may believe a false doctrine. They may actually propound that false doctrine and be leading others astray.
 - This is why we must know God's Word and know the individual or group or ministry so we can rightly discern if we can unify with them or if we need to separate from them.
 - Teach your children to immerse themselves in Scripture. Teach them to ask good questions. Teach them to be discerning.
 - But this is where our separation must stop. Nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to separate from people because of differences in the following categories:
- *Convictions*
 - Convictions are personal conclusions to which we have arrived based off principles and illustrations in the Scripture.
 - The biblical principle says "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Yes, that is a command, and yes, we're not allowed to do anything that doesn't glorify God, but this verse does not specifically command how we are glorify God in what we eat or drink.

- A conviction might be that since sugar is damaging to the body, it doesn't glorify God to eat it — especially in excess.
- Based on that personal conviction, I may create a standard that could call for moderation, occasional fasts, or even complete abstinence.
- Consider Exodus 19:10-13
- The Bible illustrates that certain parts of the human anatomy are either uniquely sexual or should be reserved for spouses alone.
- The command is that we be modest, but there are not regulations on hemlines, necklines, or tightness.
- This is where I must exercise my conviction. Let's say that the standard designed to help me keep my conviction is that shorts should be to the knee, clothes shouldn't be skin tight, and shirts should be kept on.
- The Bible commands a general expectation, but God gives us the freedom to determine with the Holy Spirit how I must live in order to glorify God under that expectation.
- *Preferences*
 - We're going to call preferences *assumptions* with no *direct* biblical basis. We see something in Scripture and we assume a logical extrapolation even though there is no direct biblical command or principle.
 - Some people prefer to decorate a baby boy's room in blue and the girl's room in pink. Though the Bible does mention basic differences between the sexes, there is no biblical data to suggest that pink is inherently a feminine color away from which all boys should stay.
 - Not dressing your sons in pink would be a preference with no direct biblical basis.
 - Since God doesn't command that men not wear pink clothes made for men, it would be wrong to separate from some guy who loves the Lord and wears pink.
- *Opinions*
 - These are beliefs with absolutely no biblical basis.
 - There are ditches on both sides of this truth. On one side we may be tempted to embrace anyone and anything even if it runs counter to the Scriptures. On the other side we may be tempted to reject everyone who doesn't live life the way we do. Both of those are sinful.
 - We have to know what God commands. We have to know what the individual believes before we can determine whether or not the Lord would be pleased by us unifying with them.

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