



The Three Minute Discernment Test

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. — Matthew 6:33

There seems to be no end to Christian websites claiming to be a “discernment ministry” who use their “gifting” to tell us what is and isn’t of the Lord. (Actually, I rarely see such sanctifying someone or something as being “good”, the majority of the time seeming to only identify the “bad”.) Setting aside the fact that biblical discernment is not a gift or ministry, but a milestone of maturity in believers who measure all things by the standard of God’s Word, (Php. 1:9-11) I’m going to dismantle the entire discernment industry today by giving away free this three minute discernment test. I’m not kidding. Every single teaching, program, and even entire movement can be absolutely determined without a doubt as biblical or not with just this one, simple verse, which is one of the few which you have most likely already memorized.

Step One: Is it seeking Christ’s kingdom?

Let’s not get “kingdom” confused with “heaven”, because everyone of every ilk claims they’re leading to heaven. We must first and foremost remember that Jesus categorically specified, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” (Jn. 18:36) So right away, anything which advertises benefits for this life must come under immediate biblical scrutiny. The most obvious automatic rejects are all the variations of the Word-Faith or Faith-Prosperity false teachings which in various colorful approaches promise personal enrichment for this life.

Matthew recorded a series of parables Jesus gave concerning the true nature of the kingdom, the highlights of which are:

- It begins with receiving and becoming fruitful by the Word. (The Parable of the Sower—Mt. 13:1-9, 18-23)
- We sell everything in this world in our proper pursuit of the kingdom. (The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and Peral of Great Value—Mt. 13:44-46)

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- It is something not attained in this life, as expressed in both the Parables of the Tares and Dragnet. (Mt. 13:24-30; 47-50)

In other words, it's a life-long commitment to God's Word and ways which is only realized in the life to come.

- When something is not committed to first and foremost sowing and nurturing the seed of the Word of God, we know it is not seeking the kingdom of God.
- When something is trying to get us to invest in or reap benefits from this life, we know it is not seeking the kingdom of God.
- When something is attempting to make the case that "faith" is proven by the blessings of material wealth or personal health, we know it is not seeking the kingdom of God.

There are some other very obvious variations of this, a most prominent one being the whole "Purpose Driven" series by Rick Warren and the associated efforts which can be assigned to the Church-Growth Movement. It is really just kingdom-making according to the works and vision of man where it has nothing to do with seeing souls saved, but making something as big as possible. It is a sad replay of the Tower of Babel in a repackaged form for the 21st century. What is the biblical formula for the Church?

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. — Ephesians 2:19-22*

Do I really have to provide a complete exegesis to confirm that "the foundation" this is speaking of is obviously the teachings of Christ, the apostles and prophets—that is, the whole Word of God? That is why it begins with the Parable of the Sower, but does not end in this life but must be cultivated for, and harvested in, the life to come. Christ's kingdom is **not** of **this** world.

Step Two: Is it seeking Christ's righteousness?

Even if something makes a presentation so as to make it difficult to determine whether or not it is biblically pursuing the kingdom of God, whether or not it is seeking to school its adherents as righteous practitioners of the Word in Christ is always readily apparent.

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This second aspect of our quickie test is the primary thing for which every false teaching attempts to substitute its chosen alternative. But to understand “**His righteousness**”—that is what means to seek being righteous in the footsteps of Jesus, He provided this definition:

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. — John 5:30

The underlying Greek word “*dikaios*” (Strong’s #1342) is rendered in English either as “*righteous*” or, as in this case, “*just*”. How does Jesus explain the working of His righteousness? “***I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.***” And as Paul will further illuminate, it takes a complete and total personal commitment to effect the necessary spiritual commitment to personally discover and put God’s will into practice:

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. — Romans 12:1-2*

Instead of pursuing Christ’s righteousness—the transformation and renewal which comes from a steadfast commitment to personally applying God’s Word, the Purpose Driven folks substitute a commitment to “purpose” so that it becomes all about human effort, human goals, a human institution.

Instead of pursuing Christ’s righteousness, the Emergent Church folks incorporate New Age and Eastern Mysticism, among other things, so that it becomes all about pursuing what satisfies each person’s own will instead of the will of God.

Instead of pursuing Christ’s righteousness, the Signs and Wonders folks seek personal experiences.

Instead of pursuing Christ’s righteousness, the Ecumenical folks seek religion and observances.

Instead of pursuing Christ’s righteousness, Messianic and Sabbatarian movements attempting to implement both Covenants seek Jewishness and Legalism.

Instead of pursuing Christ's righteousness, obsessed prophecy watchers believe their obsession with the prophetic portions of God's Word exempts them from paying attention to the rest in not just their personal lives, but their so-called "ministry".

Instead of pursuing Christ's righteousness, the discernment industry attempts to hold everyone else accountable to their own standard of righteousness.

The list can go on and on, of course, but let's bring it down to the local level where we all live, because this is the test of whether or not our local church or fellowship is doing its job. Is our church attempting to disciple and immerse us in the righteousness of Christ, or is it otherwise engaged? The desire to increase a congregation's size or to implement programs is not intrinsically bad in itself, but when it abandons the core goal of pursuing the righteousness of Christ? There are many things which are offered in churches these days, but only those who are committed to the priority of instilling and championing the righteousness of Christ are going to be commended in the end, "*Well done, good and faithful slave*". (Mt. 25:21, 23)

But It's Really A Mutual Pursuit

In reality, however, this is not an either/or test; both of these pursuits are not just mutually present, but are presented as having a symbiotic relationship in Scripture:

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for **as long as you practice these things**, you will never stumble; for in this way **the entrance into the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*
— 2 Peter 1:10-11

You are not going to find something which authentically seeks the kingdom of God without simultaneously sincerely pursuing His righteousness, and likewise vice versa. Peter provides in the verses leading up to this a wonderful teaching that provides a kind of spiritual roadmap of pursuing the righteousness of Christ, and what we should expect to find where it is authentically sought as the ultimate "*entrance into the eternal kingdom*":

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in

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your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. — 2 Peter 1:4-9

All the false things mentioned previously, their many variants, and the all too many which would take far too long to list here, provide substitutes so that their adherents **will** forget “his purification from his former sins”. Our pursuit of His righteousness is always made in the full knowledge of what we are fleeing from, our old nature once crucified in Christ and now daily abandoned in the pursuit of His Word and ways. Along the way such not only changes us, but notice at the end of Peter’s list it changes the way we treat others. The transformation and renewal Paul speaks of is not limited to how it changes us internally, but becomes outwardly visible in our behavior towards others.

Consider the Opposite Pursuit

But consider a few of the scriptural statements which are provided to categorically document what will occur in the case of pursuing anything less which actually produces **un**righteousness:

*Or do you not know that **the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. — 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

*Now **the deeds of the flesh** are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** — Galatians 5:19-21*

*For this you know with certainty, that **no immoral or impure person** or covetous man, who is an idolater, **has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** — Ephesians 5:5*

Christians have a huge hurdle to face when it comes to the modern shift of communication to the various offerings leveraging the platform of the Internet. The problem is not simply evaluating whether a teaching or website is biblically sound or not, the fact is that the majority of what is posted on websites, blogs, social media and in the endless supply of videos is not even teaching, biblical or otherwise. It's an exposure of the quality of their Christianity. The pursuit of "*His kingdom and His righteousness*" is a mutual effort which cannot be extricated from the application of God's Word, and yet so much of what is posted falls short of either. It's not just that the Internet has given a lot of attention to false teachings and even false movements, but even more so it broadcasts how few pursue or foster righteousness, much less champion it.

But in the meantime, we have a very simple process of evaluation which requires neither expert assistance nor anyone else's opinion to provide personal assurance of what is and is not biblical. And for better or worse, it is also the same standard by which we can perform a self-diagnostic as to the state of our own pursuit of Christ and that of our local fellowship. When the primary focus is not on seeking "*His kingdom and His righteousness*", it means that we are seeking something else. And "something else" **always** leads to "you know where".

*"Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied. — Matthew 5:6*

*"Listen to me, you who **pursue righteousness**
Who seek the LORD:
Look to the rock from which you were hewn
And to the quarry from which you were dug. — Isaiah 51:1*

*The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
But He loves one who **pursues righteousness**. — Proverbs
15:9*

*But flee from these things, you man of God, and **pursue righteousness**, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. — 1 Timothy 6:11*

In Him,

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