

1. For the next couple of weeks, we are going to be taking about a subject in the bible that is meant to bring us great advantages in living our life for the Lord.
2. It is meant to help make navigating this world and this life much more manageable.
3. I don't know about you, but I am for anything that will help make living life less difficult.
4. The notes are on our website batesvillefirst.org.
5. The subject we will discuss is the subject of **discernment**.
6. I honestly don't remember who said it. I know it was an evangelist.
7. Neither do I remember how long ago it has been since I heard this statement. But what I do remember vividly is the statement itself.
8. In the last days, one of the most valuable spiritual gifts to seek the Lord for will be the gift of discernment.
9. The last days of the earth, which I believe we are truly living in, will be so confusing and deceptive that it will be highly necessary to seek the Lord for the wisdom to navigate this crazy world.
10. In just a moment we will unpack more fully what the word discernment means, but for now let's focus on the word wisdom.

TEXT: **1 Corinthians 1:25-31** For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. **26** Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28** God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, **29** so that no one may boast before him. **30** It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. **31** Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

TITLE: **Discernment – elevating our standing**

INTRO:

1. One of the definitions of the word standing is “not movable”.

2. Discernment is a wonderful gift from the Lord that is meant to establish us and give us a strong footing. To help us be firm or strong in our faith and in our walk with the Lord.
3. In verse 26 Paul says to the Corinthians, think of what you were before you were called, or met Jesus as savior.
4. You were not wise. You lacked understanding.
5. You were not influential. People didn't pay attention to you.
6. You were not of noble birth. Your position in the world was lowly.
7. But God chose you, the foolish things of the world to shame the world. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
8. God chose the lowly things and the despised things and the things that are not, to nullify or to cancel out those things that are.
9. So, Paul wants the Corinthians to know that God's desire is to elevate them and their standing or place in the world.
10. But notice with me how that elevation or lifting takes place.
11. 1 Corinthians 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.
12. We are elevated or lifted up, when through Jesus Christ, or in Jesus Christ we allow Him to be our wisdom.
13. We allow Him to be the brains of the operation.
14. We allow Him to be the head, the leader and the director of our lives.
15. And one aspect of that wisdom is the God given ability to be able to discern what lies before us.
16. I want to give you several definitions of the word discernment, and I am borrowing them from a book titled "Pursuing God's will Together by Ruth Haley Barton.
17. Discernment, in a most general sense, is the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God – both in the ordinary moment and in the larger decisions of our lives.
18. Discernment literally means to separate, to discriminate, to determine, to decide or to distinguish between two things.

19. Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish or discriminate between good (that which is of God and draws us closer to God) and evil (that which is not of God and draws us away from God).
20. It is our commitment to discerning and doing the will of God through the help of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes believers in Jesus Christ from non-believers.
21. After salvation. After accepting Jesus as our savior, the very foundation of our lives. That which guides and directs our path toward heaven has to be seeking to know and do the will of God.
22. And if the driving force in our lives is not to seek to know and do the will of god, then the question needs to be asked. What are we doing?
23. Are we doing our own will? Are we living according to what seems best to us according to our own thinking and planning?
24. Are we doing that which makes us feel better or that feeds our ego?
25. Here is the problem with that kind of lifestyle. Paul established in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 1 that we as human beings are extremely deficient or lacking in wisdom.
26. Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.
27. If we will be 100% honest with ourselves each and every one of us would admit that on a regular basis, we make decisions or we do things that in the moment we think are right, only to find out later that wasn't the wisest choice.
28. We are well intentioned. We want to do what is right. But we are blinded at times to what is good and right.
29. And so, because of that lack in our lives, we need a wisdom that is entirely different and superior to human wisdom.
30. We need a wisdom that can only come from the creator of the universe and everything in it.
31. And the wonderful news is that kind of wisdom is available to us if we will open ourselves up to it.

32. 1 Corinthians 2:6-12 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"-- the things God has prepared for those who love him-- 10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

33. Paul again makes a very clear distinction. That distinction is between human or worldly wisdom, and heavenly or Godly wisdom.

34. Tapping into the wisdom of God requires us to move beyond our reliance on human thinking and planning, and into the place where we seek to deeply hear and know and respond to the Spirit of God that longs to lead and direct us.

35. Notice that I did not say tapping into the wisdom of God means throwing out the window all thinking and reasoning on our part.

36. The ability to think things through and apply reason to our decisions is a gift from the Lord.

37. Seeking discernment and Godly wisdom does not mean shutting your brain down and blindly accepting everything that comes along.

38. However, the bible is clear that human wisdom and the wisdom of God are not the same thing.

39. Part of becoming more discerning is the ability to distinguish between the two.

40. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 It is because of him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

41. In essence what we are talking about is learning how to see all over again.

42. I know I have shared before the first time I was fitted for a pair of glasses.

43. I was about 15-16. I was having trouble seeing the chalk board at school, and so I went and had my eyes checked.
44. Of course, I needed glasses.
45. About a week later when I went back to pick them up, it was like a whole new world had been opened to me.
46. 2 things jumped out at me. For the first time in memory, age of 16, I could see leaves on the trees.
47. I knew trees had leaves, but I couldn't see them. When I looked at trees all I saw was a glob of green.
48. The other thing I distinctly remember is discovering that stop signs have a white line that outlines the sign.
49. Keep in mind I was driving. I had been withing 15-20 feet of hundreds of stop signs, and I had never seen that white line.
50. It actually startled me. I thought I had been seeing clearly, but in fact I had not been seeing clearly at all.
51. One of the miracles that Jesus performed over and over while he was on earth was the healing of blind people.
52. Probably the reason this particular miracle was so common has to do with the fact that physical blindness is an illustration of spiritual blindness.
53. Moving from not seeing to seeing.
54. The spiritual journey can be understood as the movement from seeing God nowhere, or seeing God only where we expect to see him, to seeing God everywhere, especially where we least expect him.
55. Discernment then is an ever-increasing capacity to see or discern the works of God in the middle of our human situation so we can align ourselves with whatever God is trying to accomplish.
56. And the reality is that discernment is not reserved for a select few. God offers all of us the hope and the hunger to see Him at work in our lives.
57. I believe God's desire in the remainder of this message is to feed your longing and desire to be elevated in your living this life through the wonderful blessing of discernment.
58. So, let's look at some truth about discernment.

Every Christian is called to discernment.

1. Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.
2. Every time I read these verses, I am humbled by how God desires to relate to us.
3. God is God, and I am not.
4. He is great, and I am not.
5. He is all powerful. All knowing. All seeing. All understanding, and I am not.
6. But yet we are reminded in verse 2 that God's desire is to let us in on what he is doing.
7. It is not his desire to keep us perpetually in the dark and clueless. He is a loving God who longs to open up to us and reveal himself to us.
8. And that includes his will. What he desires. What his plans are.
9. There was a saying we learned when we lived in Africa many years ago that still rings true.
10. **Information is power.** Some people hold on to information, even information others need to know.
11. They will intentionally keep people in the dark about what they are up to, because as long as they know something the other person doesn't, then they feel powerful.
12. It's true. Information is power. But God in his loving way. Full of all power, doesn't use information as a control mechanism to keep us in line.
13. He doesn't use information as a way to manipulate us or dominate over us.
14. Our God loves to be open with us and open up to us.
15. However, there is also another reality I see in Romans 12:2. Generally God doesn't just lay it all out there for us at once. Seeing and discerning the will of God is a process.
16. **Romans 12:2 Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)**

17. Romans 12:2 Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (NLT)
18. Discernment is a learned ability. And we learn by trusting in the Lord step by step.
19. Often times what I really want is for God to show me everything up front. Just lay it all out there for me God.
20. What I want is to know it all for myself so I can make sense of it all before I obey.
21. But that kind of life is not a life of faith in Jesus Christ. That kind of life is faith in me.
22. So, discernment is a process that builds our faith in Jesus Christ and his ways.
23. Discernment is also a process of surrender. Romans 12:1
Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.
24. Prior to learning and testing what the perfect will of god is, Paul urges us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. To lay our lives down and give that life to Jesus.
25. Both the building of our faith and the sacrificing of our bodies to the Lord are elements of relationship.
26. It is through our giving ourselves to the Lord that he gives himself to us, as it relates to discerning his will.
27. Relationship is mutual giving.
28. On the other hand, when one party always gives and the other just takes, we call that a dysfunctional, abusive, taking advantage of type of relationship.
29. We are called to share our lives with Christ because he wants to share his life and will with us.
30. Secondly...

Discernment is a sign of spiritual maturity.

1. 1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2. John reminds us that we are not expected to be sitting ducks in a world out to destroy us. We are offered the opportunity to discern what is good and what is evil so we will not be led astray.
3. In the book of Ephesians Paul is describing the roles of different leaders in the church. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
4. And the role of those leaders is to equip the church, to equip the people so that... **Ephesians 4:14-15** Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.
5. The opposite of maturity is being an infant. And even though we all start this walk with the Lord as baby Christians, God's desire is that we grow to a place of maturity.
6. And what is a sign or signal of that maturity? When we are no longer tossed back and forth, blown here and there and everywhere by every false teaching and evil scheming.
7. That is a wonderful description of discernment.
8. It is a sign of maturity, when with the help of the Holy Spirit, we develop a level of trust in the Lord where he can reveal to us what is good for us and what is not good for us.
9. What will lead us to good fruit, and what will produce bad fruit in our lives.
10. If we go all the way back to our title this morning, a sign of spiritual maturity is our standing.
11. Remember our definition for the word standing here is not moveable. **Through discernment and the help of the Holy Spirit, God longs to elevate our standing so we can grow to a place of maturity.**

Conclusion:

1. As I was preparing this message, I was reminded of the nickname given to my home pastor during my teen years.
2. His name is Ed Shirrell. He is a great man who has had a powerful influence on my life.

3. His nickname growing up was steady Eddie. Pastor Ed was almost always steady.
4. Constant, solid, relentless, stable, calm, dependable. That was him. I admired it about him then and I admire it about him now.
5. And those are great qualities the Lord longs to give us and build into our lives.
6. While the rest of the world is caught in a never-ending whirlwind, His desire for us his people is that we be steady. Secure. Sane. Sensible.
7. Oh, how I need that in my life and oh how our world needs that. Those are wonderful gifts the Lord gives us as we surrender our lives to Him and then seek the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to what is real and true, and what God is up to.
8. I'd like to be known as steady Jeff. How about you? Steady John. Steady Jim. Steady James.
9. It begins with surrender.
10. Salvation call.
11. Are there some areas you need to surrender to Jesus?
12. Are there some areas where you need discernment? You need to see more clearly?
13. Ask him right now. Ask him by faith that he wants to give it to you.