

# *Don't Swallow Those Bones!*

*Exercising Discernment as You Study  
Missions*

# Three preliminary questions...

- ⦿ How should we approach the written works of non-fundamentalists?
- ⦿ How can we be teachable without being gullible?
- ⦿ How can we obtain instruction without infection?

# The Importance of Spiritual Discernment

- The threat of false teachers and teaching demands vigilant discernment, 1 Ths 5:21-22; cf. 1 John 4:1-6; 1 Tim 4:1-5; Eph 4:14.
- The challenge of maintaining a pure and unified church demands careful discernment, 1 Cor 5:12-13; 6:5.
- The need to apply the Scriptures to changing life situations demands disciplined discernment, Eph 5:10; John 5:24; Heb 5:14.
- The task of forming solid Christian character and testimony demands growing discernment, Phil 1:9-10.

A careless mindset has tragic consequences for doctrinal purity, church health, spiritual growth and Christlike character.

# The Character of Discernment

- ◎ Discernment makes proper distinctions between options, Heb 5:14; cf. Acts 15:19.
- ◎ Discernment evaluates evidence or circumstances and draws proper conclusions, Matt 16:2-3; 1 Cor 11:29, 31; Pro 22:3; 24:30-34.
- ◎ Discernment perceives the proper significance or application of wisdom, Pro 1:2; Eph 5:10.

# The Development of Discernment: Spiritual Foundations

- The natural man has serious problems with discernment, 1 Cor 2:14
- The spiritual man has been granted discernment, 1 Cor 2:15-16, cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27
- The fleshly believer is limited in his ability to discern, 1 Cor 3:1-3, cf. Heb 5:11-14

# The Development of Discernment: Spiritual Responsibilities

- A Strong Desire Expressed in Prayer, Pro 2:3-6; 1 Kings 3:9
- Continual Bible Reading and Study, 2 Tim 3:15-17
- Active Participation in the Local Church, 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Ths 5:12; Rom 15:14; Heb 3:13
- Practice, Practice, Practice! Heb 5:14

# The Practice of Discernment

- Understand and Apply the Inoculation Principle
  1. The Strength of the Donor
  2. The Strength of the Dosage
  3. The Strength of the Recipient

# The Practice of Discernment

- Bring Every Thought Captive to Christ, 2 Cor 10:5
  1. Slow Down and Kick Your Mind into Gear, Pro 14:15
  2. Precisely Define the Issue or Idea, Pro 18:13
  3. Measure It by the Scriptures, 2 Tim 3:15-17

# Think of Three Boxes

- Biblical
- Unbiblical
- Non-biblical

In which “box” does this idea belong?

# Three Clarifying Questions

- Is this clearly taught either *explicitly* or by necessary and legitimate *implication*?
- Is this *contradictory* to the proper understanding of any biblical texts or truths?
- Is this *consistent* with the teachings of Scripture?

# The Practice of Discernment

- Be A Fruit-Inspector, Matt 7:20; 11:19; Pro 22:3
  1. A Clarification—this is not pragmatism!
  2. The Principle: Ideas have Consequences

# The Practice of Discernment

- Establish A No-Spin Zone, 1 John 2:21
  1. Is this argument valid?
  2. Is this argument true?

# Final Exhortations

- ◎ Be a learner, but remember that there is only one infallible source!
- ◎ Develop the good habit of discernment without caving in to the bad habit of a critical spirit!
- ◎ Keep the big picture in perspective—don't be a one note band or blindly follow any Pied Pipers.