



Lighthouse of Iowa

Keeping in touch with Iowa's Churches of Christ

December 2017

On Spiritual Discernment

Romans 13 & 14

The word “discern,” as defined by Merriam-Webster online, is to grasp, comprehend, or perceive. Biblically the word “discern” or “discernment” is used to communicate many different meanings and has some slight differences. Some of the meanings include: distinguish, separate, examine, scrutinize, question, perceive, understand, determine, decide, judge, know, test, and prove. In general, to discern means to decide, or judge, between right and wrong, good and evil.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments we are instructed by various writers, prophets, and apostles to discern. So how do we go about discerning? Well, it seems pretty simple. Just “decide between right and wrong” then do the right thing. However, it’s not always that obvious. “Black and white” situations are not difficult to discern (i.e. murder, adultery, stealing). I most often need discernment when the situation is gray. Sometimes finding clarity, even in scripture, is difficult. Paul, for example, tells the believers in Rome to “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.” Then Paul immediately follows his apostolic command with a reason: “*For there is no authority except from God...*,” and adds “*...whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement*” (Rom. 13:1-2, ESV).

Ok. Got it. Simple. Incurring judgement doesn’t sound all that great so we decide to submit ourselves to the governing authorities. This discernment thing doesn’t really seem all that difficult. Paul says to submit to civil authorities, so we should submit. No. Unfortunately, it’s not always that black and white. There’s more to it than just following a command. Sometimes we need to examine the situation. We need to look at the context of the issue at hand. In this case, “*If the governing authorities command us to do something God forbids, or forbids us to do something God commands, we must disobey those in authority*” (R.S. Bible, p. 2004, theological note “Civil Government”).

So, what Paul tells us in Romans is not a command that we need to follow? Or is Paul telling the Roman Christians (and us) that his Apostolic command is conditional? If it is, then how do I know when to submit to civil authority and when to disobey civil authority? And how do I know which of God’s commands are conditional? Are God’s commands conditional?

Even the Apostle Paul didn’t really have definitive black and white answers (that removed all doubt) for the Roman Christians when it came to eating meat and vegetables, or for those who wanted to celebrate special days and those who didn’t, and what to do about these types of situations. He did

write about it. Paul wrote a whole chapter (Romans 14) on how to think and act in difficult, unclear, or confusing situations.

The difficulty in situations like the one Paul speaks to in Romans is not about unclear instructions but about how Christians perceive situations and perceive God’s expectations. Paul isn’t giving us a simple “if A then B” answer. What Paul is showing us is how to think. He is showing us how a spiritually mature believer should process information. Paul gives us guidelines and principles to apply in any situation. Our perception of the lives of other believers should be soaked in the “*righteousness, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 14:17) and tempered with “*what makes for peace and mutual edification*.” (Rom. 14:19). Paul paints a picture that illustrates what Christian maturity and spiritual growth look like. He shows us where to begin when we find ourselves in need of a little discernment.

Paul asks “*Who are you to pass judgement on the servant of another? It is before his own master he stands or falls*” (Rom. 14:4). He then informs his readers that a believer “*should be fully convinced in his own mind*” (Rom. 14:5) because if a Christian’s actions are to honor the Lord and give thanks to God, then whether he lives or dies he is the Lord’s (Rom. 14:7, 8). Paul then brings us to the judgement seat and says “*each of us will give an account of himself to God*.” (Rom. 14:12). Simply put, Paul has given the Roman Christians (and us) a place to begin, a discernment filter, an example of how we need to scrutinize, test, examine, judge, perceive, decide, etc.

Let’s go a little deeper. Although we’ve only scratched the surface of how to discern, let’s take a look at why discernment is important and how we can get better at it. I think the Apostle Peter clearly answers the why and how when he writes “*...he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ...be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.*” There it is. “*...for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.*” How? Practice. Why? So you will never fall.

Dave Henderson – Martensdale Church of Christ

Chariton

Meeting times: Sundays: 10:00 a.m. (no evening services)
Location: 15th & Roland, Chariton, Iowa
For information call: Albert Schreck (641) 535-2381 or Brian Schreck (641) 535-2931

- Evelyn Bennett was ill with a cold for several days.
- Delores VanEgdom wasn't feeling well so they took her off of her blood thinner.
- Travis and Jenika Schreck attended services with us on Nov. 19.

December Birthdays

- ★ Albert Schreck
- ★ Brian Schreck

December Anniversaries

- None
-

Dean Avenue

Meeting times: Sundays: 9:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. ♦ Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m.
Location: 2907 Dean Ave., Des Moines, Iowa
For information call: John McNeece (515) 263-9428

- Wade Stanley was here for our fall meeting. He presented many thought provoking lessons to us. **Many thanks to the surrounding congregations who supported this meeting.**
- Tom and Diane Collier from the Martensdale congregation met with us, and Tom gave us a good lesson on "The Pursuit of Glory".
- Shawn Head attended an International Fair Conference in Nevada.
- **Earl Allen had outpatient testing, and it was determined he has cancer cells in his right kidney.** He will have surgery to remove the right kidney and ureter in a few weeks. Please pray for Earl as he awaits surgery.

- Karma Sharp has a fractured tibia and needs to keep weight off it for six weeks.
- **Visitors:** Tom Warren, Bill, Bryan, Max and Tally Charlier, Piper Thatcher, Camdyn Quijano, Chloe Prenosil, Aiden and Paxon Boozell, Tisha Wells, Orabelle Conway and Lucille Warren.

December Birthdays

- ★ 18 Yvonne Coe
- ★ 18 Travis Head
- ★ 28 Risa Schamel

December Anniversaries

- None
-

Fairview

Meeting times: Sundays: 10:00 a.m. ♦ Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m.
Location: 1001 S. 22nd St, Clarinda, Iowa 51632
For information call: Richard Negley (712)542-3728 or Marvin Negley (712)542-2792

- We were fortunate this month to have **Dave Wahl with us from Indiana** and he presented us with (2) very good exhortations.
- Among our visitors this past month were
 - Manami Murakamiharaguchi & Sakai & Kyazuyo Yoichers from Japan,

- Paul Negley & family coming especially for **Marvin Negley's surprise 80th birthday.**

December Birthdays

- None

December Anniversaries

- None

Martensdale

Meeting Times: Sundays: 10:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. ♦ Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m.

Location: 10985 44th Lane, Prole, Iowa (1.5 miles east of Martensdale, Iowa on Hwy. 92)

For information call: Duane Proudfit (515) 961-4470 or Mike Penick (515) 681-0279

- Tiffany Parker and Tanner George worshiped with the Excelsior Springs congregation while visiting family in that area.
- Kirk and Bethany Ford spent a week visiting with Dave and Christy Henderson.
- Stephanie Stephens and her children attended services while visiting Mike and Tracy Penick.
- Leta Fenton and Jordan Bown worshiped with us while visiting Allen and Teresa Bown.
- Drew and Courtney Teghtmeyer traveled to the Kansas City area to visit family.
- Tracy Penick traveled to Clear Water, Florida, for business.

- Steve and Cerine Proudfit and their girls attended services while visiting Duane and Mary Proudfit over the Thanksgiving holiday.
- Tom and Dianne Collier, Dick and Phyllis Bown and Pam Deckler all traveled for the Thanksgiving holiday.

December Birthdays

- ★ 10 - Mary Proudfit ★ 12 - Teresa Bown
- ★ 29 - Drew Teghtmeyer ★ 30 - Hannah Hounsom

December Anniversaries

- None

Pleasant Hill

Meeting Times: Sundays: 9:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. ♦ Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m.

Location: 5091 E. University, Pleasant Hill, Iowa

Website: pleasanthillchurchofchrist.org

For information call: Bob Flack (515) 262-7329, Lowell Hermon (515) 989-0727, Mike Warner (515) 967-4529.

- **Beginning Dec 3rd thru Feb 25th we will have potluck and afternoon services starting at 1:00.**
- **Elle Jane Goltra was born Nov. 20 to Bob and Erica (Price) Goltra. She weighed 8 lbs. 4 oz and 21 ½ inches long.** Grandparents are Keith and

Connie Price. Keith and Connie went to get to know their new granddaughter.

- Allison George has spoken at Golf conferences this fall. She has traveled to Boston, Indianapolis & Ottawa, Canada. She will be going soon to

Michigan and San Diego. Kelly will be joining her for San Diego.

- Scott and Julene Pappan went to Washington to help Scott's dad celebrate his 80th birthday.
- Nora Lee Ingle was one of the speakers at the Ladies Meeting on Nov 4th. She stayed and visited with Cindy Morris and family.
- **Fifty-nine of the 79 members of the Vern and Nora Lee Ingle family** gathered for Friday night pizza party and/or Saturday at the Marc and Ginger Hermon home for Thanksgiving get together. Those present were family members of Dave/Joyce Ingle, Suzanne/Bruce Harvey and
- Alex and Ryane Needham were visiting in Florida and visiting some that were sick.
- Don Burkman was not feeling well.
- Shirley Warner has had the flu.
- Kathy King fell and has some bruises.

- Tom and Fred Brady made it safely to Florida for a couple of weeks.
- Mark/Cindy Morris. Family came from Missouri and Ill.
- Dave and Joyce Ingle spent Thanksgiving Day with her dad and brother in Missouri.
- Ryan and Jamie Ingle spent Thanksgiving Day with Jamie's family in Missouri.
- Mark and Cindy Morris stayed and attended church on Sunday.
- Chip Albright spent the week-end with Chips family.

December Birthdays

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ★ 4 Steve Brady | ★ 7 Gabriel Hermon |
| ★ 18 Jason Brady | ★ 18 Paul Zinnel |
| ★ 23 Dominique Blackman | ★ 29 William Conner |

December Anniversaries

- ★ 30 Susan and Nick Conner

Vandalia

Meeting Times: Sundays: 9:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. ♦ Wednesdays: 7:30 p.m.
Location: 2.5 miles east of Runnells, Iowa on F70, then 1 mile north on 131st St.
Website: vandaliacoc.com
For information call: Greg Ingle (515) 994-2824 or Charles Ingle (515) 966-2537

- **We sang with the residents at Altoona Nursing & Rehab Center on a recent Sunday evening.**
- Margaret Ingle had out-patient surgery and is doing well.
- Matt Clark had a bout with pneumonia recently and doing fine now.
- A birthday party was given for one-year old twins, Adeline and Alexander Dowdy.
- Trent and Leah Fiorentin attended the meeting in Brookfield, MO.
- Jason and Staci Miller and children visited family in Carrollton, MO.

- Jason and Mariah Henle spent a few days in Branson, MO.
- Among our visitors were: Valerie Burkman, Roy Wendt, Travis Hurst, Matt and Dawn Mikus and children, and Ryan and Jamie Ingle and children.

December Birthdays

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| ★ 2 Bonnie Harkins | ★ 3 Kelsey Fiorentin |
| ★ 3 Carson Dowdy | ★ 27 Melody Burkman |
| ★ 27 Jason Henle | |

December Anniversaries

- ★ 12 Robert & Sharon Cummings

Something my mother copied and saved years ago. I don't know the original source.

— Charles Fry, Church of Christ Evangelist, Bakersfield, California.

How to Test for Right and Wrong

The Bible is a book of principles, so it does not always tell us exactly what thing we may or may not do. Some matters must be determined by thoughtful application of Biblical principles. The following tests for right and wrong are suggested for those who are honestly trying to live righteous lives.

1. DOUBT: If there is doubt in one's mind regarding a thing, **it should be left undone**.
"He that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not out of faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:23.
2. PUBLICITY: If one would not want what he does to be made known in public, **it should be left undone**.
"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14.
3. ASSOCIATION: If what one does is associated with what is known to be wrong, **it should be left undone**.
"Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22
4. INFLUENCE: If what one does might create the wrong impression upon someone else, **it should be left undone**.
Therefore, if meat makes my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." 1 Corinthians 8:13
5. EXPEDIENCY: If a thing which may otherwise be alright is questionable at certain times and under certain circumstances, **it should be left undone** when not expedient.
"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient." 1 Corinthians 10:23
6. FORETHOUGHT: If a thing may ultimately lead downward instead of upward, **it should be left undone**.
"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:21

If these things are conscientiously applied, there should be few questions regarding any act or conduct. In most matters of a moral or recreational nature, earnestness, intellectual honesty, and common sense will solve the problem.

These principles are generally sound, if indeed one's goal is to live a clean and righteous life.



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