

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

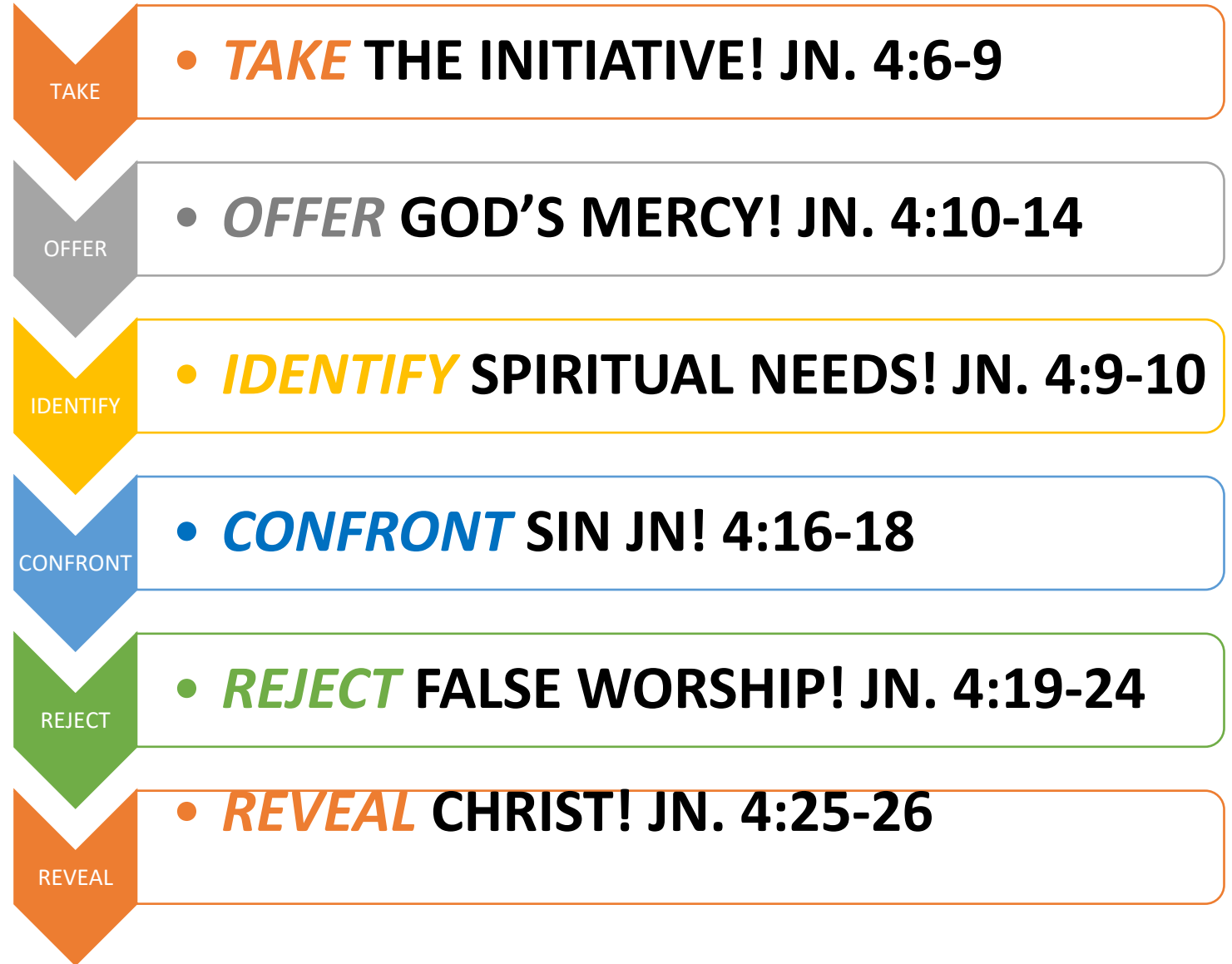




THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”



I. ALL THAT **GLITTERS** IS NOT **GOLD**.

II. THE VALUE OF **DISCRIMINATION**

- **JUDGE** EVERYTHING.
- **CLING** TO WHAT IS GOOD.
- **SHUN** WHAT IS **EVIL**.

III. OUR DUTY TO **DISCERN**.

- **DISCERNMENT** DEMANDS **HUMILITY**.
- THE **SOURCE** AND **SUPPLY** OF ALL **DISCERNMENT**.



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- THE DEADLY DANGERS OF PASSIVE DISCERNMENT.
 - *FOLLOWING* THE FAITHFUL.

SPIRIT-POWERED DISCERNMENT.

- TRUE DISCERNMENT IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT DIVINE POWER. We need the true Discerner—*THE HOLY SPIRIT*—to lead us into all truth (**JN. 16:13**).
- We cannot fully understand what God is saying to us in His Word without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. (**1 COR. 2:11**) says, ***“THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.”***
- **PAUL** goes on to write,
“NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD, WHICH THINGS WE ALSO SPEAK, NOT IN WORDS TAUGHT BY HUMAN WISDOM, BUT IN THOSE TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT, COMBINING SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS WITH SPIRITUAL WORDS...”

VERSE 14, BUT A NATURAL MAN DOES NOT ACCEPT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, FOR THEY ARE FOOLISHNESS TO HIM; AND HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY APPRAISED. BUT HE WHO IS SPIRITUAL APPRAISES (JUDGES) ALL THINGS, YET HE HIMSELF IS APPRAISED BY NO ONE.
(1 COR. 2:12-15).

- **DISCERNMENT ULTIMATELY DEPENDS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.** As we are filled with and controlled by the Spirit of God, **HE MAKES US DISCERNING**. He leads us into all truth by granting us hunger for God's Word and the ability to discern its true meaning—something the **"NATURAL MAN"** is incapable of doing (**1 COR. 2:14**).
- **THE ILLUMINATION OF SCRIPTURE THROUGH THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITY OF ALL DISCERNMENT.**

- **AND *TRUE DISCERNMENT* REQUIRES DILIGENT STUDY OF GOD'S WORD**. Every other tool of discernment is contingent on this reality. No one can be truly discerning apart from mastery of the Word of God. All the desire in the world cannot make you discerning if you don't study Scripture.
- ***PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT* IS *NOT* ENOUGH. *Obedience* alone will not suffice. *Good role models* won't do it either.**

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BE *DISCERNING*, YOU MUST DILIGENTLY STUDY THE WORD OF GOD.

GOD'S WORD IS WHERE YOU WILL LEARN THE PRINCIPLES FOR *DISCERNMENT*. IT IS THERE YOU WILL LEARN THE TRUTH. ONLY THERE CAN YOU FOLLOW THE PATH OF *MATURITY*.

- **DISCERNMENT** flourishes only in an environment of **FAITHFUL BIBLE STUDY** and **TEACHING**. Note that in **ACTS 20**, when **PAUL** was leaving the Ephesian elders, he warned them about the deadly influences that would threaten them in his absence (**ACTS 20:28-31**). He urged them to be on guard and on the alert. How?
- What **SAFEGUARD** could he leave to help protect them from Satan's onslaughts? Only the **WORD OF GOD**: **"AND NOW I COMMEND YOU TO GOD AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP AND TO GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED"** (**ACTS 20:32**).
- Consider also (**2 TIM. 2:15**): **"BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT YOURSELF APPROVED TO GOD AS A WORKMAN WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED, ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH."**

- Notice what this mandate to ***TIMOTHY*** implies.
- First, it suggests that the discerning person must be able to distinguish between the ***WORD OF TRUTH*** and the ***“IRREVERENT BABBLE”*** (ESV) mentioned in **VERSE 16**. That may seem rather obvious, but it cannot be taken for granted. The task of separating God’s Word from human foolishness actually poses a formidable challenge for many today.
- One look at some of the nonsense that proliferates in churches and Christian media will confirm that this is so. Or note the burgeoning stacks of “Christian” books touting unbiblical views. We must shun such folly and devote ourselves to the Word of God.

WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TRUTH AND ERROR.

- **How? “*BE DILIGENT.*”** Being diligent pictures, a worker giving maximum effort in his or her work. It describes someone driven by a commitment to excellence—“*BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT YOURSELF APPROVED TO GOD.*” The Greek phrase literally speaks of *STANDING ALONGSIDE GOD AS A CO-LABORER WORTHY OF IDENTIFYING WITH HIM.*
- Furthermore, **PAUL** says this approved workman “*DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED.*” The word “*ASHAMED*” is very important to Paul’s whole point. Any sloppy workman should be ashamed of low-quality work. But a servant of the Lord, handling the Word of truth carelessly, has infinitely greater reason to be ashamed.
- What **PAUL** suggests in this passage is that:
WE WILL BE ASHAMED BEFORE GOD HIMSELF *IF WE FAIL TO HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH WITH **DISCERNMENT.***

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- If we can't distinguish the truth from worldly and empty chatter, if we can't identify and refute false teachers, or if we can't handle God's truth with skill and understanding, ***WE OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED.***

AND IF WE ARE TO DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH RIGHTLY, THEN WE MUST BE VERY DILIGENT ABOUT STUDYING IT.

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- ***THERE IS NO SHORTCUT.*** Only as we master the Word of God, being led by His indwelling Spirit, are we made ***“ADEQUATE, EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK”*** (2 TIM. 3:17). ***THAT IS THE ESSENCE OF DISCERNMENT.***

GROWING IN DISCERNMENT.

- ***HOW DO YOU MEASURE MATURITY?*** It is not a function of how old you are—society is dominated by multiple generations of immature adults who refuse to act their age. Maturity is tested by time, but it's not a question of how long a person has lived. Rather, ***IT'S DETERMINED BY HOW WISELY HE OR SHE LIVES.***
- The same is true in the ***SPIRITUAL REALM***. It doesn't matter how long a person has sat under the teaching of God's Word if his life is still dominated by fickle ***EMOTIONALISM, FOOLISH WORLDLINESS,*** and ***SHALLOW SPIRITUALITY.***
EXPOSURE TO THE WORD ALONE WON'T MAKE US MATURE CHRISTIANS—WE MUST BE FAITHFUL AND DISCIPLINED TO PUT IT TO WORK IN OUR LIVES.

- *PUT SIMPLY, **SPIRITUAL MATURITY** IS THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TO DISCERN*. In fact, the path to real discernment is the path to spiritual growth—and vice versa. ***GROWTH IN GRACE IS AN ONGOING PROCESS THROUGHOUT THIS EARTHLY LIFE***. No Christian ever reaches complete maturity this side of heaven: ***“NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR DIMLY, BUT THEN FACE TO FACE; NOW I KNOW IN PART, BUT THEN I WILL KNOW FULLY JUST AS I ALSO HAVE BEEN FULLY KNOWN” (1 COR. 13:12)***.
- We must continually ***“GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST” (2 PET. 3:18)***. We should hunger ***“FOR THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD, SO THAT BY IT [WE] MAY GROW” (1 PET. 2:2)***.
- As we mature, our senses are exercised to discern good and evil (**HEB. 5:14**). As we cease to be children, we gain stability (**EPH. 4:14-15**).

MATURE PEOPLE ARE DISCERNING PEOPLE.

- ***WE KNOW THIS FROM THE NATURAL WORLD.*** The bulk of every parent's responsibility is training children to be discerning. We continually do it, even when our kid's become teenagers. We help them **think** through issues, **understand** what is wise and unwise, and **prompt** them to make the right choices. ***WE HELP THEM DISCERN.*** In fact, the goal of parenting is to raise a **discerning child**. It doesn't happen automatically, and it doesn't occur without diligent, lifelong instruction.
- ***THE SAME IS TRUE SPIRITUALLY.*** You don't pray for discernment and suddenly wake up with abundant wisdom. ***IT IS A PROCESS OF GROWTH.***
- ***STAY ON THE PATH OF MATURITY.*** Sometimes it involves **suffering** and **trials** (JAMES 1:2-4; 1 PET. 5:10). Often it necessitates **divine chastening** (HEB. 12:11). Always it requires **personal discipline** (1 TIM. 4:7-8).

BUT THE REWARDS ARE RICH:

“HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FINDS WISDOM AND THE MAN WHO GAINS UNDERSTANDING. FOR HER PROFIT IS BETTER THAN THE PROFIT FROM SILVER AND HER GAIN BETTER THAN FINE GOLD. SHE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN JEWELS; AND NOTHING YOU DESIRE COMPARES WITH HER. LONG LIFE IS IN HER RIGHT HAND; IN HER LEFT HAND ARE RICHES AND HONOR. HER WAYS ARE PLEASANT WAYS AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE. SHE IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO TAKE HOLD OF HER, AND HAPPY ARE ALL WHO HOLD HER FAST. . . . 21, MY SON, LET THEM NOT VANISH FROM YOUR SIGHT; KEEP SOUND WISDOM AND DISCRETION, 22, SO THEY WILL BE LIFE FOR YOUR SOUL AND ADORNMENT FOR YOUR NECK. 23, THEN YOU WILL WALK IN YOUR WAY SECURELY AND YOUR FOOT WILL NOT STUMBLE.”

(PROVERBS 3:13-18, 21-23)

- And these riches, unlike diamonds, will retain their value and brilliance for all eternity. ***THE ALTERNATIVE IS A LIFE OF THEOLOGICAL **CONFUSION**, WHERE SPIRITUAL TREASURES ARE CONFUSED WITH SPIRITUAL FAKES.***

“WHOEVER IS WISE, LET HIM UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS; WHOEVER IS DISCERNING, LET HIM KNOW THEM. FOR THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, AND THE UPRIGHT WALK IN THEM, BUT TRANSGRESSORS STUMBLE IN THEM.”

(HOSEA 14:9)

- **HOSEA** saw **DISCERNMENT** as necessary for righteousness, and antithetical to those who transgress God’s law. That’s why wisdom is so essential if we want to please the Lord through the way we live.

IF WE ARE TO **CONTINUALLY GROW** IN CONFORMITY TO CHRIST, WE **CANNOT** AFFORD TO STAGNATE IN OUR **DISCERNMENT**. IT MUST BE OUR LIFELONG PURSUIT.

REPENTANCE AND ASSURANCE THE *GENUINE* ARTICLE.

- ***WHAT IS REPENTANCE***? The literal Greek word, ***METANOIA***, has to do with changing your mind. But authentic repentance is much more than merely changing **your opinion, your thought process, or your mood.** ***IT'S A COMPLETE SPIRITUAL ABOUT-FACE. AND IF IT'S GENUINE, IT WILL ALWAYS RESULT IN A CHANGE OF BEHAVIOR, TOO.***
- And while ***TRUE REPENTANCE*** is the flash point for ***SAVING FAITH***, and a source of powerful, ***LASTING ASSURANCE*** of that faith, it's a widely ***MISUNDERSTOOD DOCTRINE***. Many believers only have a vague notion of what it means to repent, and they're unfamiliar with what it looks like in the pages of Scripture.

- **JESUS' PARABLE IN (MATT. 21:28-30)** is a classic illustration. ***"A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS; AND HE CAME TO THE FIRST, AND SAID, SON, GO WORK TO DAY IN MY VINEYARD. HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I WILL NOT: BUT AFTERWARD HE REPENTED AND WENT. AND HE CAME TO THE SECOND AND SAID LIKEWISE. AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I GO, SIR: AND WENT NOT"*** (KJV).
- The response of the first son explains the meaning of repentance. He said, ***"I WILL NOT," BUT HE DID. THAT'S REPENTING.*** He said one thing but changed his whole attitude and purpose and went the opposite way.

REPENTANCE IS A COMPLETE CHANGE OF HEART AND DIRECTION, NOT MERELY A NEW IDEA ABOUT SOMETHING.

- **PETER PREACHED REPENTANCE** to the Israelites who gathered after he and the **APOSTLE JOHN** healed a lame man at the Temple gate in Jerusalem. **PETER** indicted the Israelites for ignoring the prophecies about **JESUS**, for labeling Him a blasphemer, and crucifying the very One who was sent to rescue them from their sins. But then **PETER OFFERED A SOLUTION: “THEREFORE REPENT AND RETURN, SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED AWAY” (ACTS 3:19).**
- **THE NATION OF ISRAEL HAD DECIDED THAT GOD’S WILL FOR THEM WAS A SELF-GENERATED RIGHTEOUSNESS.** The **PHARISEES** manipulated a system of **LEGALISM** or **WORKS** for righteousness. They made sure it maintained its hold over the people. If a Jew kept the **365 NEGATIVE COMMANDS** and the **248 POSITIVE COMMANDS** of the law of Moses, **HE WAS SAFE AND RIGHTEOUS.**

THEY THOUGHT THAT WAS WHAT GOD WANTED, AND THEY REJECTED JESUS BECAUSE OF IT.