



*Every Spiritual  
Blessing*

**EPHESIANS - WEEK 11**  
**How to Know What's False**

**Opening prayer**

**Prayer for the millennial generation:**

That they would be a generation not content with simply making converts but would strive to make disciples. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19-20)

### **Prayer for a local church:**

This morning we pray for our brother Bob Warning and 412 Church in Menifee.

### **Closing prayer**

## INTRODUCTION

Has there ever been a time in your life when you said to yourself, “I don’t know what to believe?” Maybe you’re in that place right now. You hear one person say this is true and then another person says the complete opposite is true. One person says, “I’m okay, you’re okay,” and another person says, “There is none righteous, no not one.” You want to throw your hands up and say, “No one can know,” or maybe you’ve said, “We can only know when we’re dead.”

How can you tell what is true? This is what is called an epistemological problem, which is just a fancy word for how we know things. Today we're going to focus on the area of knowing called discernment, which is the ability to judge between something false and something true.

Now when it comes to how we know things there is a longer explanation for this, but we believe the things we do because of the authorities in our lives. None of us believe the things we believe just because we've decided to believe them. You have been influenced by someone and you've

been influenced by them because in your eyes they are trustworthy. This trust gives them a type of authority to speak into your life. Say parents, for instance, or various teachers you've had, or neighbors, or even experiences that have left a lasting impact on you. And we often react to our experiences in a way that colors what we decide to believe about ourselves and the world.

Again, this discussion could go on for hours about how we know things, but for the sake of saving the rest of your afternoon, I'm going to cut to the

chase.

Christianity claims that God has spoken to humanity. And this is not a claim that is taken by blind faith. It is a claim that God himself has backed up with evidence. In the Old Testament we find statements foretold about Jesus Christ hundreds of years before he was even born. In the New Testament we have a record of what the early church proclaimed about Christ and a record of what Christ proclaimed about himself.

And if God has spoken to humanity, then we have a plumb-line for truth. We have something objective by which to measure statements for their truthfulness or their falsehood. Not all truth, but spiritual truth in particular.

This takes truth out of the realm of personal subjectivity. Truth is not a matter of how you feel. It's a matter of how God has defined reality. When you live your life in direct contradiction to how

God has defined reality you will find life even more difficult. Instead of flourishing and living the abundant life Jesus spoke of, you will find yourself spiraling downward both internally and externally.

Now all that to say:

**Big Idea:** The way you know something is false is by knowing what is true.



So, to determine what's actually false, you have to know what's actually true.

Now, last week we ended with these verses:

**<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith (what is taught about Christ) and of the knowledge of the Son of God (what is experienced of Christ), to**

**mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,**

That's the result of understanding our gifts and being trained and equipped in using them and growing in maturity. So, the first thing we see about knowing the truth is that truth is not intuitive.

**1 Point #1 - The truth is not intuitive.**

That's why we need the gospel. There are aspects of the truth that are indeed intuitive, meaning that you know they're true because you have experienced these truths personally. You know that no one is perfect, because you know something of yourself. You've experienced that truth. King David said in the song that he wrote that he was born a sinner. In other words, he was born with a disposition to act selfishly and not to love God with everything that was in him.

- College experience (Now because I had an experience of this, I was in agreement with the biblical witness without knowing it. The point is we can have knowledgeable experiences of biblical truths but not connect them. We don't know how to put them together without God's revelation. We can know the brokenness that sin brings, we can feel that we're separated from God, we can feel pangs of conscience because of something wrong we've done, we

have this sense that no matter how good we try to become we can never be sure that we're good enough to be accepted by God, etc. But without God communicating to us we won't know what to do with all these separate truths. We won't know what to make of them. That's what I mean that the truth is not intuitive. You don't just figure it out on your own. Things falls into place when you hear the message of the gospel proclaimed.)

This is why every human being who believes that humanity is lacking because they have personally experienced this brokenness, does not believe the same thing about why humanity is lacking. People give different reasons for this and they give different answers for the remedy.

But here's the thing, if there is a true remedy to this issue of human nature it is not found within. If we're lacking, if we're broken, then how do we fix ourselves? Christianity says the answer does

not lie within, but the answer comes from without — from an outside source, from the Creator Himself who has communicated enough truth to us that we can know God, that we can know ourselves and that we can know how to truly live and how to truly help our neighbors.

That's why Paul says that once you're grounded in the basics of Christianity, then you won't be tossed all around by this view and then that view. Whenever you hear someone say something

along the lines of, “Christianity must change with the times,” this person clearly doesn’t understand the basic message of the gospel, which has been the same from the earliest time it was proclaimed.

## **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**

**<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third**



**day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**

Even skeptical biblical scholars will admit that this was an early Christian creed that was being recited within three years of the death of Jesus. The message of Christianity has been the same from day one — he who died is now alive. And the same message holds true for us today, that Christ is not only alive, but that he is with us

today, right here in our midst through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that he sent.

Once you understand that basic message and experience Christ personally through faith and repentance, then Paul says:

**14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by**

**human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

First, he doesn't want us to be like children. We all start out as babes in Christ, but he wants us to mature and to grow.

**2 Point #2 - Instability in the Christian life is immaturity.**

Paul likens instability (being tossed to and fro

both emotionally and intellectually) to immaturity. If there was ever a time when people were tossed to and fro by deceitful teachings it is today. And the people most susceptible to these false teachings are immature Christians.

Paul categorizes false teaching in three different ways. First, faddish teaching. The latest wave of old heresies with a fresh coat of paint. Now, how do you know when something is a fad?

- 1970 - the est seminars, two-week seminars focused on human potential.
- 1970's - the power of crystals (Remember when the New Age movement was new?)

Generally, Christians find popular fads easier to spot than fads of spiritual error within their own camp.

- 2000 - *The Prayer of Jabez* - a kind of prosperity teaching with a toned down

delivery.

- 2006 - *The Secret* - the prosperity teaching in secular garb. It promoted this idea that your thoughts can change reality. If you think about certain things they will appear in your life. This goes back to a book written in 1910 called *The Science of Getting Rich*.

You don't need to have a historical understanding of every false teaching known to man to know what's false. All you need is a

growing knowledge of the gospel.

This is what discernment is based upon. You can't discern falsehood, you can't recognize it if you don't know the truth.

## **1 John 4:1-6**

**<sup>4</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

False teaching is a much more serious problem than we realize. This is why all over the New Testament we're given warnings over and over again. Severe warnings with violent language — watch out for the dogs, the blind guides, the ravenous wolves, distorters of truth, errors of the lawless, liars with cleverly devised stories, full of meaningless talk and deception, out for dishonest gain, destructive heresies, full of greed and self-indulgence.



False teaching is taken very seriously. And false teaching includes all ideas and philosophies and concepts and therapies that have no biblical support.

**<sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world**

**already. <sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**

If you have the Spirit of truth, you will listen to the New Testament writers. You will listen to the Old

Testament authors.

Paul doesn't want you to be fooled by every fad that comes repackaged down the pike.

Secondly, he doesn't want you to be fooled by human cunning, by the cult of the clever individual. These are false teachers who are crafty and calculating. They understand how to manipulate people.

But then there is the craftiness of the scheme itself. It can begin with the cunning personality, someone like Joseph Smith who founded Mormonism or Mary Baker Eddy who founded what is called Christian Science or Jehovah Witnesses whose religion was founded by Charles Taze Russell. All of these systems (or schemes) of religion were founded in the 1800s when the revival of the Second Great Awakening had subsided and many people became focused on new revelations rather than the gospel itself.

So, we can see what a fad can lead to.

The point is, they can begin with the clever individual and then the scheme itself propagates the false system of belief.

Now all of these systems I used as examples are aberrations (or departures) of historic Christianity. And you can know they're departures when you understand the basic elements of the gospel.

- The gospel has been lost

## **Galatians 1:8-9**

**8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.**

Now, however harsh that sounds, Paul says it because he cares about people and he cares that people know the truth and believe the truth.

## **Ephesians 4:15**

**<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,**

**3 | Point #3 - Learning is growing.  
(Christians grow through doctrine.)**

This idea that we shouldn't focus on doctrine because it's divisive, but we should just focus on Jesus is simply a false idea, because you can't really love and follow Jesus if you don't know who he is. And the only way to know who he is and what he has done is by learning about him. We learn through being taught. Doctrine simply means teaching. To say we shouldn't focus on doctrine is really saying we shouldn't focus on teaching people about Jesus. It's anti-intellectualism at the core.



**<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

**4 | Point #4 - The point of growth is loving service.**

Imperfection and immaturity are not the same thing. We're all imperfect. We all battle sin

everyday in thought, word and deed. Yet, the church is to be a functional family. We should work together properly. This can only be done through Christians who are maturing in their faith.

## Applications

If you're one to think that education is vital to a human being, then you have something in common with God, because God has always used teaching as the vital tool for His message to humanity. Preaching is a type of teaching with

oomph. But this has always been God's most common method of revealing His truth.

If you're not a Christian, do you feel tossed to and fro? Do you believe one thing for awhile with certainty, but then believe something else later because of some persuasive argument?

This section of Scripture makes it clear that Christians are responsible for a growing understanding of the gospel. If you're

understanding of the gospel hasn't grown deeper than the day you responded to it, then you're not maturing as you should. Do you know the strength of your faith? If your faith is like a ship tossed about on ocean waves, will the structure of your ship withstand the storm?

Jesus said He is the way and the truth. He is the truth. He is the One religious leader all other religious leaders are measured by. Nearly every religion in the world says, "Jesus is one of the

ways, but our guy or our system is a better way.”  
Jesus says, “There’s only one way and I’m it!”

Again, Christian unity comes from our common understanding of what the Bible teaches about Jesus. When we both understand who Jesus is and experience Him now, we find we have unity of the faith (doctrine) and a knowledge that is both intellectual and experiential. We’ll find unity in our diversity and as we go deeper in the gospel we’ll grow into maturity by both serving

one another and our neighbors in love and speaking to both each other and our neighbors in love. Truth and love, these should be the marks of the growing Christian.