

Introduction: Pg. \_\_\_\_

Dismiss Kids

Last two weeks...

Next two weeks...

Baptism Sunday??

## “Fake News & Developing Discernment” Hebrews 5:11-14

GLOBE

Story 1

Story 2

Story 3

Trusted Source... the Globe.... Not the Boston Globe...

### 2017 Word of the Year: FAKE NEWS

Collins Dictionary named “fake news” its [2017 word of the year](#), because of the word’s “unprecedented usage increase” of 365 percent over the previous year.

According to one count, the term fake news was tweeted 203 times from the @realdonaldtrump Twitter account over 18 months. That’s 11 times a month or once every 2 and a half days. Now, I’m not here to get political, though I know some of you would like me to. The goal is to think rightly about our world and culture. [Trump Twitter Archive](#)

The objective of fake news is to get the reader to believe something that is false.

But fake news is nothing new. Globe was first published in 1954.

(But bogus stories can reach more people quicker than ever before!) So much so that... Facebook and Google [announced](#) they will crack down on fake news sites, restricting their ability to garner ad revenue.)

But this is about so much more than Fake News... The reality of fake news is a case study for larger questions of life and the spiritual dynamics that lurk beneath those questions.

Question like..

- Who can we trust?
- What can we believe?
- What is our source of authority?

What we need is what the Bible calls discernment.

**“Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying God’s Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong.” - Tim Challies, in *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment***

Let’s turn our attention to Hebrews 5 for some help in learning to

### Read Hebrews 5:11-14

**The Point: Develop discernment to navigate the falsities of life.**

Setup... flow... The encouragement of the Scripture will

- Look at the truth of the text.
- Consider its relevance for the issues surrounding fake news in our culture.

## 1. Develop discernment through active receiving (11)

God made us to communicate. He is “talking God.” He is relational. We are constantly receiving information. Even right now...

### Read 11

“About this...”

The writer of Hebrews says that he wants to go on speaking of Jesus as the new and greater high priest, the one who gives us total and free access to God, BUJUTTT, he can't do that yet, because of their lack of spiritual maturity.

In essence, this little paragraph is packed with one primary exhortation: GROW UP! ACT YOUR AGE!

Every parent knows the speech: When a kid does something foolish, what is the question: “How old are you?” To imply: 4 year olds aren't babies, 7 year olds aren't 4 year olds!

He begins in verse 11 by saying that...

- ...teaching them about Christ's priesthood would be “hard to explain.”
  - not because of the subject matter nor his ability to communicate, but
  - BECAUSE the audience was “dull of hearing.”
- He is calling out their lethargic state of mind. They were apathetic, not active in receiving the truth concerning Jesus.
- The word *nothros* connotes the idea of a “culpable negligence or sluggishness in some aspect of life.”
- This is similar to what he said in **Hebrews 2:1**: “**Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.**”
- But notice, how carefully he explains their condition. He says: “you have become.” What does that imply? They were once in a better spiritual condition.
  - Sharp listeners, not dull.
  - Humble listeners, not proud. (“Oh, I got that. I've heard that before.”)
  - Active listeners, not lazy!
- If I can just keep it real, this is the primary reason why two people can walk out of here today with...
  - One saying: “Pastor Tanner, he wasn't on his A-game today. I didn't get much out of it.”
  - And the other saying: “Wow. I really needed to hear that. I need God's wisdom. I want to develop deeper discernment.”
- Research has proven: The more humble the listener, the better the sermon. :)
- It's always comes back to the condition of our hearts. Now, I'm not excuses bad preaching or poor communication, but at the end of the day, we have to examine how well we are hearing and receiving!

T: What does this mean for how we process news?

### Principles for Processing News

- Process news **actively not passively**.

One reason fake news thrives is because we are so passive in how we get our news.

- Previous generations chose to pick up a newspaper. And then came the television, with cable networks providing 24 hour news coverage, but...
- Today we have instant and constant access. Random stories and articles come flying at us, enticing us to click on the bait strategically placed on our social media “news feeds.”

The increasing reality is this: we don't seek news; news seeks us.

That's why we need to be active readers, active listeners. We need to put our critical thinking hats on a little quicker. Consider the source, trace the argument, listen for logical and rational presentation.

Part of the irony of how fake news spreads so quickly through social media, is the fact that social media and the ubiquitous nature of technology (the hours scrolling social media, playing video games, binge watching Netflix - I'm not saying it's bad in moderation!, but HOURS AND HOURS AND HOURS - word to men?) all of that can have a deadening effect on our minds and souls.

As Neil Postman famously wrote: “We are amusing ourselves to death.”

T: So first, we need to develop discernment through active receiving.

## 2. Develop discernment by growing in God's truth (12-13)

### Read 12-13

Here's his encouragement in very clear terms...

- You've been following Jesus. You been taught for years. This is not new! You've been to Community Group. You've served those around you. You showed up to prayer meetings...
- But you've regressed, not progressed. You're acting like babies, like brand new Christians.
- You should have your teacher's certification, but you need to go back to school!
  
- "Basic principles" can also be translated "elementary principles of the oracles of God." The greek word was sometimes used to refer to the letters of the alphabet.
- He emphasizes their lack of maturity by using the metaphor of food. He says, they "need milk, not solid food."
  - Titus: my 7 week old.... dude drinks milk. That's all he can drink. My guy can't even drink water yet, and he certainly can't eat food or he'd choke.
  - Tanner: give me that burger. How about that NY Strip? Maybe some C Parm. Maybe some
- The idea of childish immaturity is reemphasized in verse 13, by the word "infant" or "child," referring to a child not yet weaned.

The clear implication of Hebrews 5 is that all believers in Jesus have the capacity to teach, to pass on what Jesus has passed on to them. You don't need an Masters of Divinity. You don't the title of a pastor. You need a humble heart, the Word of God, and love for the people around you. That's what WE ALL need.

The church thrives, when we all are growing in Christ and encouraging one another by teaching the truth to one another.

- Are you saying: "feed me, feed me, feed me, feed me...?"
- Or "Mmm. That was good. I Gotta give that to somebody else. I've been fed so I can feed someone else. That's the rhythm.

Now, let me be clear!

- If you are new in Christ, keep growing!
- If you are a young Christians: keep growing!
- But if you should to the point of maturity in your journey: the text is telling us to teach or grow up!

T: Notice that the writer is talking about our ultimate source of authority, which is the revelation of God, as it is captured for us in the Scriptures. The phrase "oracles of God" is also translated, "word of God."

"This phrase is commonly used to refer to the Old Testament as divine revelation, but the context makes" clear that the author also refers to "the content of the Christian message."

What is your source of authority? We must...

### Principles for Processing News

- 1
- **Measure every source against the source of God's Word.**

We should seek to filter everything we hear and read through what God has already said. There's not one news story that cannot be filtered through and spoken to from a Christian perspective. As Francis Shaeffer would say: we need to learn to "think Christianly" about our world.

God is our ultimate authority and because he's revealed his truth and wisdom in the Word, the Bible is our Laser Level.

Laser Level: Got this one at IKEA. Cheap but effective. (I needed it last Sunday night. And I needed some patience. Up a little, down a little, turn it this way. WHAT?! Now clearly the issue was not with my excellent wife, the issue was with me... but the laser level settles it.)

So as we receive news actively... this will include...

- Considering the source
- Investigating the author
- Reading beyond the headline. How do they backup their claims/arguments? What sources do they use? Are those sources legitimate?
- Checking for bias. Don't be naive.

- Checking our own bias. [Everyone is tempted to fall into the trap of *confirmation bias* - the tendency to pay attention to that which confirms what we already value or believe. Related to that is the reality of “*the echo chamber*,” which is fueled by social media because we surround ourselves with people who reinforce our views.
- And then when it comes to FakeNews, we can always consult fact-check websites who regularly snuff out major scams and false stories.

But let me say this: we must measure every source... not just what we hear in the media, but what we hear in the church!

- If most people believe it, it must be true (why we're obsessed with polls).
- If it feels good, do it.
- God's commitment to me is proportional to my commitment to him.
- Our eternal destiny is heaven (nope, new heavens and a new earth).
- The key to happiness is learning to love and forgive yourself.

T: We must measure every source against the source of God's truth, but to do so, we must grow in it! And then finally...

### 3. Develop discernment to distinguish good from evil (5:14).

When we trace the argument, we see the author has been driving to verse 14. Verse 11. “You have become dull.” Verse 12 - FOR... Verse 13 - FOR... BUT... here's the contrast. Here's his hope for them. Verse 14

- “The Greek text fronts the word, *teleios*, which is translated “mature,” to draw a sharp contrast with the word for child at the end of verse 13.” (Allen)
- The mature have “their powers of discernment trained.” He is saying that our intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties are strengthened to distinguish good from evil.
- When the author says good from evil, we should think both: 1) truth from error, and 2) right from wrong).
- The discerning know how to make the right choices when confronted with diverging options and critical decisions.

How? By constant practice.

- Day after day after day, as we're confronted with various stories and truth claims from professors and coworkers, we have an increasing ability to say: wait a minute. Something does not smell right about that. Let me go back and run that through biblical truth and biblical wisdom.
- Day after day after day, we're confronted with a myriad of moral choices. We learn to ask questions like: Will this action build me up or tear me down? Will this action benefit those around me? Will this action honor and point others to God?

We should constantly be living out Paul's instruction in **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**, when he says...

**“but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”**

Apologetic Sidebar: By the way, this does not contradict Jesus words when he says: Judge not, lest you be judged. What Jesus is talking about there is being “judgmental” in the sense that we look down on others with a proud disposition, not that we should lack discernment or be afraid to say with humility - that is not true, nor right.

Why does this matter?

- God wants us to be protected from deception... and that which is false. (False Teaching...)
- God wants us to understand more of who he is, so we can grow to be like Jesus.
- In short, we want to think like Jesus, so that we can act like Jesus.

Discernment is a huge part of living the wise life. Wisdom is virtue in motion.

- We need it for all of life... in the workplace, parenting, leadership, choosing how we spend our time, who we hang out with.
- It's not easy:
  - Our hearts are still imperfect, battling against sin in our lives. We still fall short. Our hearts can grow cold toward God.
  - AND... we have an enemy, who is constantly seeking to deceive us. That which is demonic “masquarades as angels of light.” (2 Cor 11:13-15)
  - AND our world is constantly bombarding us with information and truth claims unfiltered through the wisdom of God.

But here's the good news. God understands this. That's why he says: “If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all.” (James 1:5)

- When King Solomon was granted one request from God, he did not ask for riches or long life, or the expansion of his kingdom, he asked: "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil."

### **Principles for Processing News**

- 1
- 2
- **3 Test everything with maturity and wisdom in Christ.**

Fake news thrives on immaturity... We have a childish craving for controversy. That's why people spend \$5 on Globe Magazine! And we have a childish craving for quarreling, ready to write comments on a screen that we would never have the courage to say to someone's face.

The old proverb is true: "A lie can fly half way around the world while the truth is still putting on its boots."

Researchers at MIT discovered that a "false story is much more likely to go viral than a real story . . . reaching 1,500 people six times quicker, on average, than a true story does." It does not matter if the topic is business, terrorism, science, entertainment, or politics, though politics usually travel further, faster. (MIT Study: "The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News, *The Atlantic*)

T: Our greatest need is the wisdom of God that is found in Jesus Christ

*Conclusion:*

**"In [Jesus] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)**

So, like every week, at Redemption Hill. It's all about him. To develop discernment we come to him, seek him, listen to him, live like him.

This is might invitation to you today. This is the good news that trumps all the fake news the world will ever throw at us.

Let's pray.