

JUDGMENT OR DISCERNMENT?

How to Know the Difference

WORD ALIVE • WEEK 14 • MATTHEW 7

MATTHEW 7: MATURE DISCIPLESHIP

Big Idea: Mature discipleship requires more than knowing the rules. We have to know the heart of the Father well enough to discern how His love, truth, mercy, holiness, and justice apply in real life.

DON'T JUDGE - BUT DO DISCERN — Matthew 7:1-6

Jesus' command "**Judge not**" does not mean believers should never evaluate behavior, teaching, or spiritual fruit. He confronts **heart judgment** - harsh, loveless judgment rooted in pride.

Heart judgment says: "My failure has an explanation. Yours reveals who you are."

Kingdom order: Self-examination → Repentance → Clear vision → Helping another person.

Repentance truth: There is a depth of repentance where we stop merely feeling bad that we sinned and begin agreeing with God about what sin actually is. God's correction is mercy.

DON'T THROW YOUR PEARLS EVERYWHERE — Matthew 7:6

Not everything holy should be shared indiscriminately with everyone. Some people need patience and compassion; others have determined they will tear apart whatever is offered to them.

Key truth: Revelation doesn't always mean permission to speak.

Before speaking, ask: "**Holy Spirit, is this person hungry for truth - or hungry for a fight?**" Sometimes love speaks. Sometimes love stays quiet. Both require discernment.

WORD STUDY — What Does Biblical Discernment Mean?

1 Corinthians 2:14-15 | Greek: anakrino | Strong's G350

The word can carry ideas such as **examining, investigating, evaluating, questioning, appraising, and discerning carefully.**

Think like an appraiser: A trained appraiser notices what the average person may miss and evaluates it properly. Spiritual discernment must likewise be trained and submitted to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Biblical discernment is the Spirit-led ability to examine and distinguish what is true, right, and from God from what is false, harmful, or contrary to Him - according to His Word.

AM I DISCERNING THIS SITUATION - OR AM I SIMPLY JUDGING IT?

HOW TO DO A SIMPLE WORD STUDY

- **1. Identify the word.** Notice an important word or concept in the passage.
- **2. Find the original word.** Use a concordance or Bible-study tool to identify the Hebrew or Greek.
- **3. Study its range of meaning.** Note definitions and the ways the word is translated.
- **4. Study the context.** Ask who is speaking, to whom, and what the writer is discussing.
- **5. Compare Scripture with Scripture.** Look for other passages where the word or concept appears.
- **6. Apply it.** Ask the Holy Spirit, "How should this truth change the way I live?"

Study habit: Never build theology from a dictionary definition alone. Words get their meaning from context.

CAN YOU DISCERN WHAT IS REAL? — Matthew 7:13-29

Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount with a series of contrasts: **two ways, two trees, two professions, and two builders**. Each contrast asks us to discern what is real.

- A speck from a log
- People who can rightly handle holy things from those who will trample them
- A true prophet from a false prophet
- Good fruit from bad fruit
- The narrow road from the broad road
- True discipleship from empty profession

YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUIT — Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus says, “**You will recognize them by their fruits.**” So “Judge not” cannot mean “Never evaluate anything.” There is a difference between evaluating fruit and condemning someone's heart.

HUMILITY EXAMINES FRUIT. PRIDE ASSUMES MOTIVES.

Another test: Discernment protects the reputation of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Self-righteous judgment protects my ego.

“I NEVER KNEW YOU” — Matthew 7:21-23

The people Jesus describes call Him **Lord** and present Him with their **ministry résumé**: prophecy, deliverance, and mighty works. Jesus does not say, “You didn't do enough.” He says, “**I never knew you.**”

It is possible to become fascinated with what we can do **for Jesus** while neglecting life **with Jesus**. 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us that spiritual activity without love is not the goal.

God's ultimate goal isn't spiritual performance. He is forming Christ in us.

- Platform is not proof of maturity.
- Giftedness is not proof of character.
- Spiritual power is not a substitute for knowing Jesus.

WALK AS JESUS WALKED — 1 John 2:3-6

Jesus walked in the perfect love of the Father. He showed mercy to sinners, confronted hypocrisy and unrighteousness, and loved even those who opposed Him. He was full of grace and truth.

YOUR HIGHER PURSUIT CHALLENGE

Choose **ONE word from Matthew 7** and do your own word study this week: **judge, ask, seek, knock, fruit, know, narrow, or love**. Find the original word, study its range of meaning, examine the context, compare Scripture with Scripture, and ask how the truth should change the way you live.

DON'T JUST LISTEN. DIG.

PRAYER & REFLECTION

- Ask the Father to reveal heart judgment and lead you into genuine repentance.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to train your discernment through His voice and the Word.
- Ask for wisdom to know when love should speak and when love should remain quiet.
- Ask God to help you examine fruit without assuming motives He alone knows.
- Ask Jesus to keep you from substituting spiritual activity for genuine relationship with Him.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to form the character and love of Christ in you.

Further Study: Matthew 7 • 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 • 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 • 1 John 2:3-6

THE HIGHER PURSUIT

Nurturing your faith. Sharpening your endurance.