

In order to make our home with Christ more real in our lives, we must grow into Christlikeness. The first challenge to becoming more like Christ is to develop our discernment so that we can know when we are in step with Christ, and when we are out of step with Christ. Discernment is not a list of rules to follow, nor is it a magical skill, but it revolves around the recognition of patterns in your life and in the world. You must develop the eyes to see, and the ears to hear, when the pattern is matching and when the pattern is not matching the pattern of Christ's life.

## Day 1

### Goodness

The bible encourages us to think about, and to meditate on, things that are good. Ephesians 4:8 tells us, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about** these things." We are to familiarize ourselves with the many manifestations of goodness, so that we can discern when things fit into the pattern, and when they do not. A long time ago I watched a documentary about military sniper school, and in this documentary, they showed how long the students had to spend outside of the shooting range developing their ability to spot patterns, and to discern what didn't belong. The students would spend hours looking at a hillside, trying to find all the things their instructors had hidden, and if they failed to find enough of them, they would fail the sniper course completely. Learning to hit a target wasn't enough, you first had to learn to discern the target. In the same way, we must have our eyes and ears trained by meditating on the pattern of goodness that Christ represents, so that we can understand by experience when we are conforming our lives to that pattern, and when we are not, because it is much more complicated than it seems, and good intentions are not enough. Spend some time this week reading, meditating, seeing, and hearing, and make that part of your life on a daily basis, so that you can learn to discern.

Verses: Galatians 5:22-23, Joshua 1:8, Isaiah 26:3

Prayer Topics: Meditation, Wisdom, Submission

## Day 2

### Justice

Learning to deal justly is a major part of developing discernment, because what is just, and what we often see as fair, are not the same things at all. I once had to sit on a jury in a civil case where two businessmen were fighting over a few thousand dollars, and had been fighting over it for a couple of years. When the jury first went into recess to discuss the case, many of the jurors wanted to split the money down the middle because it would be "fair." When asked what point of law that notion of fairness was based on, the jurors who wanted what was "fair" were at a loss. The question was not what was fair, because getting equal amounts could have settled that, but what was just. The businessmen had a contract, and one had adhered to the contract, and one had not. Justice was giving the whole sum to one, and nothing to the other, because one had been faithful to the contract, and one had not, and the contract awarded the sum to the one who had been faithful. In the bible, adherence to the covenant is just, not everyone getting the same amount. God as creator writes and upholds the covenant, according to his character and nature. Some people are born with advantages that others are not, that is not unjust, as all are recipients of God's blessing, even if that blessing is distributed unevenly. God expects those blessings to be used according to his will, meaning that those blessings create an obligation so that the less blessed have less responsibility, creating justice within a system that is not

equal. Learning to appreciate and embody God's justice is vital to making a home with him, so seek to understand and meditate on God's covenant, so that you may be just, as He is just.

Verses: Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, Isaiah 1:17

Prayer Topics: Authority, Integrity, Truth

Day 3

Grace

Grace is a very important aspect of God's character, and if we are going to make our home with Him, we must be discerning enough to understand it. Grace is unmerited favor, and we are all recipients of it. If we fail to understand the nature and extent of God's grace, we will become entitled, or we will assent to the demands of the entitled. Grace is not distributed evenly, nor should it be. It takes a great deal of discernment to understand how to be a gracious person, even though it seems like it would be easy. We often believe that just giving everything we can to someone is what it means to be gracious, but that is a dangerous oversimplification. In the movie, "Bruce Almighty", the titular character Bruce has been given God's powers by God himself, and proceeds to grant everyone's prayers, with the result being complete chaos and destruction. The question in apportioning grace is, "what would bring good to the person, those around them, and all of creation?" Many times, people want things that would not be good for them, or for others, or for the world in general. In fact, I believe that God gives us the greatest blessing he can, given the limitations of our sinfulness, and the sinfulness of the world. Learning how to say, "No", is often much more difficult for Christians than learning how to give people what they want, to their own destruction. This is not gracious, and so, if we are to make our home with Christ, we must learn the correct way to be gracious people.

Verses: Romans 6:12-14, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Prayer Topics: Compassion, Understanding, Limits

Day 4

Poverty

Since many people do not know what money is, it follows that many people do not understand the nature of poverty. Money is not real. It's real in the sense that something called money exists, but it is not real in the way we think it is. Money is a symbol, and it only functions as a symbol. If you saw a person asking for money on the side of the road, and you saw me give them monopoly money, you would probably tell me it wasn't going to help. Our dollars are no different. The problem that most people have is that they have nothing real to exchange for other things that are real, and they have nothing real because they don't know how to produce something real, or that don't have the inclination to produce something real that would be of help or service to another human being. Giving someone ten bucks is probably not going to change that fundamental issue, so tomorrow the problem is still going to be there. When you give them money, you are just exchanging something real you have made for something real someone else has made, and have included them temporarily in the process. This is why, for the trillions spent on the war on poverty, we still have the same amount of poverty. In order to cure poverty, you must either teach someone how to produce something, or motivate them to produce something by giving them a new heart. The easy answer that makes us feel good, "just hand someone a few bucks and I'm doing my part", is generally an illusion that comes from a lack of discernment. God wants to give us riches, and if we are to make our home with God, we must become like him in

participating in the work of making the poor become rich.

Verses: 2 Corinthians 8:9, Proverbs 20:13, Proverbs 28:6

Prayer Topics: Spiritual Poverty, Motivation, Worth

Day 5

Riches

What are true riches? Is it money or houses or cars or luxury items? From a Biblical perspective, these are not true riches but the physical symbols or embodiments of the spiritual realities that constitute true riches. So, what are these spiritual realities? Let's take a beautiful mansion as an example. There is the knowledge of mathematics and engineering, the ability to understand how God has made materials and physical laws so that we can create after God's own mind. Next there is the knowledge of plants and fruitfulness, as we create the grounds and gardens to reflect the beauty and fruitfulness of the divine. Next, there is the family that lives in the house and the love and service they give to each other that inspires the creation of the house that reflects their glory. Finally, there is the love that motivates the sacrifice that brings the whole house together, from the payment for the house to the skill of the tradesmen that build it. We must, if we are going to make our home with God, understand what true riches are, and we must come to possess them as the gifts of God in Christ Jesus. To do that, we must become discerning, and we must grow to maturity in the love and discipline that God provides.

Verses: Matthew 6:19-21, Proverbs 28:20, Proverbs 11:4, Hebrews 13:5

Prayer Topics: Heart, Building Up, Character