



Theological Triage

SPIRITUAL
FORMATION CLASS

WEEK 1

THE DISCIPLINE OF DISCERNMENT

THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE

Triage comes from the French word: trier.
Trier means "to _____".

After visiting the emergency room, Al Mohler applied his observations to sorting out theological issues. Here are levels of theology as defined by Al Mohler.¹

Level One - Doctrines most _____ to the Christian faith

Examples: Trinity, Full Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith, and the authority of Scripture.

Level Two - Believing Christians may disagree causing _____ between them.

Examples: meaning and mode of baptism, women being ordained ministers

Level Three - Many Christians disagree, but can remain in _____, even in the same local congregation.

Examples: Eschatology, election, social justice

¹ For full article see: <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>

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“Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying God’s Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong.”¹

“With discernment comes division.”²

HOW DO WE KEEP UNITY?

1. Know what is essential and _____.
2. Maintain a _____ spirit.

“We can best know what is wrong by first knowing what is right.”³

3. Remember that it is _____ responsibility to convict men.
4. Speak with _____.

“It is sad to say that the word discernment has negative connotations in the minds of many Christians and non-Christians alike, for those who claim to exhibit discernment are often those who lack love.”⁴

¹Challies, T. (2007). The discipline of spiritual discernment. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 61.

²Ibid, 39.

³Ibid, 101.

⁴Ibid, 143.

DANGERS OF DISCERNMENT

1. We are _____ as to what is evil.
Romans 16:19, 1 Cor. 14:20
"One of the greatest dangers of discernment is that we will become so interested in what is evil and ungodly that we will allow ourselves to be come immersed in it and inadvertently oppressed by the evil we encounter."¹
2. _____ by Association
3. _____ by Association
4. The Critical and the Disputable - "Another danger of discernment is ignoring the fact that some doctrine is of greater importance and greater urgency than other doctrine."²
5. _____ - "...more often than not, there is enough error in the world that we do not need to seek it out deliberately."³
6. _____ - categorizing people good or bad
7. _____
8. _____
9. Truth Without _____

¹Challies, T. (2007). The discipline of spiritual discernment. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 144.

²Ibid, 143

³Ibid, 144.

WEEK 2

STEPS TO ENGAGEMENT

It is important to actively read a book or article in order to discern how to respond. The following steps can help you engage with what you are reading and discern what is best.

1. Pray for discernment.
2. Do not go to resource books yet.
3. Write down what the passage (book or article) is about as a whole.
4. Write down what you would like to verify.
5. What issue is at stake? How important is it?
6. Did your heart or mind immediately react with acceptance or hesitation? Does what is written bother you or make you uncomfortable?
7. What Scripture relates to this idea? Write a sentence about what each Scripture says.
8. At this point, refer to reference materials. What do they say about the topic or Scriptures you have found?
9. Look at the information about the author. Does this lend any insight to his/her perspective?
10. What truths or false teaching have you found?
11. Write a list of what you will abstain from or do as a result of reading the passage.

Use the steps above to go through the article on pages 6-13. Avoid looking at information about the author in the back of this book until you reach step 9. There is room in the margin for your notes.

4 Teachings of Jesus That His Followers (Almost) Never Take Seriously¹

It's no secret that those of us who claim to follow Jesus Christ consistently fall short of living up to the way of life of our Rabbi. Being a disciple of Jesus is a lifelong journey towards conforming ourselves to the image and way of life that Jesus taught. However, so often, followers of Jesus chose to blatantly ignore some of the clearest instruction of our Rabbi and obscure it with vague theology so that we can get off the hook. Other times, followers of Jesus are taught something explicitly contradictory to the plain words of Jesus and then spend their lives obeying the instruction they received instead of the commands of Jesus.

However we end up at the place of disobedience, all of us who claim to be followers of Jesus struggle to obey the commands of our Lord. One of the most transformative periods in my faith was when I took time to re-read the Gospels of the New Testament and get reacquainted with Jesus' himself, in his own words. As I studied the words of Jesus, I discovered that so much of what he asks of us as his disciples is incredibly clear and yet so much of it was new to me. I had never heard it in church or Sunday school or actually heard someone teach the exact opposite of the words of

Christ. It was during that season of my life where I took inventory of how I lived and what I believed and aligned to the person and teachings of Christ that my faith was radically transformed for the better.

Below I have compiled a short list of 4 clear teachings of Jesus that most of us who exist within Evangelicalism have either never heard, refuse to acknowledge, or believe the exact opposite of. It's my hope that by rereading these teachings of Christ, you will be inspired, like I have been, to return to the Gospels and begin to reshape your faith and life around the way and teachings of our Master, Jesus. Get ready and buckle up, because most of what Jesus says is pretty bold and potent. It'll shake up your faith!

1. Jesus, not the Bible, is God's living and active Word that brings life.

"You don't have His word living in you, because you don't believe the One He sent. You study the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. And you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life."- John 5:39-40 HCSB

The Christian life is one that is fundamentally rooted in the reality that Jesus Christ is living and active. He interacts with us on a day to day basis and de-

sires that we cultivate an intimate relationship with him. The more we commune with the Spirit of Christ, the more life and truth we are exposed to and are able to comprehend. However, for many Evangelicals, we rely more on the Bible than we do on the living and active Spirit of God within us. We fear that following the Spirit could lead to confusion and subjectivity and so we root our faith in the Bible. The problem is that a faith that is rooted in the Scripture alone is not sustainable. It will dry up and wither on the vine. While the Bible is an important and authoritative guide for Christian faith and practice, it isn't the foundation or center of our faith—Jesus is. And if we truly believe that he is alive, we should also have faith that communing with him will produce spiritual life within us. He is the living Word that we can ask anything to and expect, in faith, to receive and answer. Sometimes he will speak through Scripture. Other times he will speak through our friends and family. Other times he will find unique and special ways to reveal himself to us. But in order to maintain a vibrant and living faith, we must not make the Bible our substitute for communion with the living Word of God. Studying Scripture is valuable, but nowhere near as valuable as cultivating a day to day relationship with the God incarnate.

2. The only way to enter the Kingdom

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of Heaven is through DOING the will of God.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21 ESV

“An expert in the law stood up to test Him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the law?” He asked him. “How do you read it?” He answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. “You’ve answered correctly,” He told him. “Do this and you will live.” - Luke 10: 25-28 HCSB

“We are saved by faith alone, apart from works!” This is a very popular Protestant catch phrase. The doctrine of sola fide (faith alone) was developed by the Reformers in response to the Roman Catholic Churches corrupted teachings that emerged in the 16th Century teaching that one could gain favor with God and shave off years in Hell and Purgatory by giving money to the church or doing acts of penance. The intention of the doctrine of faith alone was very good- to correct the error that our salvation could be earned or that God’s grace could be manipulated. But like most doctrines that are formulated

in response to another group's doctrine, it often goes too far. One of the clearest teachings throughout all four Gospel accounts is that the way to enter the Kingdom of God is through living in obedience to the Law of Christ. Time and time again, Jesus makes very clear statements that condemn those who think that they will be saved because they believe the right things or do the right religious rituals. Jesus responds to people who believe they are religious and deserve heaven by saying that their outward religiosity is detestable to God and the only thing God desires is that they would exercise their faith by obeying the command of God- to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly. (Micah 6:8) Jesus says if anyone claims to be right with God but doesn't serve the poor, needy, oppressed, marginalized, sick, diseased, and sinful, then they do not have a relationship with God. No matter what they proclaim with their lips. No matter how religious they may appear. Jesus says those who don't obey will have no part in his Kingdom. He makes very clear that the way to "inherit eternal life" is through loving God and loving our neighbor. Isn't it astonishing, then, how many Christians today have been taught that salvation comes through right believing instead of right practice- a message that is fundamentally contrary to the words of Jesus. (And even more to his little brother James who says, "You see that

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a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." James 2:24 ESV)

3. Condemnation isn't Jesus' style.

"I have not come to condemn the world, but to save it." John 3:17 ESV

"Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."- John 8:11 ESV

Many modern day Evangelical preachers spend a lot of time talking about the kinds of people that God is opposed to and who he condemns. They spend time talking about how to transition from a position of condemnation before God to a position of Grace through believing the right things about Jesus. They often talk about those who disagree or live contrary to their understanding of what is "righteous" as those who are under condemnation from God. But what's funny is that as one examines the teachings and life of Jesus, we find him not only befriending, loving, and affirming some of his societies most despised and vile people, but chastising the religious leaders who condemned them for their sin. Whether it is Jesus' conversation with Rabbi Nicodemus in John 3 where Christ explains that it is his mission to redeem the world and not to condemn it or the instance where a woman is caught in the act of adultery and is taken outside to be stoned by the religious officials

(as the law required) and Jesus steps in to stop the condemnation and proclaim freedom and forgiveness to the broken woman, it is clear that Jesus is not in the condemning business. Instead, it seems Christ is in the business of restoring humanity to the most broken and wicked of people. It seems that his passion is to see the weak, sick, and broken become strong, healthy, and whole in his Kingdom. It seems that he spends very little time (almost none) telling sinners why they're wrong or speaking words of condemnation over them, but rather practically loving and extending grace to the most screwed up of individuals. Maybe we Evangelicals, who are known for our condemnation of entire people groups with whom we disagree, could learn something from Jesus on this point.

4. You're supposed to sacrifice yourself and speak words of blessings for those you disagree with the most.

"Love Your Enemies and Bless Those Who Persecute You" Matthew 5:44 ESV

It seems like every week there is a new major controversy taking place within the Church. Most of the time, the situation revolves around one group of Christians disagreeing with another and then taking to the internet to write slanderous posts about the other. If it's not infighting, then it is Christians engaging in culture wars, working to defeat those

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whom we disagree with politically and socially by painting them as soul-less monsters. But that response is absolutely contrary to the way of Jesus. Jesus calls his followers to love the people they disagree with most and to speak blessings over them when all we really want to do is curse them out. No matter what the situation is or what kind of enemy we have, Christians are called to bless the people who hurt us the most. This includes in theological battles, political disagreements, national wars, and personal conflicts. Christians are called to a radical position of nonviolence and forgiveness, grace, and even blessing of our enemies. There is no way around it. And when Christians chose to ignore these clear teachings, our hypocrisy is glaringly obvious to the watching world. Want some proof? Take a couple minutes to watch this clip of the famous Agnostic Comedian, Bill Maher, talk about Christian's refusal to obey the teaching of Jesus. (Contains explicit language)

That video may be hard to stomach but Bill Maher is 100% correct. "If you ignore every single thing Jesus commanded you to do, you're not a Christian."

The point of this post is to encourage those of us who claim to be followers of Jesus to reexamine how we are living our lives and practicing our faith. It is so easy to get so caught up in the flow that we fail to recognize just how far away

from shore we have been carried. The words of Jesus are pretty darn clear, but oftentimes in our zealousness for our faith, we often get pulled away from the basics and eventually end up living in a way that we believe is honoring to God, but is actually contradictory to everything he has taught us.

In this post, I have offered just four examples. There are hundreds of teachings contained in the 4 Gospels of the New Testament, teachings that, if we obeyed, would absolutely flip our lives and world upside-down for the glory of God and the good of all people. What the Church as a whole and Evangelicals in particular desperately need in this age is a return to the plain teachings of Jesus. We need to be willing to set aside our theological debates and meanderings for a season and focus on simply reading, conforming, and obeying the will of Christ, both as revealed in Scripture and as we are led by his Spirit. The world is desperately longing to encounter Jesus through us and for far too long we have been giving them a cheap knock off that we have exported under his name. But it's clear to everyone that what is passing for Christianity today is almost totally divorced from the teachings of Jesus Christ.

My prayer is that we would all turn our faces towards our risen Savior and seek to selflessly follow his commands. I am

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convinced that the Jesus' way is the only way that will heal our broken world. I am convinced that the whole earth is groaning as it waits for men and women to take of their crosses and follow in the way of redemption. I am convinced that when those of us who call ourselves "Christian" re-orient ourselves in Jesus, the power of God will flow through us in an unprecedented and miraculous way that will bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Oh how I long for that day.

"Those who aren't following Jesus aren't his followers. It's that simple. Followers follow, and those who don't follow aren't followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it." Scot McKnight

1. This article was written by Brandan Robertson. Google his name to get some insight on the author. Does this help you understand the perspective from which he is writing?
2. This article once appeared in the *Huffington Post*. Does this contribute to your discernment of this article?

PRACTICE

2

"The curse of perfectionism is an issue I've spoken about in the past. So many young women feel like they have to be perfect - that the world is telling them they're not pretty enough, thin enough, smart enough, nice enough, likable enough...whatever it may be. That somehow they fall short. I've tried to make it as clear as I can that they shouldn't be held back by this imposition of perfectionism. Nobody can achieve that. Yes, you have to be good, you have to be competitive. But don't let it paralyze you. Don't let it undermine you. Don't give in to those who are constantly demanding more and more of you when, frankly, they don't demand the same of your male counterparts."²

WEEK 3

GROWING IN DISCERNMENT

WE MUST _____ OURSELVES
TO DISCERNMENT.

"My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God."

- Proverbs 2:1-5 -

THE _____ IS THE
CONTEXT OF DISCERNMENT.

"A person who wishes to grow in discernment must belong to a local church and must place himself under the authority of godly leaders."¹

¹Challies, T. (2007). The discipline of spiritual discernment. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 158.

THE CHARACTER OF DISCERNMENT INCLUDES HUMILITY, MEEKNESS AND COMPASSION.

Humility -

Meekness -

Compassion -

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PRACTICE

3

"Some time ago, I had an inner vision from the Lord. In my vision, I saw soft, pliable golden pipes coming down from heaven and pouring out golden oil on a believer, every pipe bearing constant supply for different areas of the believer's life. Soon after I had the vision, I asked the Lord for confirmation from the Scriptures and He led me to Zechariah 4:12, where the prophet Zechariah saw golden pipes from which golden oil flowed. In my vision, one of the golden pipes ministered to the believer's health, another golden pipe ministered to his finances, while yet another golden pipe ministered to his marital well-being. Another golden pipe ministered to his walk with God with *charismata*, anointings and spiritual gifts flowing down from heaven. Another golden pipe ministered to his sense of peace.... When our Lord Jesus died on the cross, He paid for our healing. He paid for our provision. He paid for our peace. He paid for our marriages to be blessed. He paid for the well-being of our children. He paid for heavenly supply to flow into every area of our lives - for golden pipes filled with golden oil to flow unabated over us, bringing supply constantly into our lives."³

PRACTICE 4

"You may be in a dark place right now. You went through a breakup, and you're hurt, lonely, wondering if you'll ever be happy again. I can tell you firsthand - I'm a living witness - that if you'll keep moving forward, honoring God, He'll bring somebody into your life who is better than you ever imagined - somebody kinder, friendlier, more loving, who'll treat you like a king, a queen. The latter part of your life will be better than the first part. God has an exclamation point waiting for you.

Maybe you're dealing with a sickness. You've been told that it doesn't look good. Stay in faith - the exclamation point is coming. My mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and thirty-six years later, she's still healthy and strong. That's good, but here's the exclamation point. Every week she goes to the hospital to pray for other sick people. That's God making the enemy pay.

Perhaps you're in a dark place in your finances. You had a setback or lost a client, and you're wondering, *Is it ever going to get better?* Yes, on the other side of that valley you're going to find your cup that runs over - increase, abundance, a new level of your destiny. You may have been in that valley for a long time, but you need to get ready. You're about to see the breakthrough, and the problem is about to turn around. Don't stop believing. Get your fire back, because God did not bring you this far to leave you. He has an exclamation point coming your way."⁴

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PRACTICE 5

"Sometimes you need to have a chain reaction. Sometimes you need to say, 'I want to feel free again. I don't have to be chained up to worry and all stressed out about the situation and the pressure I'm under. I refuse these chains. I'm gonna have a chain reaction.' Your chain reaction needs to be, 'I'll praise God at all times. His praise will continually be in my mouth.'

Sometimes you have to say, 'I'm tired of being wrapped up in depression. I'm tired of being wrapped up in fear. I'm tired of being wrapped up in joylessness and anxiety. I'm tired of it, and I'm gonna have a chain reaction.'...

I don't care what you're going through. I don't care how bad it is. Have a chain reaction. Refuse those chains by praising the Lord. It's not that your chains aren't real, but it's your *reaction* to the problems of life that releases God....

The Bible says the other prisoners heard them. Sometimes you're not praising God for yourself. Sometimes you're not worshipping and making noise for yourself. Sometimes people around you are stressed out, on the verge of giving up, addicted, and bound up. And all it takes is for the people of God to begin to praise the Lord, and the prisoners hear our praise....

Everyone in that prison was set free by the chain reaction of Paul and

Silas. You may have family members who are messed up, but God says, 'If you have the right reaction and refuse the chains, I'll set other captives free.' There'll be a chain reaction."⁵

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WEEK 4

WHY WOMEN?

For among them are those who creep into households and capture *weak women*, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth."
- 2 Timothy 3:6-7 (emphasis mine) -

What does Paul mean when he says "weak women?"

How do women fit our mission?

PRACTICE

6

Read 2 Kings 6:1-7 to address this exposition of on the text.

"The servant was doing something good when he lost his cutting edge. He was being productive, building a new dwelling for himself and for those who others involved in the school of the prophets (v. 2). In fact, if he hadn't been working so hard - if he'd just been sitting around doing nothing - there's little chance the ax would've ever become gradually loosened and ultimately dislodged. This tells me that being engaged in good, even godly, productive things is not an automatic guard against losing your cutting edge. In fact, one of Satan's dirtiest little tactics is to sneak in and steal it while you're square in the middle of investing yourself in worthwhile activities."⁶

“Next we have a gospel presentation. This is the only gospel presentation in the entire book, which is a Christian book about making wise choices.”⁷

PRACTICE

7

“It is difficult to embrace an intimate relationship with someone we never see. God understood this, so He physically came to earth and took on another name: Jesus. The absolute Best Yes we’ll ever give is asking Jesus Christ to be ‘the LORD God’ over our lives. When we receive Him, we receive life everlasting. But this is just the starting place. We must walk with Him daily, using His gift of wisdom with each and every decision.”⁸

PRACTICE

8

"But, if we're willing to give up our addiction to shame, to believe what He's done, to receive His full redemption and the forgiveness of all our sins, and consider ourselves outrageously loved and valiantly pursued, we, my friend, are about to run free in the wide-open liberty of audacity."⁹

What do the words in this paragraph mean?

ENDNOTES

¹Author: Brandan Robertson. This post originally appeared on The Revangelical Blog on Patheos.

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⁵Franklin, J. (2013). *Spirit of Python - Exposing Satan's Plan To Squeeze the Life Out of You*. Charisma House, 212-215.

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⁹Moore, B. (2015). *Audacious*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 53.



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