

**Discerning the Will of God**  
**Humbly Seeking Discernment**  
Lesson 2

**Remembering last week's objective:** (or connection to past lesson series)

This week's main objective: Members of the body of Christ will explore how humility in discerning God's direction is required for accurately understanding His will, and how pride functions as a barrier to the same.

**Principle teaching points:**

1. Knowing who God is
2. Knowing who we are
3. Replicating Jesus
4. Not letting pride be a barrier to discernment

**Guiding scripture(s):** 1 Peter 1:15-16; John 5:19; 12:49; Matthew chs 6 and 7; Mark 4:24-25

**Main teaching point 1: Humbly approaching discernment of God's will requires a recognition of who God is.**

**1 Peter 1:15-16** "But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (NLT)

1. God calls us to be holy; but the *reason* we are to be holy seems to be important to God. If I am holy to be seen by others as holy, that is pride. If I am holy to bring others to a saving faith in Jesus, that causes me to depend upon my good works as the principle factor as I "guide" others to a saving grace (still pride) or I may become discouraged when it doesn't work. If I am holy in order to earn my way to heaven, that is legalism and minimizes the work of Jesus. The only acceptable reason to be holy is God's holiness. Being holy must begin with a recognition of God's holiness as the foundation of my being.
  - a. Certainly, other good things may arise from good works, including others seeing them and glorifying God; however, if the motive of my "holiness" is anything other than to be like God, I run a severe risk of feeding my pride and losing sight of the true Holy One.
  - b. Discerning God's will logically begins with the reason why I wish to seek His will in the first place. God is holy and I am a sinner saved by grace. God is the creator; I am the creature.
2. Other good passages to consider God's holiness include Isaiah 6:1-7 and Psalm 29.

**Questions to consider for further exploration:**

1. Matthew 23:1-11 Jesus tells his followers to do what the Pharisees say, but not what they do. What is the difference? What were the Pharisees saying that was right in contrast to what they were doing?
2. How might we be tempted today to make the same mistake as the Pharisees did (even with the best of intentions)?

**Main teaching point 2: Humbly approaching discernment of God's will requires a recognition of who I am.**

**Romans 3:10-12** As the scriptures say, “No one is righteous – not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.” (NLT)

1. I am a sinner saved by grace. In this passage, Paul is quoting Psalm 14. Clearly, the psalmist is using poetic hyperbole to express our relative position to God. The passage doesn’t literally mean that *nobody* seeks God. And yet, Paul here is using the psalmist’s verse to show how truly undeserving and how far we are from the holiness of God. He is holy, I am not. Paul isn’t trying to tell us that we are worthless in God’s eyes. His larger point is that Jesus has saved us in the midst of our sinful state, not because we deserve it.
2. Understanding who I am in relation to a holy God puts me in a humble posture before Him. As I humble myself, I am more receptive to His will and far less likely to twist God’s word to my own end.

**Thessalonians 3:3-5** “But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. And we are confident in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we commanded you. May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ.” (NLT)

- As I understand my position with respect to God as a sinner, I am more open to his direction. God is “faithful” in that he provides the strength and protection from Satan inasmuch as I am humbly receptive to his direction and protection. Removing myself from his will is dangerous.

#### **Question to consider for further exploration.**

Why do you suppose a humble perspective makes me more receptive to God’s direction?

#### **Main teaching point 3: Humbly approaching discernment of God’s will is replicating Jesus. Jesus provides the example of how to humbly discern God’s will.**

**John 5:19** “So Jesus explained, ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.’” ; **John 12:49** “I don’t speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.” (NLT)

- In these passages we see that even Jesus had a humble approach to understanding what God’s will was. If anyone could have acted independently, it was Jesus. And yet, Jesus pointedly explained that he took his cues for action and knowledge from God the Father. In doing so, Jesus clearly sets the example for us.

#### **Main teaching point 4: Jesus teaches us how to approach God with humility so that our pride does not become a barrier and we will be “rewarded” with discernment.**

Most of Matt 6 is about how a prideful disposition becomes a barrier to seeking God.

**Matt 6:5-6** “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” (NLT)

- When we pray for discernment of God’s will, pride will keep me from sincerely asking God for genuine direction. The desire to be seen as “spiritual” or “holy” and receiving the praise of others will keep me from being rewarded with understanding.

**Matt 6:16-18** “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And you Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” (NLT)

- Jesus uses another example, fasting, to indicate that all our spiritual acts that focus on seeking God (discernment, healing, etc.) are all for naught when we do so pridefully.

**Matt 7:7-11** “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” (NLT)

1. Persistence in asking requires faith, but also humility. To keep coming back to God, asking Him for discernment requires me to first understand that I am the one in need and that He is the one who can provide. Returning humbly to ask God is an act of faithful humility.
2. Matt 7:15-20 follows all these passages on humility. This is where Jesus explains that good trees bear fruit and bad trees do not. Humbly asking God for discernment will produce godly fruit, and the sacrifice required is my “self.” This concept of asking in humility is repeated with Jesus’ healing in late chapters.

**Mark 4:24-25** “Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given – and you will receive even more. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.” (NLT)

- Jesus explains that we must have a heart prepared to hear (good soil) and that is ready for the seed of God’s instruction. We ready our heart with humility. Only a humble heart will listen closely to God. The prideful wish to be heard, not to hear. Humility is the key to hearing and understanding (discernment).

**Suggestions for prayer and further study:**

1. Consider the healings of Jesus. Clearly, Jesus demands faith, but that faith is manifested in a humble spirit.
2. Matt 6:33 says “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” How does “seeking God” require humility?
3. Matt 8:5-13 depicts the faith (and humility) of the Roman officer asking for healing. How is this a portrait of humility?

Conclusion: Looking forward to next week – Practice discernment as an ongoing process