

# The Need For Discernment

The Vision / February 2009

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**Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”**

**Hebrews 5:12-14 (NKJV) “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”**

In the introduction of their book *The Passionate Church* [Cook Communications, Colorado Springs, CO, 2005], Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad recount the following event:

*“February 3, 1931, began as a quiet Tuesday morning in the beautiful coastal region of Hawkes Bay in New Zealand. The residents of Napier and Hastings, the two main towns in that area, went about their business as they had for decades. Customers were keeping the banks busy. Shops were filled with merchandise and eager buyers. Restaurants were clearing away the last of the breakfast dishes and preparing for the lunch crowd. Those on holiday made plans to go to the beach. In other words, life was going on as it had always been and probably would always be as the sun rose over these idyllic villages.*

*Then, at 10:46 in the morning, everything changed. An earthquake struck. In less than three minutes, seismic forces reaching 7.9 on the Richter scale destroyed most of the buildings in both towns, killing hundreds of people. Those structures not flattened by the quake were destroyed in the subsequent fire that swept through the ruins.*

*Once the smoke and dust cleared, the residents of Napier and Hastings were met with a great surprise. The shattered landscape bore little resemblance to the terrain they had known so well. Landmarks such as Napier Bluff Hill, a popular tourist destination, had been torn from the coast and tossed into the sea. What had once been flat ground was now a series of hills. Where there had been valleys, there was now level ground. Most shocking of all was the discovery that the water in Ahuriri Lagoon had somehow been swallowed up, leaving nine thousand acres of dry ground.*

*When residents of Hawkes Bay set about rebuilding their town, they faced a dilemma. The extent to which the earthquake had changed their environment was astonishing. Their maps of the region no longer applied; those maps showed roads running along land that no longer existed. And they did not show new land heaved up by the earthquake*

*Eventually the towns of Napier and Hastings were successfully rebuilt in the art deco style of the time (and to this day remain among the best examples of period architecture in the world) because those who directed the rebuilding threw out their maps and instead relied on a compass. When the landscape changes, maps are useless, but the compass is still trustworthy.”*

When we look around at the political and economic status in our nation and around the world, something is very evident: The social landscape has shifted. We are experiencing a cultural earthquake. Everything is changing. People want change without asking what that change will mean. In reality, what people really mean when they say they

want “change” is that they want “relief”. Whatever will bring relief is what must change. Unfortunately, no one seems to be asking the question, “Are we going the right direction?”

Let’s face it: our culture is lost. We are living in a postmodern era. Postmodernism is a worldview that rejects absolute truth. In this worldview, there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong. Right and wrong is not found through some outside code of teaching such as the Bible, but within ourselves. What may be wrong for you may be right for me. Everything is relative to the individual and the situation rather than an external standard. As a result, everyone lives according to their own concept of what is right.

This kind of thinking is nothing new. Consider the following passages from the Bible:

- Judges 17:5-6 (NKJV) *“The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*
- 1 Kings 15:4-5 (NKJV) *“Nevertheless for David’s sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”*
- Isaiah 5:21 (NKJV) *“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!”*

Postmodernism is not a sign of social progress but of social decay. We have lost our ability to discern our way. We no longer know how to discern right from wrong, truth from error, the holy from the profane, or the clean from the unclean. We have become vulnerable to deception. Deception is nothing more than the marketing of a lie—and we have bought the lie.

The church is also lost. In Revelation 6:14 NKJV) we read how an earthquake can change the landscape: *“Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.”* The cultural earthquake in our day has left us without a reliable point of reference. Our old maps no longer work. Our GPS systems are rendered useless. Our attempts to adapt to the culture have not produced true disciples. Even Bill Hybels and Willow Creek, the innovators of the seeker sensitive movement have determined that their efforts at seeker sensitive discipleship have not produced healthy disciples. People now blame the church establishment for their lack of spirituality and growth rather than themselves.

When our maps no longer work, we must turn to the compass. The Word of God is our compass. A compass is a device for determining directions by means of a magnetic needle or group of needles turning freely on a pivot and pointing to the magnetic north (“True North”). Jesus is our True North. Jesus said in John 14:6 (NKJV), *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”* If what we do doesn’t begin, continue, and end with Jesus, then we are lost. It is time to return to God’s Word and get our focus back on Jesus. Only then can we properly test and evaluate the social landscape, discern right from wrong, truth from error, and find God’s direction for our lost generation.