

**INTRO**

- What has been the biggest benefit and downside of technology in your life?

**READ**

1 John 4:1-6

**REFLECT & RESPOND**

The information/digital age we are in has given us unprecedented access to information and ideas. But it's becoming harder to know what's truth from error, what's helpful from harmful, in an age of fake news, alternative facts, media bias, conspiracy theories and a growing secular culture. We need to cultivate DISCERNMENT.

**WHAT IS DISCERNMENT?**

Jesus said, "Do not judge by appearances, but *judge with right judgement*" (Jn 7:24). Simply then, discernment is the ability to **rightly judge**.

*Qu: Some people accuse Christians of being judgmental. Is that fair? So, as we desire to grow in discernment, how do we avoid becoming judgmental?*

**WHY IS DISCERNMENT CRITICAL?**

There is more to discernment than just being on our guard from false teachers. Discernment is critical in these 3 areas:

- 1. Discerning Doctrine** = ability to discern *relative importance* of theological beliefs.
- 2. Discerning Culture** = ability to have a *faithful presence* in an increasingly secular world.
- 3. Discerning the Times** = ability to *recognize and respond* to the presence & activity of God both personally & in community.

*Qu: What is a belief that you felt strongly about as a new Christian that you've re-examined as you've grown in your walk with the Lord?*

**HOW DO I GROW IN DISCERNMENT?**

Spiritual discernment is a discipleship issue. In other words, there's a direct link between spiritual maturity and discernment.

John talked about "confessing Christ". Anyone can talk about Jesus and even believe in him (as other religions, cults, and philosophies often do). However, to confess Christ means to agree with and come in alignment with everything that's true of him. To grow in discernment (and maturity) means to grow in these 3 areas where Christ's light, love and life are manifested:

- 1. God's Word** — the Truth (Jn 17:15,17)
- 2. God's People:** Pillar & Foundation of Truth (1 Tim 3:15)
- 3. God's Spirit:** the Spirit of Truth (Jn 16:13)

*Exercise: Media Consumption vs Spiritual Input*  
Consider how much time you spend on TV, social media, gaming, your phone etc. Now, weigh that against how much time you invest in spiritual input (bible, prayer, church community etc). If you're like most, it becomes pretty obvious why we need to grow in discernment — there is a disproportionate influence we give to other voices outside of God's word, people and Spirit which underscores our critical need to grow in discernment.

*Qu: how might God be wanting you to grow in greater discernment? In what specific and/or practical ways?*

**PRAY**

- Pray for each one to grow in discernment instead of staying gullible, suspicious or overly judgemental.
- Pray for the group to grow deeper in reliance on God's Word, People and Spirit in this pursuit.