

**SHE CONSIDERS A
FIELD AND BUYS IT;
OUT OF HER EARNINGS SHE**
plants a vineyard

PROVERBS 31:16



CHAPTER 7

She is Discerning

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: GEN. 3:1-13 & MATT. 4:1-11

Right from the start, I knew how different they were from one another. Our daughter Madison was a little stinker at times, whose curious mind led her to dig into drawers and empty the cupboards. Graham and Nathaniel were two little monkeys, with more energy than a gallon of sweet tea, and the world was their jungle. And Brendan? He walked a straight line before he could crawl. In fact, he was so well-behaved that he made us look good.

Regardless of their personalities, it was our job as parents to wisely instruct them—instilling values within them, teaching them right from wrong according to God’s Word, and pointing them toward a life of integrity and kindness. Looking at each of them now, I see a reflection of that work in their lives.

As I thought about that today, I was reminded of Luke 7:35: “But wisdom is proved right by all her children.”

In other words, the choices we make, the way we treat others, and how we navigate life's difficulties all speak to the wisdom we live by.

And that's exactly what James helps us discern.

In James 3, James contrasts two types of wisdom: heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom. How do we know whether our wisdom is earthly or spiritual? First, it will be evident in the way that we live. And second, we can hold it up to the gospel as our standard. The life and teachings of Jesus provide the clearest picture of what true, heavenly wisdom looks like. James gives us a practical way to distinguish between heavenly and earthly wisdom by showing us their characteristics and the fruit they produce. When we compare our lives, our choices, and the wisdom we follow to the gospel, we can see where we stand.

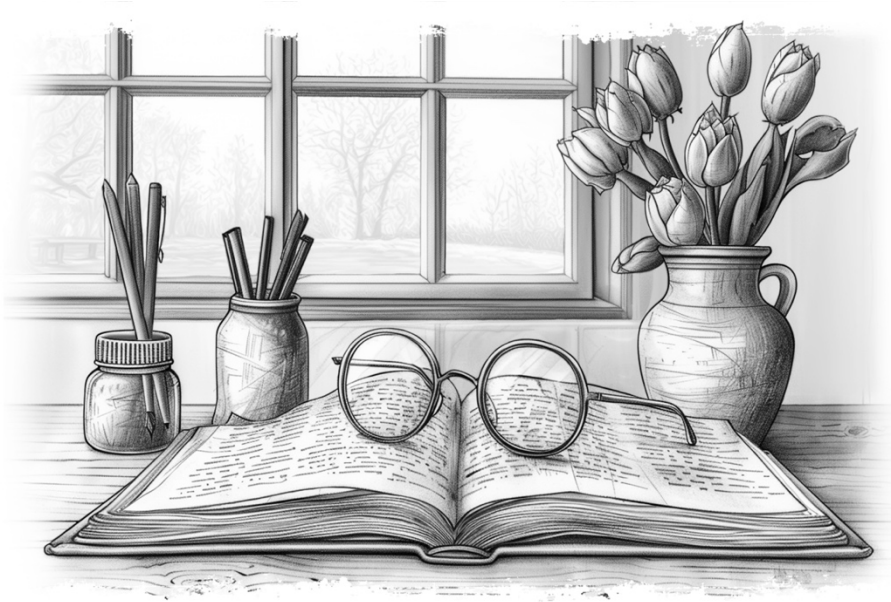
Heavenly wisdom will be reflected in a life that bears good fruit. It's marked by purity, peace-loving actions, consideration for others, and a heart that submits to God's will. When we live by heavenly wisdom, it shows in the way we handle conflict, how we respond to those in need, and the mercy we extend to others. It's not just about knowing what's right, but about living in a way that aligns with God's heart and His Word.

Earthly wisdom is driven by selfish ambition and envy, leading to disorder and division. It's easy to recognize because it often results in bitterness, strife, and an attitude that prioritizes personal gain over the needs of others. Earthly wisdom feeds our pride, convincing us to put ourselves ahead of others. James makes it clear that this kind of wisdom is unspiritual—even demonic—because it pulls us away from the humble and sacrificial life that Christ calls us to live. Rather than leading to peace, it leads to chaos.

SHE IS GROUNDED IN GOD'S WISDOM

Discernment is the ability to recognize when something isn't right. It's spiritual awareness—the God-given ability to distinguish truth from error, wisdom from deception, and what honors God from what merely sounds good.

But discernment doesn't come from intelligence, personality, experience, or what we sometimes call intuition. It doesn't come from having strong opinions or quick instincts. Discernment comes from God.



James makes that clear when he writes:

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

—James 3:17

Notice where that wisdom comes from. Not from culture. Not from consensus. Not from personal preference. It comes from heaven.

Two people can look at the same situation and walk away with completely different conclusions. Our views are shaped by many things—

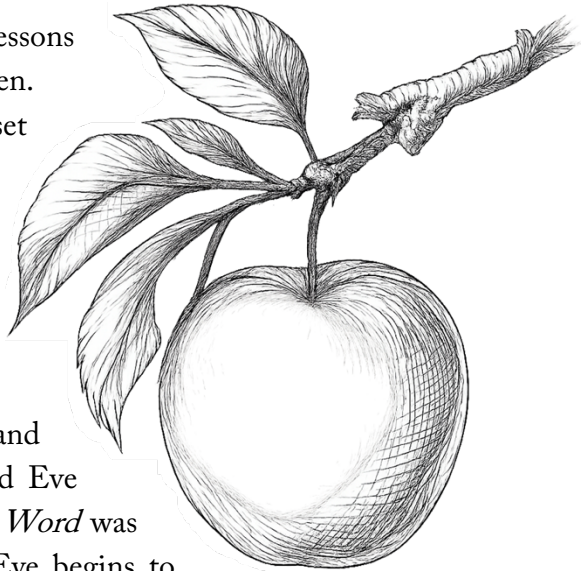
our upbringing, our past hurts, our fears, and our expectations. And while those influences may explain how we feel, they don't define what is true.

God's character doesn't shift with circumstances. His truth doesn't change with opinion. He simply *is* who He is.

That's why discernment begins with humility. It begins when we stop trusting our own conclusions and submit our understanding to God's wisdom.

One of the earliest lessons on discernment is found in a garden.

Eve didn't fall because she set out to rebel against God. She fell because deception entered quietly. The serpent didn't begin with a bold lie. He began with a question. "Did God really say...?" (Genesis 3:1)



That question planted doubt, and notice what it also did—it pulled Eve into a conversation where *God's Word* was treated like something flexible. Eve begins to reason it through. She answers the serpent, interacts with the idea, and in doing so she allows the discussion to move from *what God said* to *what she thinks God meant*. The focus shifts from trust to analysis. And the serpent keeps pressing, nudging her to interpret God's command through the lens of desire: *Wouldn't God want you to have this? Isn't He withholding something good?*

That's how temptation often works. It doesn't begin with, "Disobey God." It begins with, "Let's talk about whether God is truly good." It subtly reframes God's command until obedience feels restrictive and disobedience feels reasonable. God's generosity is questioned. His intentions are recast. And before Eve realizes what's happening, truth is being distorted.

Deception rarely arrives loudly. More often, it whispers. It invites conversation. It makes disobedience feel justified and trust feel naïve.

The enemy hasn't changed his approach.

We see the same tactic used again in the wilderness.

After Jesus had fasted for forty days, Satan came to Him—not with force, but with reasoning. He appealed to hunger. He appealed to identity. And at one point, he even quoted Scripture.

“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written...”

—Matthew 4:6

What Satan offered sounded logical. It even sounded biblical. But Jesus refused to reason on Satan's terms. He didn't step into the argument. He didn't let the enemy set the frame for the conversation. He didn't treat God's Word like a topic up for negotiation. Instead, Jesus answered with Scripture—truth rightly understood, truth rooted in the character and purposes of God. He met distortion with clarity. He met suggestion with certainty.

That contrast teaches us something important: discernment isn't just hearing a lie—it's recognizing when a discussion is trying to pull you away from simple trust. It's knowing when to stop entertaining a thought and start standing on truth.

Charles Spurgeon explained it this way: “Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.”

That's the heart of discernment. Not choosing between good and evil, but recognizing when something appears good while quietly leading us away from God.

Hebrews 5:14

According to this verse, what two things mark a mature believer, and how does "constant use" train discernment?

Philippians 1:9-10

What does Paul pray will "abound more and more," and what two outcomes does he connect to being able to "discern what is best"?

1 John 4:1

What command is given in this verse, and what reason does John give for why believers must "test the spirits"?

1 Kings 3:9-12

Why do you think God was pleased with Solomon's request?

SHE KEEPS HER THOUGHTS IN LINE WITH GOD'S TRUTH

Scripture makes it clear that deception doesn't just target our behavior—it targets the mind. Long before sin shows up in our actions, it takes root in our thinking. Paul wrote,

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

—2 Corinthians 10:5

The word Paul uses for “arguments” there comes from the Greek word λογίζομαι (logizomai). It means to reckon, calculate, reason, or carefully consider. It’s the kind of mental process we’d associate with logic—thought-through conclusions that feel measured, sensible, and well supported.

That detail matters.

Paul isn’t talking about fleeting thoughts or random temptations that pass through the mind. He’s talking about structured patterns of reasoning—carefully built cases that settle in and begin to shape the way we see God, ourselves, and the world around us. These are the thoughts that say, This makes sense, or Surely God would understand, or This seems reasonable given the circumstances.

The danger is that logic, when separated from truth, can sound convincing. A line of reasoning can be internally consistent and still be spiritually wrong. That’s exactly how deception works. It doesn’t always push us toward obvious sin; it invites us to justify ideas that quietly undermine our trust in God.



Paul’s point is this: discernment doesn’t stop at resisting sinful behavior. It reaches deeper. It challenges the conclusions we’re forming. It asks whether our reasoning is truly aligned with who Christ is and what He has revealed about Himself.

SHE TESTS WHAT SHE HEARS

In Acts 17, we're given a clear picture of discernment lived out in real life.

When Paul and Silas arrived in Berea, Luke describes the people there as noble—not because they accepted everything they heard, but because they tested it.

They received the message with great eagerness
and examined the Scriptures every day to see if
what Paul said was true.

—Acts 17:11

They were eager to learn. Open to instruction. Willing to listen. But they didn't stop there. They examined the Scriptures for themselves.

That balance matters.

Discernment isn't about being suspicious of every teacher or resistant to learning. It's about anchoring what we hear in the Word of God. No matter how engaging the speaker. No matter how persuasive the message. Scripture remains the standard.

And this is where many of us can quietly relate. Some women have "always believed." You grew up in church. You've heard Bible stories your whole life. You know the right answers, the familiar phrases, and the songs by heart. That's a gift. But there's a difference between hearing truth often and knowing it deeply for yourself. When faith is mostly inherited, it can feel steady—until it's tested. Until sorrow hits. Until a new teaching sounds convincing. Until someone questions what you believe, and you realize you're not sure how to explain it.

God never intended for our relationship with Him to be second-hand. Our Bibles were meant to be opened. Studied. Searched. Not as a burden, and not as a badge of spiritual success, but as a place to meet the Lord

personally. Even small, consistent steps matter—reading a paragraph, looking at a passage in context, asking, “What does this show me about God?” Discernment grows when we return to the source again and again.

Which camp are you in—have you ‘always believed,’ or did you come to faith later in life?

Discernment is important for someone who always believed, because:

It's important to someone who came to faith later in life, because:

And here's where discernment begins to move from study to practice. Proverbs 31:16 tells us,

She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

—Proverbs 31:16

That word “considers” matters. She doesn't rush into a decision because something looks promising on the surface. She weighs it. She thinks it through. She looks beyond the moment and considers what it will produce. That's discernment in action—measured, thoughtful, and rooted in wisdom.

Discernment doesn't stay on the pages of Scripture—it shows up in the ordinary moments of life.

Sometimes it appears in conversations where an opinion is shared confidently, yet something about it isn't quite right. Other times it shows up in the books we read, the podcasts we enjoy, or the messages we scroll past online—teaching that sounds thoughtful, encouraging, and compassionate, yet slowly shifts the focus away from God's truth.

Discernment also matters when we're given advice. Well-meaning people can offer counsel shaped by experience or emotion rather than Scripture. A P31 Woman learns to listen graciously without adopting every opinion. She weighs what she hears, asking whether it reflects the heart and wisdom of God.

Even culture speaks loudly. Messages about identity, fulfillment, and happiness can sound loving, while quietly redefining God's truth. Discernment helps us recognize when compassion is being separated from obedience.

In the small, everyday moments—what we listen to, what we accept, and what we quietly believe—discernment guards our hearts and keeps us anchored in truth.

SHE GUARDS HER HEART

I'm sure you've heard it said at least once:

“Follow your heart.”

That almost sounds good, doesn't it? The words are warm and familiar. Easy advice for a tough situation, but is it as wise as it sounds? More importantly, does it line up with truth?

Scripture gives us a sober answer.

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, “The heart is deceitful above all things...”

The Bible never tells us to follow our hearts. It tells us to guard them.

Our desires are not neutral guides. Left unchecked, they can cloud our judgment and pull us off course. If we followed our hearts without restraint, we'd eat too much, sleep too much, spend too much, and justify far more than we should. What feels reasonable in the moment doesn't always lead us toward wisdom. That's why discernment matters. It teaches us to slow down, to pause, and to measure what we're taking in against the truth of God's Word.

What we allow into our hearts—ideas, influences, teaching—shapes how we think and how we live. Discernment helps us recognize what belongs there and what does not.

A Proverbs 31 woman doesn't rush to conclusions. She listens carefully. She weighs wisely. She doesn't follow the crowd simply because a message sounds confident or appealing. Her confidence isn't loud or defensive; it's quiet and steady. She understands that truth doesn't need to be reinvented. It needs to be trusted.

Proverbs gives us this instruction:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

—Proverbs 3:5-6

That kind of trust requires humility. It means accepting God's wisdom even when it challenges our assumptions or runs counter to what feels natural. When we lean on our own understanding, we lean away from Him. But when we acknowledge God and trust His wisdom, we place ourselves under His leading.

Discernment is rarely dramatic. Most of the time, it's quiet and unseen. It shows up in ordinary moments—what we listen to, what we accept, what we repeat, and what we quietly believe. Over time, those small choices shape the direction of our lives.

A discerning woman learns to pause instead of react. She weighs what she hears rather than rushing to conclusions. She doesn't follow every voice that sounds persuasive. Her steadiness comes from knowing where truth is found—and returning there again and again.

That kind of discernment doesn't grow out of self-trust or sharp instincts. It grows out of humility. Out of a willingness to submit our understanding to God and trust that His wisdom is better than our own. And when the winds come—as they always do—she remains steady. Not because she has every answer, but because she is anchored in truth.

The P31 Challenge

How does Jesus' example in the wilderness challenge you to respond when a thought or teaching sounds logical, but doesn't line up with God's Word?



Take one message you hear this week, and hold it up to Scripture. Ask, What does this show me about God? Does this align with His Word? Practice slowing down, weighing wisely, and choosing trust over impulse. Small moments of discernment, practiced faithfully, shape a steady life.