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## **How to Have Standards and Not Be a Legalist: Sufficiency and Discernment**

How can a book written 2,000 years ago be sufficient to tell me how to live? There are two ways of answering this question:

1. Whatever isn't expressly forbidden doesn't really matter
2. **Discernment – the ability to carefully and wisely choose what is right based on principles from God's Word.**

Tonight we will look at what God's Word has to say about the issue of discernment.

### **I. God Warns Us about the Danger of Standards**

#### **A. God warns against the traditions of men (Mark 7:5-13).**

- The traditions of men can end up contradicting God's Word.
- The traditions of men can overemphasize the authority of man.
- The traditions of men fail to lead to a true worship of God.

#### **B. God warns against making a big deal out of the details (1 Timothy 1:3-7).**

- C. God warns against involving weaker Christians in controversy (Romans 14:1-4).

## II. God Shows Us the Need to Have Discernment (Heb. 5:11-14)

- A. Discernment goes beyond what is explicitly stated in the Bible (Galatians 5:19-21).
- B. Discernment is needed to live life by God's Word (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).
- C. Discernment is needed to please God (Ephesians 5:10).

## III. God Instructs Us about How to Develop the Right Standards

- A. Discernment requires knowledge.
- Think *theologically*. What does God think about this issue?
  - Think *biblically*. Will this edify? Enslave? Embolden?
  - Think *culturally*. What does this activity or thing mean to the culture at large?
  - Think *practically*. How can I best implement the principles above to love God and others?
- B. Discernment takes practice.
- Be ready to be proven wrong. Realize that over time you will learn better and better how God wants you to live.
  - Listen to those who are older and wiser.

## IV. God Gives the Final Goal of Discernment (Phil. 1:9-11)

- A. Discernment helps me love better.
- B. Discernment keeps me pure.
- C. Discernment helps me be fruitful for Christ.
- D. Discernment leads to a life that pleases God.

God's Word is sufficient, not because it gives us chapter and verse for everything we need to do, but because it trains us how to think and live.