

We should learn to distinguish between good and evil as God does

In the days when Malachi was a prophet, the people of Israel had gotten to the point where they thought it didn't make much difference whether a person tried to do right or not. They were saying such things as these: "It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evil-doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape" (**Mal. 3:14,15**). This moral indifference was all the more shocking because those who were thinking that way were not pagan idolaters but members of a nation that had a special relationship with God.

But God rebuked this cynical disregard for right and wrong, and He said a time was coming when "once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him" (**Mal. 3:18**). Both in the short term and the long, it does make a difference whether we follow God's will or not. And like those to whom Malachi preached, ***we should learn to distinguish between good and evil as God does***. If we don't, we will gradually lose touch with God Himself, and eventually get to the point where we have trouble identifying even the simplest truths about right and wrong.

Paul described the immoral mind of the ancient world in which the Ephesian Christians had lived before they obeyed the gospel: "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity" (**Eph. 4:17-19**). The God-given ability to tell right from wrong is a gift to be used properly. As with many other good gifts, we will either use it wisely or lose it.

If we don't try to distinguish between right and wrong, a progressive darkening of our understanding will take place. God will allow us to become deluded, and we may have a hard time recognizing even basic moral distinctions (**Eph. 4:18,19; 2 Thess. 2:11,12; Hb. 5:14**). So let's determine to make this week one of positive growth in our discernment between good and evil.

Monday: John 7:24

Key Idea: In matters of judgment, we need to judge with righteous judgment.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to "judge" something? What is the difference between "right" or "righteous" judgment and any other kind? What did Jesus mean by saying that we should not "judge by appearances"?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 14:5**.

Tuesday: Psalm 58:10,11

Key Idea: God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

Questions for Family Growth: In this life, why might we be tempted to doubt or wonder whether “there is a reward for the righteous”? Can we truly have faith in God and doubt what He says about His eventual judging of good and evil?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:6-8](#).

Wednesday: Galatians 6:7,8

Key Idea: We mock God if we say that He will not do as He has promised about good and evil.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “mock” someone? What is the lie that we are told not to let ourselves be “deceived” by? In the long run, what difference will it make whether we have lived righteously or not?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:9](#).

Thursday: Isaiah 5:20

Key Idea: Those who substitute evil for good will suffer serious consequences.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some practical ways we may “call evil good and good evil”? Is there any definite, objective standard by which right and wrong can be distinguished? How can we be sure that this standard is trustworthy?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:10](#).

Friday: Hebrews 5:14

Key Idea: We need to grow in our ability to discern between good and evil.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “solid food” spoken of here? What does it mean to “distinguish good from evil”? What does it mean that some “by constant practice” have their “powers of discernment trained” to do this?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 14:11](#).

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