

## APPS SERIES BY DAVID H. MCKINLEY

# 3-D: Discretion, Discernment, Discrimination

Sometimes there is more to life than “meets the eyes.” While there are no magic glasses to see through people, problems and perplexing circumstances that cross your path in life, there is an “App” to help you stay on course each day.

The idea is “seeing” in more than one dimension.

In the world of real estate, there is a motto that says, “Location. Location. Location.” In the way of wisdom, the motto is, “Discretion. Discretion. Discretion.”

<sup>1</sup>My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, <sup>2</sup>making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup>yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup>if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, <sup>5</sup>then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup>For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; <sup>7</sup>he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, <sup>8</sup>guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. <sup>9</sup>Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; <sup>10</sup>**for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; <sup>11</sup>discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you... <sup>20</sup>So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous (Proverbs 2:1-11, 20 ESV).**

There it is... discretion! We live in a world of massive indiscretion! And many spend their lives chasing and pursuing “fools gold,” and do not understand the meaning of *discretion*.

## 1. How do you define the word, *discretion*?

According to the *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828—“Discretion is prudence, foresight or knowledge that enables a person to judge critically of what is correct and proper, united with caution, judgment, primarily regarding one’s own conduct.”

In the world of wisdom, it all comes down to 3-D: Discretion, Discernment and Discrimination.

### Discretion

**Discretion is the power to perceive or the ability to make responsible decisions. A lack of discretion brings injury, pain and severe consequence.**

Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman without discretion (Proverbs 11:22 ESV).

Many beautiful people bear the pain of great indiscretions in life.

“Notable talents are not necessarily connected with discretion.” —Junius

Solomon, the principal writer of Proverbs, knew the essential need for discretion in life. If you turn back to the book of 1 Kings, you gain insight and background to the entire book of Proverbs.

READ 1 Kings 3:3, 5-10.

God answered Solomon’s prayer for discernment, a “cousin” to discretion.

### Discernment

*Discernment* is the power to see what is not evident to the average mind.

READ 1 Kings 3:16-28.

### Discrimination

*Discrimination* is the power to distinguish and select what is true or appropriate or excellent.

In the social context, discrimination is evil when you discriminate against race, culture or gender.

READ James 2:1-8.

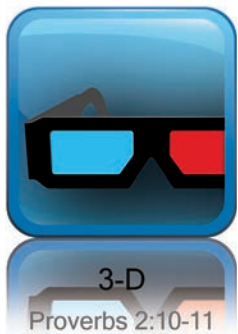
However, in the world of moral and social responsibility, discrimination is vital. Discrimination in this context is the ability to distinguish and separate what is good from evil, what is right from wrong and what is essential from what is excess.

Thomas Jefferson: “I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it [liberty] from them, but to inform their discretion.”

We live in an age of willful indiscretion. Is it no wonder then, we have such grave injury and consequence in the name of human liberty?

Discretion. Discernment. Discrimination. These are not only lacking, but are completely overlooked in the lives of most people in our day.

Discretion looks further down the road to see the consequences. Discernment looks beneath the surface to see deeper issues. Discrimination chooses a



3-D

**Apps Series, Part Two**  
David H. McKinley, Pastor  
warrenbaptist.org  
**Scripture:** Proverbs 2:11

**+** Discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you

**D** To forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness

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## 3-D &gt;&gt;&gt; CONTINUED

course of action based on the outcome of these two.

Look again to the Word of God:

<sup>21</sup>My son, do not lose sight of these—keep sound wisdom and discretion, <sup>22</sup>and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. <sup>23</sup>Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. <sup>24</sup>If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet (Proverbs 3:21-23 ESV).

**How do you develop discretion?**

How do you develop an ability to recognize and avoid words, actions and attitudes that result in undesirable injury and consequence? Can you develop discretion? Yes!

**>>Ask and Seek**

Look again at Proverbs 2:4-6. It is natural to the *natural man* to live by impulse. However, the *spiritual man or woman* does not live by instincts; he or she lives by divine impartation.

Discretion is a daily thing in the lives of men and women who care about spiritual reality and spiritual influence in life.

God is the One who gives wisdom.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him (James 1:5 ESV)

READ 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.

**>>Study and Know**

Wisdom comes from God and God's primary tool to impart wisdom is His Word!

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple (Psalm 119:130 ESV).

READ Psalm 119:97-100.

**>>Listen and Learn**

Many indiscretions come because of a failure to develop good listening skills.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice (Proverbs 12:15 ESV).

Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence (Proverbs 15:32 ESV).

**>>Think, then Act**

<sup>15</sup>The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. <sup>16</sup>One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless (Proverbs 14:15-16 ESV).

In each of our lives, ambition quickly climbs over judgment, caution is laid aside in compulsiveness, reactions overtake planned responses, and discretion is "dumped" as we shift into drive. The result is worse than we ever imagined.

Impulsive behaviors and reactive tendencies often cause us great trouble. Have you ever said or done something that as soon as you "released" your thought, you wondered, "Why did I do that?"

The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence (Proverbs 14:16 NLT).

A prudent person sees trouble coming and ducks; a simpleton walks in blindly and is clobbered (Proverbs 22:3 MSG).

Too many people live with the "domino effect" in life—one quick push and all the rest fall in rapid succession.

To build a life of skillful living and blessing, you must follow a simple adage I once heard from a wise missionary: "Don't just do something – stand there!" —Don Seymour

What about you today? Do you need discretion?

When you lack discretion, you cheat God, yourself and others.

Let's end where we started:

...discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you... (Proverbs 2:11 ESV).

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