

# SOLVING THE SPIRITUAL DILEMMA

Why is Discernment Key to Receiving Eternal Life?



MICHAEL COPPLE

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of the  
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Dedicated to

James Dean Steele

11 January 1944 – 15 September 2021

Just three months prior to the Lord taking him home, Jim Steele edited this book with great attention to detail. I will forever be grateful for his knowledge and caring attitude. Valedictorian of His 1962 class of Webb City, Missouri High School, and five decades later, WCHS Hall of Fame inductee, he was a life-long friend who I was honored to stand beside when we received our Eagle Scout awards. I am thankful for his loving support in my every endeavor throughout our entire lives. I genuinely, deeply appreciate his service to our nation, as he was a US Air Force Captain and Vietnam veteran who served near the DMZ for one full year. Most of all, I am sincerely looking forward to seeing Jim Steele again, because he is a fellow born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ our God and Savior.

## Acknowledgments

First, I give deepest, sincere gratitude to our Triune God for the life changing relationship He has given me with the Lord Jesus Christ. This new life and hope have motivated me to hunger more and more for His truth and to spread His love with God's Word. God took Randy Amos home on the night of 3 to 4 November 2020. Our brother is face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe he is hearing those words from the Savior: "Well done, good and faithful servant." The gift of teaching which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon our brother Randy is still reaping fruit and will continue for the rest of time. I pray that the Lord would let him know my heartfelt gratefulness. I'd like to offer special thanks to Jabe Nicholson, not only for the edification he transmits in our regular listening to the Uplook Ministries messages, but also for the inspiration of restored automobile photos in chapter three. Since he and six young men came through Golden, B.C., Canada with the 50's model refurbished cars and evangelic truths, I haven't stopped thinking about it. The young men with Jabe were Josh Caplan, Stephen Dick, Jayson Ball, Dale Martin, Elijah Middleton, and Keith Trevolt. I am deeply thankful for how they all roused the thought of comparing a restored car to that of a ruined but renewed soul.

I extend my gratitude to our brother and sister in Christ, Theo Wiersma, who is now at home with the Lord, and his

widow, Donna Wiersma. Theo skillfully “rescued” the ruined car from the pasture with his tractor and carefully loaded it onto the trailer. I appreciate Donna kindly granting permission to use the photos.

Jim Steele, life-long friend and dear brother in Christ, spent what I believe had to be many painstaking hours meticulously editing the manuscript for Solving the Spiritual Dilemma. I will forever be sincerely appreciative for his attention to detail, manner of modest corrections (to prevent me from being too embarrassed), and yet, thoroughness for a professional end product. He wrote this statement in his return of the many pages of manuscript: “Thank you for sending it, that I might find some light in our dark, increasingly foreboding world.”

Brother in Christ, US Air Force veteran, F-15 pilot, and Academy Wings of Blue Parachute Team member, Al Wallace read yet another of our manuscripts and provided the following feedback for which I am deeply humbled and very grateful: “You have set a new standard for providing Biblical and other references for your assertions — quite impressive.”

Peter Kerr, author of Election and Predestination, long-time teacher at Kawartha Lakes Bible College, Peterborough, ON, and present Canadian Director of the Emmaus Correspondence School, overwhelmed me by “focusing on the content” with the following positive

review: “I thoroughly enjoyed the book, and appreciate the solid Scriptural authority throughout. I realize the material is counter-cultural and not politically correct, but the truth is so needed in these times. I pray the Lord creates the opening for publishing and to get it into the hands of teachable souls.”

Other solid, gifted brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ who’ve helped me grow in my walk with the Lord are Warren Henderson, Louis Voyer, Ed Anthony, Harold Summers, Mike Atwood, Steve Price, and more. I am extremely grateful to these brothers who’ve devoted so much of their lives to the Lord and have helped us understand God’s absolute truth and to better know Him and love Him by writing books and commentaries, and speaking on “Zoom” and at conferences. Most have even come to the little assembly meeting of the Columbia Valley Bible Fellowship at Parson, BC to bring messages that encourage the saints with growing knowledge of our Lord God and Savior.

I continue to thank my brother in Christ and mentor, Ralph Kirchhofer, who has further developed my walk with the Lord moment by moment for the past 16 years. He has often boosted my confidence and reminded and instilled in me that in all things the Lord Jesus Christ may have the preeminence.



I will never stop thanking my loving, equally yoked wife, Elfriede Cople, who has a fulltime job editing, marketing, and communicating with publishers' staffs. Elfriede's gifts of administration and longsuffering were incalculable for supporting me to make this book public. I give her my heartfelt, deep appreciation. She and I both hope this book will make a positive impact for the Lord's purpose. To God be the glory.

I thank my dad and mom for instilling a foundation of patriotism, moral values and faith; and for the way they raised my brother and sisters and myself with unfailing love and energy. I would not be the person I am today without what they have done for me.

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## INTRODUCTION

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible unless otherwise noted

Within the Scriptures there are sometimes [brackets] with explanations of the meaning of older, out of date English words not commonly used today. Those bracketed, up-to-date words are either taken from the Bible margins, or from the author, to provide ease of understanding or clarification.

To make sense in English, the KJV Bible *italicized* some added words—words which were not in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek languages. The following verse demonstrates an example with the word *is*:

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God.  
2 Timothy 3:16a

The verbs *is* and *are* often were added, but not in every case:

The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;  
in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and  
knowledge.  
Colossians 2:2b-3

## CHAPTER 1

### What is Discernment?

It is the author's resolute, unshakable belief that time never ends and that eternal continuance of life even outside the physical body is inevitable. Each and every believer has experienced a life-changing relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ and our Creator. He has been in existence for all eternity. Each and every believer is convinced to have faith in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All believers are connected together by believing that the shed blood of Christ is what has forgiven them for offending God. Believers read and come to realize the Bible is absolutely flawless. Every word is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit of God (our Savior), who inspired the writers of the Bible, resides in (indwells) the being of every believer and provides convincing proof (although our physical bodies will die) to one's self that spiritual life is unending. He even adds that we will eventually have new physical, pain free bodies. The following verse, when kept in context with preceding and subsequent verses is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ:

All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. John 1:3

<sup>20b</sup>the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>21</sup>Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself. Philippians 3:20b-21

Therefore I [Paul the apostle] endure all things for the elect's [those who have made the choice to accept Jesus as their Savior] sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 2 Timothy 2:10

A passage in Matthew begins with a man asking Jesus what he must do to have eternal life:

“What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” Matthew 19:16b

The passage ends ten verses later with the Lord Jesus saying:

“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”

Matthew 19:26

God makes it possible for each of us to be His children who in turn have eternal life:

to them gave he [God gave to those who would believe] power [the right] to become the sons [children] of God, *even* to them that believe on his name. John 1:12b

Noah Webster describes *belief*:

“1. A persuasion of the truth, or [the mind agreeing] to the truth of a declaration” ... “or alleged fact, on the ground of evidence.” ... “2. In theology, faith, or a firm persuasion of the truths of religion.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Making the Wisest Choices Using Discernment**

In the 1940’s and 1950’s, many young kids were fascinated with stories like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and many more. They enjoyed the cartoons: *Bugs Bunny*, *Porky Pig*, *Sylvester the Cat*, and *Elmer Fudd*. They laughed at *The Three Stooges*, *The Keystone Cops*, and *The Little Rascals*; and after that—back when comedy drove people to laugh without having to use vulgarity—*Red Skelton*, *Jack Benny*, and *Bob Hope* could always make them giggle. Lots of these children wholeheartedly believed in *Super Man* and *Santa Claus*.

They believed the fairy tales that were so intimately instilled within them were sure enough true. But when they grew to be teens, they began to have serious doubts. When those who attended Sunday School attempted to hear the teacher, they couldn’t pronounce most of the biblical names of people and places that were being read to them and the other kids; much less understand what was being taught.

When they became adults, they saw the government beginning to tolerate Hollywood movie makers implanting foul language into their productions. This encouraged the comedians to use the same shock techniques to lure audiences—and what had crept in slowly finally erupted into breaking the third Commandment; the use of God’s name in vain, to be the norm.

What most Sunday School teaching boiled down to, was educating children to know right from wrong—recognize the difference between honesty and deceitfulness—and know what is *true* and what is *false*.

What does all this have to do with developing discernment? When looking back over those sixty to seventy years of our nation’s decline in good values—the degeneracy of the United States—we should consider what our Creator’s Word has to say:

Righteousness exalteth [gives dignity to] a nation: but sin *is* a reproach [shame or disgrace] to any people. Proverbs 14:34

The objective of *Solving the Spiritual Dilemma* is to emphasize the *eternal* impact that discernment can have upon all thoughts, decisions, actions, and reactions in one’s very life and being. Furthermore, the purpose is to develop a hunger for the Book that informs how a ruined soul can be renewed. *Solving the Spiritual Dilemma* can in no way profess to impart good judgment or reasoning ability like the library of Books that does: the Holy Bible. The Book of Proverbs is primarily focused on wisdom—a trait which, like discernment, imparts understanding and good judgment. The Bible consists of sixty-six Books, all of which are inspired by the Source of wisdom—our God and Creator.

Reading and comprehending to the end, God’s truth is presented in the Scriptures in such a manner that His truth cannot honestly be disputed. Quoting Peter Kerr from his book, *Election and Predestination*:

“Anyone who has read the entire Bible has seen that God stands alone as Creator, Master, King, Judge, Sovereign, etc. But on the other hand, within this same Bible, in just as plain language, God commands His created beings, over and over again, to make choices, warning them of negative consequences for wrong choices and promising them positive blessings for right choices.”<sup>2</sup>

### **What is Discernment?**

The basic definition of the noun *discernment*:

“The power or faculty of the mind, by which it distinguishes one thing from another, as truth from falsehood, virtue from vice; acuteness of judgment. ... The errors of youth often proceed from the want of *discernment*.”<sup>3</sup>

Noah Webster also gives the definition of the verb to *discern*:

To see or understand the difference; to make distinction; as, to *discern* between good and evil, truth and falsehood.<sup>4</sup>

As a youngster matures, the mind is capable of receiving both *sound* and *false* teaching. Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives the definition of *doctrine*:

In a *general sense*, [doctrine is] whatever is taught. Hence, a principle or position in any science; whatever principle or position is laid down as true by an instructor or master. The *doctrines* of the gospel [from God and spell, means *good news*] are the principles or truths taught by Christ and his apostles. The *doctrines* of Plato are the principles which he taught. Hence a *doctrine* may be true or false; it may be a mere tenet [theory] or opinion.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, both spiritual and worldly things are correspondingly discovered. Two different individuals, instead of being of one mind, can be of different opinions.

The act of *discerning* is much the same as *detecting*. To detect something is described as:

“finding out what is concealed, hidden, or formerly unknown. To discover; to find out; to bring to light. The act of detecting; finding out what is concealed, especially what is concealed by design, hidden, or formerly unknown; discovery.”<sup>6</sup>

“To discern is to see or understand differences; to make distinction; to have clearness of mental vision. A discerner makes clear-sighted observations and judgments; and has the power of distinguishing or perceiving differences of things or ideas, and their relations.”<sup>7</sup>

Discernment, reasoning, and *wisdom* go hand in hand. Mr. Webster, in his definition of the word *solid*, also said,

“Wise men seek *solid* reasons for their opinions.”<sup>8</sup>

It has been said, “The influence of a valid education which is free from error cannot be refuted. When absolute truth is planted, the facts

produce a new found power to see what is not evident to all people.”

The Lord Jesus instructed His eleven [after Judas Iscariot was no more]:

Sanctify [set those who would believe, apart from the world] through thy truth; thy word is truth. John 17:17

I am [Jesus is] the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto [goes to] the Father [in heaven], but by me. John 14:6b

For my mouth shall speak truth; Proverbs 8:7a

My mouth shall speak of wisdom. Psalm 49:3a

At various times those who are not able to back up their opinions have distorted and attempted to revise history. However, no matter what is said, the *truth* of history never changes. Noah Webster describes the *truth* of history:

The *truth* of history constitutes its whole value. We rely on the *truth* of the scriptural prophecies.<sup>9</sup>

The word *heart* has a double meaning. It can be referring to the physical heart which is in our chests, or metaphorically like when we hear someone say, “She has a good heart.” The *heart*, according to James Strong, when used figuratively, can be a synonym of *mind*, and, in this sense, is regarded as the foundation of discernment, knowledge, and wisdom. James Strong describes the heart:

“The heart includes not only the motives, feelings, affections, and desires, but also the will, the aims, the principles, the thoughts, and the intellect of man. In fact, it embraces the whole inner man, the head never being regarded as the seat of intelligence. While it is the source of all action and the center of all thought and feeling the heart is also described as receptive to the influences both from the outer world and from God Himself.”<sup>10</sup>

Discernment then, as taught by theologian Joseph Rioux, is the *action* of selecting the most excellent decision—the wisest choice—in any and all circumstances. The *best response* is not based on the wisdom of any other



created being; rather the unsurpassed answer is the Source of wisdom—  
life's Creator:

But of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us  
wisdom. 1 Corinthians 1:30a KJV

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and  
understanding. Proverbs 2:6

It would seem reasonable that the creature should trust his Creator:

<sup>2</sup>That their hearts might be comforted [encouraged], being knit  
together in love, and unto [attaining to] all riches of the full assurance  
of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and  
[both] of the Father, and of Christ; <sup>3</sup>In whom are hid all the treasures  
of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:2-3

The word *sound* has many definitions, but the one which is much like  
the word *right* (as in the word *correct*), is used in the Scriptures for *sound  
doctrine*. The definition of *sound* from Noah Webster:

“Founded in truth, Right; correct; well founded; free from error.”<sup>11</sup>

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in  
faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 1:13

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but  
after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having  
itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and  
shall be turned unto fables. 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be  
able by sound doctrine both to exhort [encourage] and to convince  
[convict] the gainsayers [those who contradict]. Titus 1:9

BUT speak thou the things which become [are proper for] sound  
doctrine: <sup>2</sup>That the aged men be sober, grave [reverent], temperate,  
sound in faith, in charity [love], in patience. Titus 2:1-2

<sup>7</sup>In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine  
*showing* uncorruptness [integrity], gravity [reverence], sincerity,

<sup>8</sup>Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part [an opponent] may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Titus 2:7-8

When making decisions on any and all courses of action, the *best response* is to do what pleases—not self—not other people—but what pleases the Lord:

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” Galatians 1:10

If, instead of preaching the truth, Paul, the apostle, had preached what was pleasing to others just for them to hear what they wanted to hear, he would not have been a worthy servant of the Savior.

not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth [tests] our hearts. 1 Thessalonians 2:4b

and do those things that are pleasing in his [God’s] sight. 1 John 3:22b

<sup>3</sup>Yea, if thou criest after knowledge [discernment], *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; ... <sup>5</sup>Then shalt thou understand the fear [reverential awe] of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup>For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:3, 5-6

<sup>7</sup>The works of his [God’s] hands *are* verity [truth] and judgment; all his commandments *are* sure. <sup>8</sup>They stand fast for ever and ever, *and are* done in truth and uprightness. ... <sup>9b</sup>*holy and reverend is* his name. Psalm 111:7-8, 9b

Since God is *holy*—that is, totally *righteous*—and since God is the Source of wisdom and discernment; then to know God is to know what is *right*. Speaking of a man, everything one does, *should be* the *right* thing to do, and should be done in accordance with the authorities’ laws *and* the things that are pleasing—not displeasing—to God. When a man does what

is within the will of God, then he is doing what is done in accordance with truth.

“God’s Law—the Ten Commandments—is the perfect standard of truth and justice. When laws are definite, *right* and *wrong* are easily ascertained and understood.”<sup>12</sup>

The definition of *righteous* is

“Just; accordant to the divine law.”<sup>13</sup>

Applied to the Lord Jesus, righteousness is holy obedience to the Father with flawless perfection.

“*Applied to persons*, it denotes one who is holy in heart, and observant of the divine commands in *practice*. The *righteous* in Scripture, denote the servants of God, the saints.”<sup>14</sup>

The word *saints* in the above quote speaks of everyone who is a true believer. Anyone who believes is set apart from the world (sanctified) and is one of the Lord’s *saints*.

\* \* \*

The author you’re reading was still confused about what was true and what was false when he graduated from high school and joined the US Air Force in 1961. Thinking he was a Christian, and that he might get killed, he got baptized by being immersed in a tank of water at a Christian Church. But, not really knowing God, he was not a true, *believing* Christian; he was actually a *professed* Christian. Before he went under the water, he was a dry sinner; and when he came up out of the water, he was a wet sinner. He would later learn that there was nothing—including getting baptized—he could physically do to save himself. This is the reason we are blessed with the Savior’s physical work on the cross, shedding His blood to forgive us and dying for us so we can have life in Him.

### **Two Different Baptisms: Spirit and Water**

What does baptism have to do with discernment? The answer: If the only thing anyone needs to do to get to heaven is to get water baptized, then people would be lined up waiting to be baptized in the ocean, a lake, a river,

or a baptismal tank. It takes only a little reasoning—that is, discernment—to understand this notion. *If it sounds too good to be true...it probably isn't.*

Being baptized in water does not save a person. However, the importance of the event for a new believer cannot be overemphasized, but the reason for the baptism must be correctly understood. Upon his acceptance of and believing in God, the new believer is immediately spiritually [invisibly] baptized by Jesus into the Holy Spirit who then forever indwells—that is, abides within—the regenerated person.

<sup>11a</sup>I [John the Baptist] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance:  
... <sup>11c</sup>he [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost... Matthew  
3:11a, c

Then soon after being spiritually baptized, the new believer is physically [visibly] water baptized, showing publicly, front and center, an obvious declaration that the Lord Jesus has earlier baptized him by indwelling him—already immersing the Holy Spirit—within his soul. Everyone attending at the subsequent water baptism, sees that he testifies to the fact that he is a changed person, a new creature with a new heart—a new believer in Christ.

Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:27

At the moment a person believes, the Holy Spirit indwells—is absorbed into—his being—Jesus *spiritually* baptizes him, and then he *publicly* “puts on Christ” by being immersed in water baptism. It can be said like this: When a soldier puts on his uniform, he identifies himself as being in the army. When the believer “puts on Christ” he identifies himself as being in Christ.

The two different baptisms, Spirit and water baptisms, will be further expounded upon in chapter three. But first, the enormous, eternal value for one to possess discernment should be noted.

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## Notes

[←1]

American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828, Permission to reprint granted by G. C. Merriam Company, Copyright 1967 & 1995 (Renewal) by Rosalie J. Slater. Definition of *belief* #1 and #2

[←2]

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[←3]

American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828, Permission to reprint granted by G. C. Merriam Company, Copyright 1967 & 1995 (Renewal) by Rosalie J. Slater. Definition of *discernment*



[←4]

Ibid. Definition of verb discern

[←5]

Ibid. Definition of doctrine #1

[←6]

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published by CONSOLIDATED BOOK PUBLISHERS Chicago Copyright ©  
MCMLXIX, MCMLXIX, MCMLXVIII, MCMLXVII. MCMLXV, MCMLXLXIV,  
MCMLII by Processing & Books, Inc. Definition of *detect*

[←7]

Ibid. Definition of *discern*

[←8]

American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828, Permission to reprint granted by G. C. Merriam Company, Copyright 1967 & 1995 (Renewal) by Rosalie J. Slater. – Definition of *solid* #6

[←9]

Ibid. Definition of *truth* #1

[←10]

The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, © 2001 by  
Thomas Nelson Publishers. Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary Section; p. 139 #3820  
#1

[←11]

American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828, Permission to reprint granted by G. C. Merriam Company, Copyright 1967 & 1995 (Renewal) by Rosalie J. Slater. # 8, 9



[←12]

American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828, Permission to reprint granted by G. C. Merriam Company, Copyright 1967 & 1995 (Renewal) by Rosalie J. Slater. - 3<sup>rd</sup> definition of *right* #1

[←13]

Ibid. *righteous* # 1

[←14]

Ibid. definition of *righteous* #1