

Being a Relevant Church: Discerning God's Call Where to *BE*

Participant Study Guide

Thursday, April 30 & May 7, 2020

Series: P.U.**R**.S.U.E. Excellence | Unit: Relevance

Relevance. *God is at all times, and in every case, relevant. So too is God's word. The same must be true of God's people. To be relevant, we must **BE** who God formed this church to be where God planted us. Relevance positively impacts the community's lived experiences.*

With this statement about the nature of relevance for our church, it is necessary to further develop our understanding of how we can be a relevant church, and the implications of such a characterization. This lesson is tailored to examine Biblical models of Jesus' intentions about where His disciples should be relevant.

Discernment

Discernment is one of the buzzwords of the Christian faith. That is to say, it is used without discretion or consideration of its meaning. What we know is that we like the way it sounds because it somehow positions the user as one with authority, able to speak where others are not. So let's start to appreciate relevance by better understanding the word *discern*.

What it means to discern

The Bible provides for us our English word discern and its derivatives (i.e., discernment, discerning, discerned, etc.) from the Hebrew word *nakar*, first appearing in Genesis 27:23, and defined as scrutinize, or look intently at, and it carries diverse implications. On one hand, there is a sense of knowing or acknowledging. On the other hand, there is a sense of being estranged from (as in a stranger to, separated from, or foreign/unfamiliar) or alienating. Here is how Gen. 27:23 (NJKV) reads: "And he (Isaac) did not recognize him (Jacob), because his (Jacob's) hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him (Jacob)." Other examples include Job 34:19 and Ezra 3:13.

New Testament usage provides the Greek word *diakrino*, first appearing in Matthew 16:3, which is defined as to separate (make a distinction or distinguish between), to learn by discriminating (in the sense of testing), to withdraw or to separate oneself, to dispute. Here is how Matt. 16:3 (NJKV) reads: "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times." Other examples include Acts 15:9 and Romans 14:1.

Taken together, to discern is to carefully consider a matter, by testing. The act of discernment is not an end to itself, however. Discernment plays out in the way one acts upon what has been considered by testing. With this in mind, it can be seen why discernment is necessary.

Why discernment is necessary



Being a Relevant Church: Discovering God's Call Where to BE

Discerning God's call about the aspect of location pertaining to relevance--i.e., the question of where to be--is an important part of what it means to be relevant. Let's take a few minutes to discuss why this is so.

Relevance in relationship to Jesus' direction

We turn our attention now to the relationship between discernment and relevance as it pertains to Jesus' disciple-making initiative. First, let's consider Mark 6:7-13

1. *Why does Jesus send the disciples out?* _____

2. *Who does Jesus send?* _____

3. *Based on what happens in the text, describe what the disciples encounter upon their arrival.* _____

4. *What does Jesus expect of those He sends?* _____
