



Discerning Good and Evil *September/October 1999 Bimonthly Tape*

Study Guide

This teaching is really about goodness, the fruit of the spirit, but we'll be looking at it in light of its opposite—evil.

- “There are only two states of being: submission to God and goodness or the refusal to submit to anything beyond one’s own will—which refusal automatically enslaves one to the forces of evil. We must ultimately belong either to God or the devil.” M. Scott Peck, *The People of the Lie* (Simon & Shuster, N.Y., 1983), p. 83.
 - This knowledge goes a long way toward whether our lives are pleasing to God or not. **Proverbs 15:3,8,9,26**
 - We are to increase in a knowledge of good and evil in order to educate our conscience biblically—to be able to choose good and avoid evil. **Hebrews 5:11-6:12** - This is not going to happen just by being “spiritual.”
 - Relating properly to our [educated] conscience and the conscience of the others is the key to consistently manifesting the love of God. **Romans 14; I Corinthians 8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:2**
 - The purpose of increasing in knowledge of good and evil is to call good what God calls good and to call evil what God calls evil. We live in a culture and a time that wants to believe that no one is evil, only misunderstood.
1. **Recognize evil** in order to be able to choose to be good and do good.
- We all have evil present with us, and available to us. We can easily fall into patterns of evil thinking without knowing it. “It is the sense of our own sinfulness that prevents any of us from undergoing a similar deterioration. *POTL*, p. 69.
 - Recognize evil in order to be able to choose to be good and do good
 - Good and evil is a major theme of the Bible; **Genesis 1:31; 2:9; 17; 3:22**; the first thing that was not “good” is that man was alone; isolation and ungodly introspection are a breeding ground for evil. God made us to be in community, and to care for one another.
 - Knowledge of good and evil is a good thing once innocence was lost and evil entered the picture. A knowledge of the moral law is crucial to a walk of righteousness. Ignorance is not innocence.
 - Sin is the state of disobedience and the individual act of falling short of perfection, literally “missing the mark.” Evil enters the picture when we deny there is a mark, and/or that we have missed it.

- Naming evil gives us a certain power over it.
- Evil defined biblically: maliciously inflicting pain on others
 - a. Characteristics of evil and evil people;** a theme of Proverbs “the Wicked” vs. “the Righteous.”

“They cast their pain onto others through projection and scapegoating. They themselves may not suffer, but those around them do. They cause suffering. The evil create for those under their dominion a miniature sick society...are we to consider individuals healthy simply because they are not in pain—no matter how much havoc and harm they bring to their fellow human beings?” *POTL* p. 125,26

Evil: the use of power to destroy the spiritual growth of others for the purpose of defending and preserving the integrity of our own sick selves. In short, it is scapegoating. We scapegoat not the strong but the weak. For the evil to so misuse their power, they must have the power to use it in the first place. They must have some kind of dominion over their victims.” Parent/child, Jews and Hitler, MyLai. *POTL*, p. 119

- **Proverbs 4:19** - Willful ignorance; refusing instruction, walk in darkness; characterized by denial, complacency and self-satisfaction.
- **Proverbs 10:6,32** - Marked by verbal and physical abuse; cutting, slanderous, accusative, etc. You can trace the evil from their victims; evil comes from a perversion of strength: the poor of spirit are not the ones that are evil.
- **Proverbs 10:16; 11:18; 15:16; 1 Timothy 6:10** - Dishonest gotten gain, blood money; the pursuit of money is the source of many evils. His income is derived from deceitful and unethical means—lying to his supervisors, cheating his customers, not giving good service, just pretending to, etc.
- **Proverbs 10:24; 28:1** - The evil person has secret fears that he won’t confront; he lives in denial of his feelings of guilt, suffering and emotional pain, and ignores his conscience.

The fear of self-criticism is typical of evil persons: “they are pathologically attached to the status quo of their personalities, which in their narcissism they consciously regard as perfect...” *POTL*, p. 74.

Evil persons demonstrate “an extreme form of self-protectiveness (from fear) which invariably sacrificed others rather than themselves, failure to be displeasing to themselves... utterly dedicated to preserving their self-image of perfection, they are unceasingly engaged in the effort to maintain the appearance of moral purity...lying is designed not so much to deceive others as to deceive themselves. They cannot or will not tolerate the pain of self-reproach. *POTL*, p. 75

- **Proverbs 10:25** - Unprincipled; easily blown about by circumstances; **Eph. 4:14** They “lie in wait to deceive.” There is a willful quality being spoken of. We always want to believe that people mean well, but some people don’t, even leaders in the Church. They are caught in the snare of the enemy and are poison, not genuinely caring about the spiritual growth of others, but
- Protecting their own interests, control, empire, etc. They are blown here and there by every wind of teaching; compromise, lack of integrity.

- **Proverbs 12:5** The evil person gives bad advice and is deceitful because it is not based on personal responsibility. Adam shifted the blame, scapegoating is characteristic of evil. *POTL*, p. 75
 - **Proverbs 13:5; Ephesians 5:8-16** The evil person disguises his motives with lies evil rather than bring it to the light.
 - **Proverbs 29:7** The evil disguise their motives with lies; they want to appear as if they want to help; basically have a lack of concern for others as persons and view them as objects, means to the end of the satisfaction of their own desires—for domination and control, for wealth, acceptance, etc (Prov. 15:28 NIV). *POTL*, p. 104,105.
2. **Avoid being and doing evil; Job 1:1** feared God and shunned evil. Avoid even the appearance of evil (**1 Thessalonians 5:22--KJV**)
 3. **Avoid evil people** who are unrepentant; Jesus said avoid the Pharisees. **Proverbs 12:26; 1 Corinthians 15:33**
 4. **Abhor (KJV), hate (NIV) evil; Romans 12:9** this is a commandment!
 - There can be no compromise with evil--**Proverbs 25:26**
 - Sometimes we can get motivated by hate for evil and the Devil when God and the Love of God seem remote.
 - **The Evil One—the Devil**, the personification of stubbornness, contrariness, disobedience, hatred, self-fulfillment. **John 10:10f** His only interest is in stealing, killing and destroying
 - **Evil Spirits** (not called demons, devils, as often as evil spirit)—they have no concern for their host—they are interested only in having a dwelling place.

It is evil to teach that there is no evil, devil, or that evil spirits ought not to be cast out. Popular counseling ministries teach against “ekballistic” ministry—that believers ought not to think that casting out spirits is either available or desirable.
 5. **Avoid repaying evil with evil**—retaliation—much evil is done with the motivation of combating or eliminating evil.
 6. **Overcome evil with good.** “All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” Once we get over our spiritual naivete and see evil for what it is, we must remember to love our enemies, and overcome evil with goodness.

The Role of Civil Government; Genesis 9:6; Proverbs 20:26; 28:4; 29:2; Romans 13:3
 7. Consistently manifest biblical goodness—a loving attitude toward God and man that upholds standards and acts in the best long-term interests of others. It is the “fruit with teeth.”