How to Build Character in your Children

Day 9:

**Discernment**  
By Scott Williams

For as long as I can remember, I’ve always been interested in birds. In our current house, I’ve set up several feeders outside our dining area so we can enjoy the many different species that come throughout the year. (I’ve identified at least 60!)

When I was young and first learning to identify birds, I could differentiate between a woodpecker and a robin. As I learned more about bird markings and features, I was able to tell one type of woodpecker from another. Now that I’ve been watching for decades, I can readily discern different races within a species of woodpeckers.

Discernment is the ability to judge well. It is the life application of knowledge and wisdom that grows keener with maturity. All children first gain an awareness of the world outside themselves, and as they comprehend it, they begin to apply it to their own life situation.

It’s the same in our spiritual lives. Author and pastor Tim Challies describes discernment as “the skill of understanding and applying God’s Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong … Our goal in discernment is to do just this: to see things through God’s eyes through the Bible and thus to see things as they really are.”

While you can’t discern for your child, there are some vital things that you *can* do to help them learn proper discernment.

***Lead them to Christ.*** Let them see and know what God has done for you through Christ’s redemption and how they can receive the free gift for themselves. Without the Holy Spirit in their lives, they can’t understand the foundational truths of God’s word (1 Corinthians 2:14).

***Teach them to know and love the Word.*** Knowing God, as we read in 2 Peter 1:2-4, is sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness. Regularly reading God’s Word, which is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), will give them the tools for discernment as they encounter new ideas and experiences.

***Engage on real-life issues.*** Let them know that the reality of God’s love and grace affects how we understand the world. As events come in their lives or in the daily current events, share your wisdom and ask them questions that will help them sharpen their discernment and begin to better process on their own.

**Scripture:**

Philippians 1:9-10 I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. 10For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can’t understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.

1 Peter 1:2-4 May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

3By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.4And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.