

Character Qualities: Discretion

Proverbs 27:12

Today we're looking at a topic that probably everyone needs to hear.

Pr 27:12 A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, The naive proceed and pay the penalty.

Intro: Define discretion.

"Avoiding words, actions, and attitudes that could result in undesirable consequences." - Bill Gothard

Discretion is looking and thinking ahead.

It is putting yourself in the place of others to anticipate their needs, priorities, and perspective.

Discretion is considering the consequences before you make a choice.

Discretion is deferring your right to say or do something in order to gain a better outcome.

Discretion is the opposite of impetuosity.

Lack of discretion can be due to naivety, insensitivity, or selfishness/pride/rebellion.

Excessive discretion can appear to be over-timidity or over-cautiousness.

I. Discretion in Words

Pr 17:28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is counted prudent.

James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. ³Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. ⁵So also **the tongue** is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸But **no one can tame the tongue**; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh

and bitter water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh.

Pr 19:11 A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Ecc. 5: 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

This is especially easy for someone who has a choleric (Type "D") personality – "Direct" (as opposed to the Type "S" personality – "Sensitive")

This is especially easy for someone who has the spiritual gift of Prophecy (as opposed to someone with the gift of Mercy).

Is it OK to say something as long as it is true?

II. Discretion in Actions

Pr 11:22 As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.

What does it mean for a woman to "lack discretion?" _____

Rom 14:16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. ²⁰Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. ²¹**It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.**

What does this passage have to do with discretion? _____

Is this hypocritical?

Sometimes this can be ignorantly or pridefully violating another person's cultural norms.

Examples: Other countries, other cities, other church traditions

Just because we have the "right" to do something, does that mean it's OK?

Ro 15:1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. ²Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

Doesn't this also apply to raising our children?

III. Discretion in Attitudes

Phil. 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

James 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." ¹⁶But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Other excellent references: Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 17:6-10, 18:9-14, 22:25-27

How could these attitudes result in undesirable consequences?

What are some other attitudes that could fit here?

Conclusion: How do you increase discretion?

Ask: Do you have discretion?

How can you get discretion?

Prov. 2:1 My son, if you will receive my sayings, And treasure my commandments within you, ²Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; ³For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; ⁴If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, And discover the knowledge of God. ⁶For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. ⁹Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course.

¹⁰For wisdom will enter your heart, And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

¹¹**Discretion** will guard you, Understanding will watch over you,

Prov. 5:1 My son, give attention to my wisdom, Incline your ear to my understanding;

²That you may observe **discretion**, And your lips may reserve knowledge.

First, seek wisdom.

Ask God to help you think before you speak or act.