

Location: Sixth & Washington Streets Church of Christ

Date: December 3rd, 2025 (Mid Week Bible Study Winter Quarter 1)

Title: Counter Point 1: The Importance of Discernment and Defeating the Straw Man

1. Developing the Skill of Discernment:

- a. *Hosea 4.6* – “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge.
- b. *John 10.4-5* – “When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”
- c. *John 10.16* – “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd.”
- d. *John 10.27* – “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”
- e. *Colossians 2.8* – “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”
- f. *Hebrews 5.14* – “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”
- g. Remember:
 - i. ***Bad logic leads to bad conclusions!***
 - ii. ***Truth does not hide from questions!***
 - iii. ***Discernment helps us to love God and our neighbors more faithfully!***

2. Truth vs. Relativism

- a. *Is Truth Subjective or Objective?*
 - i. Subjective: statements or judgments based on personal feelings, preferences or perspectives
 1. *Key Trait:* Dependent on an individual’s perspective or preference.
 2. *Test:* Different people may disagree, and both can be “right” from their perspective.
 3. *Example:* “Chocolate ice cream is better than vanilla ice cream.”
 - ii. Objective: statements or observations based on observable facts, evidence, or reality.
 1. *Key Trait:* Independent of personal feelings or opinions.
 2. *Test:* If multiple people investigate, they should reach the same conclusion.
 3. *Example:* “Water boils at 100° C at sea level.”

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b. *Why it matters:*

- i. Subjective claims reveal values, preferences, or emotions.
- ii. Objective claims can be tested and verified.
- iii. Confusion happens when someone treats a subjective opinion as if it were objective truth (or vice versa). That's often where fallacies sneak in.

3. Different Fallacies We Will Consider in this and Coming Lessons:

- a. Strawman
- b. Ad Hominem Attacks
- c. Begging the Question
- d. False Dichotomies
- e. Appeal to Emotion
- f. Bandwagon Fallacy
- g. Slippery Slope

4. **The Strawman Fallacy**

- a. A Straw man fallacy is when a person misrepresents another person's position to make it easier to attack. Instead of engaging with the actual argument they create a distorted version – like a scare-crow, and knock that down instead.
- b. Example: Christians say the Earth is flat because the Bible says so...LOL
 - i. How is this a strawman fallacy?
 1. It is dishonest (It avoids the real issue)
 2. It is manipulative (it makes the opponent look foolish without fair engagement)
 3. It is unproductive (It shut downs meaningful dialogue)
- c. How to Answer this Straw Man Fallacy
 - i. Restate the claim fairly: "I hear you saying that Christians teach a flat Earth."
 - ii. Correct the Distortion: "Actually, the Bible does not teach the Earth is flat. That is a misunderstanding of the text." Then go through several passages of the Bible and show how it is a misunderstanding.
 - iii. Respond Graciously: Christians throughout history have recognized that the earth is round. The Bible's purpose is to reveal God and His relationship with humanity, not to give a scientific textbook. So, it's important to read it in its proper context.
- d. Passages Commonly Misunderstood as Supporting a Flat Earth:

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- i. *Isaiah 11:12* – “He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”
 1. Misinterpretation: Taken literally, “four corners” suggests a flat, rectangular earth.
 2. Context: It’s a metaphor for the whole world, not a geometric description.
- ii. *Revelation 7:1* – “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth...”
 1. Misinterpretation: Again, “corners” is read as physical edges.
 2. Context: Symbolic imagery of completeness and universality.
- iii. *Isaiah 40:22* – “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.”
 1. Misinterpretation: Some argue “circle” means a flat disk.
 2. Context: The Hebrew word *chug* can mean “sphere” or “roundness,” and is not limited to flatness.
- iv. *Psalm 104:5* – “He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.”
 1. Misinterpretation: Read as teaching a stationary, immovable earth.
 2. Context: Poetic language about God’s sovereignty, not physics.
- v. *Ecclesiastes 1:5* – “The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.”
 1. Misinterpretation: Suggests the sun moves around a stationary earth.
 2. Context: Descriptive, phenomenological language (how things appear to us), not astronomy.
- vi. *Job 38:13* – “...that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it?”
 1. Misinterpretation: “Edges” imply a flat surface with boundaries.
 2. Context: Figurative imagery of God’s power, not a literal cosmology.