



You have a choice ... to pause and discern

When things begin to escalate in work situations, or there's just a lot going on constantly, do you feel you have a choice to pause and discern?



This and more was the focus of the July 9th BELIEVES session featuring Rory Gray, Senior Counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom focused on a topic entitled "You have a choice ... to pause and discern."

Gray, who grew up in Oregon, and went to Washington and Lee University in Virginia to earn degrees in Medieval and Renaissance studies and law, has been in Georgia for 8 years working for the Alliance Defending Freedom.

"How many of you have heard of Alliance Defending Freedom?" Gray asked.

A few hands were raised.

"A lot of people haven't," he added.

Then he asked, "Has anyone heard of former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran?"

More hands were raised then before.

"That was one of our cases," Gray stated. "I helped draft the complaint. There was nothing he actually did that was wrong. It's about what he wrote in his free time for a Bible study."

Gray then continued, "Y'all have given me a fantastic topic – 'You have a choice ... to pause and discern.' So I thought first I need to go to the Bible to see what it has to say about that."

The first thing Gray that became clear from seeing what the Bible had to say about the topic is that we have to pause in the first place.

"The only reason to do that is if you believe in God," Gray said.

He then spoke a bit about Alliance Defending Freedom.

"Alan Sears is the founder of ADF. Early on he came up with the ADF life verse –

'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5).

Society tells us to ‘look within’ when we should be ‘looking up.’ That’s hard to do, particularly at work. It’s difficult even when you work at a Christian law firm like ADF,” commented Gray.

Why is this all hard to do?



Gray stated, “We tend to compartmentalize our lives and keep work away from home and church. If you went to public school like I did, we were trained like this. It’s particularly hard in the legal field. If you share your faith too much, you could be seen as not rational (what we’re expected to be).”

For Gray, if he didn’t think God was in control, he doesn’t believe he could do his job.

“If I thought the weight of these cases was all on my shoulders, I’d be overwhelmed.”

In his line of work, Gray says they win more cases than they lose – but they still lose.

“Sometimes we lose the case but win the battle,” he remarked. “One example of this is a case we had pertaining to a public school in New York. The space in the school was allowed to be rented for other uses – except for religious worship. We lost the case, but the next mayor came in and changed the policy.”

So what does pausing actually do?

“It sounds like we’re doing nothing or being lazy,” said Gray. “It’s actually how we put our faith into action though. Think of Psalm 46:10 – *‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’* When we recognize our need for God, we stop to listen to Him.”

Another example of this from the Bible that Gray cited was Habakkuk 2:1-2 –

“I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.’ Then the Lord replied: ‘Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.’”

“I know in secular businesses you may not see the spiritual battle going on as much, but it’s there,” commented Gray. “I’ve never been so spiritually attacked like when I am working on Barronelle Stutzman’s case, the owner of Arlene’s Flowers of Richland, Washington.”

Whether it’s Gray in his legal work, or anyone in their particular profession, Gray indicated he believes that we so often conform to what the world says that we don’t see the spiritual battle.

“If we’re not pausing, we’re not going to do the discerning to know what’s right versus wrong.”

In the courtroom, Gray says it's easy to look across at the other party is the enemy, but they're not – the Devil is the enemy.

"Society is so toxic, any disagreement is labeled 'hate' – even the most un-hateful people you've ever met like Barronelle Stutzman," said Gray. "Barronelle was recently asked in an interview, 'What can we pray for?' She didn't say, 'Pray for me.' She said, 'Pray for Robert, the customer involved on the other side of the lawsuit.' If it was me, and my home and retirement was threatened, I'll be honest, I don't think I'd say, 'Pray for Robert.'"

Gray then added, "Our culture says, 'if you love me, you'll tell me everything I do is right,' but that's not really love."

All of this reminded Gray of Proverbs 2:1-5 –

"My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

"How hard are we really knocking?" Gray asked to everyone present. "Sometimes I don't think I'm knocking hard enough."



Gray then shifted the focus of his remarks to the Holy Spirit.

"All too often the Holy Spirit is the forgotten member of the Trinity. Yet Jesus said that he is to be a vital part of our lives (John 14:16-17). He is strongly associated with God's peace (John 14:26-27). Who doesn't need more of that?"

Going back to the case of Barronelle Stutzman, Gray spoke of how she's been in the crosshairs for 6+ years with the case she's a part of.

"That's a good chunk of her life. The only way to have joy in all this is to surrender it to God."

Continuing with the focus on the Holy Spirit, Gray remarked that discernment often comes through the Holy Spirit working through God's word.

"Scripture tells us that God's ways are 'discerned only through the Spirit' (1 Corinthians 2:14). Often the Spirit speaks to us through God's word."

This has often been the case for Gray personally.

"I can't tell you how many times my Bible reading for the day has just happened to be exactly what God needed me to hear—even if it was uncomfortable (Hebrews 4:12). Immersing ourselves in God's word shows us who God is and reveals his heart," stated Gray. "This knowledge and the Holy Spirit's leading enable us 'to discern what is best' – not to build ourselves up but so that we may be "pure and blameless" (Philippians 1:9-10)."

As the session began coming to a close, Gray stated that one of the most refreshing things about Christians should be that they know they're sinners and are able to admit it rather than pretending everything they do or want is right.



"The only way to combat our sinful nature is to listen to God's 'still small voice,'" he said. "Every day, I have to discern at ADF why I am there doing what I do, and who I put my faith in. If I put my faith in people, I'm not OK. If I put my faith in God, I'm OK."

As is often the case at BELIEVES, Gray left all the attendees with a set of questions for reflection and discussion, which were:

1. What are some ways to create regular opportunities for pausing and discernment?
2. How could pausing to discern be a powerful witness of our faith to non-believers?
3. How do we reorient our minds to see pausing to discern as a virtue not a vice?
4. What types of God-given discernment have you experienced in your life?
5. Is a misconception of God the cause of our failure to pause and discern?