

## C3 LEADERS' QUESTIONS

S2022-WEEK 5

2/27/22

### Listen to, Learn about, and Love on one another

- Please share with your group a time that you doubted and questioned your faith.

### Getting Started with a Warm-Up:

- Please share with your group a person you are personally acquainted with who has walked away from their Christian faith (please do not use real names).

### Getting Down to Business:

The following questions are following this format: Scripture/Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP).

#### 1) Scripture/Observation:

A) Read 2 Corinthians 13:5 (see passage and commentary below). We can see from this passage that examining and testing are not wrong activities. What is Paul encouraging the Corinthian believers to examine and test? How would they go about doing this?

“Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.” (2 Corinthians 13:5 NLT)

**13:5 Examine . . . Test.** See 1 Cor. 11:28; Gal. 6:4. Paul's words help clarify the doctrine of assurance of faith. Paul asks the Corinthians to examine their own lives for evidence of salvation. Such evidence would include trust in Christ (Heb. 3:6), obedience to God (Matt. 7:21), growth in holiness (Heb. 12:14; 1 John 3:3), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23), love for other Christians (1 John 3:14), positive influence on others (Matt. 5:16), adhering to the apostolic teaching (1 John 4:2), and the testimony of the Holy Spirit within them (Rom. 8:15, 16). [ESV Reformation Study Bible,

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<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+corinthians+13&version=NLT>, accessed 2/25/22.]

“That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.” (1 Corinthians 11:28 NLT)

“Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else.” (Galatians 6:4 NLT)

Also read this essay of “Assurance” by Ray Galea  
(<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/assurance/>)

B) Read 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 (see passage and commentary below). From this passage, what are followers of Christ told to test? How would they go about doing this?

“20 Do not scoff at prophecies, 21 but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. 22 Stay away from every kind of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 NLT)

Paul warns against putting out the Spirit’s fire (v.19). The specific issue is prophecy. Paul is unequivocal: “Do not treat prophecies with contempt” (v.20). Equally, they ought to test everything, hold on to the good and reject any “evil type of phenomenon allegedly inspired by the Spirit” (Marshall, 159).

Prophecy was important to the early church for the task of explaining the meaning of the OT in light of Jesus and for building up the church through correction and instruction.

Paul strikes a balance between a gullible acceptance of any claim to prophetic utterance and a cynical disdain that denies its possibility. He does not give the criteria for discernment here, but other texts may help (see especially 1Co 12-14). Prophetic utterance must be consistent with the oral tradition. It does not announce revelation direct from God independent of the tradition. It draws attention to the lordship of Jesus who

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is God's final and complete revelation (see Heb 1:1-2). Finally, it builds the church. [Asbury Bible Commentary, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5%3A20-22&version=NLT>, accessed 2/25/22.]

C) Read Genesis 3:1 (see passage and commentary below). In what way was the serpent encouraging Eve to question and rethink her faith?

“The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” (Genesis 3:1 NLT)

A new character is introduced into the narrative in the form of a serpent. How one interprets the serpent is immaterial to the intent of the plot. The character of the serpent is clear enough. It is intrinsic to neither God nor man but exists apart from each, possessing an inimitable craftiness (3:1a). The introduction of the serpent brings into focus again the problem posed in 2:16-17. In the ensuing dialogue with the woman, the Creator's authority is maliciously challenged, realities are distorted, and God himself is misrepresented. By appealing to the unreasonableness of God's command, the serpent sets itself over against God. God is no longer depicted as benevolent, desiring the harmonious well-being of his creation. He is defined by the serpent as selfishly malevolent, with only his own best interests at stake. (Asbury Bible Commentary, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+3%3A1&version=NLT>, accessed 2/25/22)

D) Read 1 Timothy 1:3-4 (see passage and commentary below). How did Paul tell Timothy to deal with the people who had contrary teaching? What was the warning he gave concerning their teaching?

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3 When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth. 4 Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God. 5 The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. (1 Timothy 1:3-5 NLT)

Command shows that Timothy, like Paul, has authority. The false doctrines disrupted the management of God's household by undermining faith and promoting controversies instead of love. This love results from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere (Gk., "non-hypocritical") faith (v.5). These qualities describe an inner character that is in contrast with the hypocrisy of the false believer. Internal qualities are reflected in external action. This is a major emphasis in the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness. (Asbury Bible Commentary, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy+1&version=NLT>, accessed 2/25/22)

### **2) Application:**

A) What new idea or truth have you gleaned from this look at deconstructing Christianity?

B) Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. How would knowing the truth of this passage of scripture and believing it help you during times of doubt and questioning?

14 But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. 15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches

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us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17 NLT)

**3) Prayer:** As you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to be wise and discerning during the difficult times we are currently living in.