

## Five Ways to Examine Your Faith

Air Dates: February 28 - March 4, 2022

### Day One

We have come through two years of the unknown like most of us have never experienced before. And the end is not yet in sight! How are we as believers in Jesus Christ navigating through these strange and difficult waters? Are we any better at it than others who don't know Jesus as we do?

If nothing else, this pandemic and its many side effects have caused us to examine our faith, don't you think? We read in 2 Corinthians 13:5:

*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?*

In the face of this uncertainty, this loss of hope, this new normal which we all find very troubling and hard, maybe it's time to truly examine ourselves and our faith. So, this week I will give you five ways to examine your faith. I hope you will find it helpful. Here's number one.

1. Have you allowed the important daily disciplines of your life to fall away?

I'm referring to everyday disciplines as well as spiritual disciplines. For example:

- Are you getting up early and making a plan for each day? Days without discipline are discouraging. Recently I allowed a day to just get away from me. I sat and thought about all I had to do, but I didn't do anything. By the end of the day I was grumpy, not joyful. I simply had abandoned a daily discipline of a regular routine with goals for the day. I find that even the small disciplines—like making your bed, dressing in a caring way, straightening up the house, eliminating clutter—they make a difference in your approach to your day and therefore in whether your day is well spent or not.
- How faithful have you been to stay focused on God's Word and prayer? Is that a priority in your life? In fact, have you stepped up the time you spend in getting to know God and truly learning to pray? I have learned that if I allow this discipline to slip, it's usually downhill for the rest of my day. It's the essential one—the discipline that is foundational for all the other daily disciplines.

So, examine your faith by checking up on how you're doing in the daily disciplines of life. It's easy to let things slide when life is uncertain, and if that's happened to you, you will benefit greatly by re-establishing those important daily disciplines.

### Day Two

We go to doctors for regular checkups—right—just to make sure nothing's wrong. According to 2 Corinthians 13:5, we are to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. It's like a faith checkup. Here's the second way to examine your faith:

2. Are you doing the good works God has for you to do?

Galatians 6:3-5 says:

*If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.*

So, what are the works you are doing in obedience to the Lord? This passage says we are to test our own actions—or examine our actions. We know from Ephesians 2:10 that “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” What are the good works you are doing that God has prepared for you to do?

The works we are to do are part of the gifting God has given to us. For example, if God wants you to help people who are sick or disabled, you will most likely have the gift of mercy. That is what you need to do those kinds of good works. If he wants you to lead a worship team, then no doubt you have some musical gifting that enables you to do that good work. Part of the works God has for me is teaching and writing and speaking. Well, thankfully I love to communicate in these ways.

God would not have a good work for you to do that would be beyond your ability. Oh, for sure it will mean you have to work at it and develop your gifts and skills. But he will equip you to do the good work he has determined in advance for you to do.

So, are you sitting on the sidelines or are you actively doing the works God wants you to do? That’s a really good question to ask yourself as you examine your faith.

### Day Three

This is faith checkup week! I’m suggesting five ways to examine your faith—to see how healthy your faith is. I’m asking some incisive questions that may prompt you to consider whether you need some adjustments, some changes, some recommitment in some areas of your life.

1. Have you allowed the important daily disciplines of your life to fall away?
2. Are you doing the good works God has for you to do?
3. Are you showing the love of Christ as you should?

John 13:35 says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” And in 1 John 4:7-8, it is even stronger:

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

The kind of love this refers to is not necessarily warm, gushy feelings toward someone, but rather it is agape love—love that results in practical actions. First Corinthians 13:4-7 lists those love actions:

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Every time I read that description of love, I’m convicted because I know I lack some of these evidences at times. Like, love is not self-seeking. That means it’s not selfish. You love because God is love and you choose to love like he loves. And love is not easily angered—think of what easily angers you. That’s where you need to learn to show love.

So, take another look at this description of love, and ask God to reveal any areas in your life where you're not loving like he wants you to.

## Day Four

Our fourth test question for is:

4. Is your faith—your relationship with God—growing?

You know, if your child didn't grow as expected, you would be concerned. If a ten-year-old looks and acts like a five-year-old, you would be seriously worried, right? How do you think our Heavenly Father feels when we are spiritually way behind the curve? So, can you see areas of growth in your spiritual life? Can you actually identify areas where you are more like Jesus today than this time last year?

Second Corinthians 3:18 makes it clear that we should be in a growing process:

*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Ever-increasing—that's the key word there. A healthy Christ-follower should be able to name areas where they are growing. Take the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23a:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

Test yourself in each of these areas: Are you more loving, more joyful? Have you been more faithful, more gentle? Are you exercising more self-control? Further in Galatians 5 we read: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Are you "keeping in step" with God's Spirit and growing more and more like Jesus? That's a really good spiritual checkup question.

## Day Five

How long has it been since you had a checkup? Most of us are pretty good at making sure we have physical checkups regularly, but I'm talking about a spiritual checkup. So, I've suggested four examination questions which may be helpful in determining how healthy your faith is. They are:

- Have you allowed the important daily disciplines of your life to fall away?
- Are you doing the good works God has for you to do?
- Are you showing the love of Christ as you should?
- Is your faith growing?

Here's the final question:

5. Do you share your faith with others?

As Christ-followers, we believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and there is no other way to have a right relationship with God—right? So, if we believe that, it should be natural that we share it with others. We know that God does not wish that anyone should perish, and neither should we. Since truth sets people free and because we know this truth about Jesus, sharing that truth is one evidence that our faith is strong.

I've just finished reading the book, *Not a Fan*, where the author asks again and again if you are just a fan of Jesus Christ or are you a follower, truly a disciple. If you do not share your faith, is it because you fear persecution or rejection? If you believe the gospel is the only way to salvation and that others will

be lost eternally if they do not accept it, that should urge you to share your faith with others. So, have you done that lately?

My former Pastor was and is very comfortable sharing with anyone anywhere. Taxi-drivers, someone sitting next to him on an airplane, the next-door neighbor—he simply never hesitates to ask appropriate questions and start a conversation about Jesus. I have to confess that I'm not as natural at that as he is but I realize it's an area where I need to grow. And what I've discovered is that when I start a conversation about my faith with someone I may not know so well, it usually is not nearly as scary or as difficult as I thought it would be. I think we let our enemy cause us to fear sharing our faith and then we miss out on lots of opportunities.

So, I'm hoping you'll look at these five questions I've asked and allow God's Spirit to help you check up on yourself, make sure your faith walk is healthy and growing, to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.