

Check, Check and Check Again (How to Discern 4)

by Anton Bosch

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of discernment in faith by encouraging believers to rigorously test teachings against Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 17:11

Topics: "Discerning Truth", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of testing everything we hear in our faith, just like carpenters measure twice before cutting. He warns about the prevalence of deceivers and false prophets in the world, urging believers to be vigilant and discerning. By listening to the voice of the Spirit, aligning teachings with Scripture, understanding biblical truths, and checking for flaws in logic and dishonesty, we can safeguard ourselves from being misled. It is crucial to know the basic doctrines of the Christian faith to avoid deception and stand firm on non-negotiable truths.

Transcript

This is a principle that holds true in most areas in life. Carpenters speak about measuring twice and cutting once. We teach our children that when they cross the street they must look left, look right and look left again. And when it comes to our faith we must be even more careful and check everything we hear.

1Thessalonians 5:21 says: "Test all things; hold fast what is good." In other words, not everything is good and can be trusted, so everything must be tested first. The noble-minded Bereans even subjected Paul's teaching to scrutiny and they were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11).

We live in dangerous times and the world is filled with deceivers, false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing and heretics. Those who preach the Truth are a small minority while the false apostles wield massive budgets with which they dominate every form of media. No matter whether you listen to "Christian" radio, watch "Christian" television look at "Christian" websites or enter a "Christian" bookstore, the odds are stacked against the possibility that you will be exposed to truth. Yet every day thousands are deceived into believing anything that is sold under the banner of "Christian."

It is thus imperative that we carefully check every word we hear or read. But how do we do that? Here are a few brief pointers:

First, listen to the voice of the Spirit: "...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:21). Let me make this very clear: You cannot judge a message or a man just based on that inner voice. But if you listen to the promptings of God's Spirit, you will often feel uneasy about something which simply means that you need to stop and check. In the same way, a good feeling about someone or a teaching does not mean it is right - you must still check. Almost every week I get emails from people who question things because they "did not feel it was right." In most cases they were correct. Error is presented so cleverly and so slickly that there are times that the problem will not be obvious. Yet an uncomfortable feeling about the message should lead to a check.

It is easy to overreact to the extremes of the mystical and touchy-feely religions and to reject anything that is not written in black and white. But Jesus promised that "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). Paul writes "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). Listen to Him. He will often warn you of danger and alert you to the need to check further.

The second check is to ask the question: "Does this line up with Scripture." Notice, the question is not whether the speaker / author quoted a verse. The question is "does it line up with the general teaching of the Bible." It is easy to support error with isolated verses which are taken out of context.

Next ask the question: "Exactly what does the Bible teach on this matter". You will be surprised how much you can learn by simply using a concordance. The first time I heard that people were barking like dogs in churches, and that this was a "blessing from God," I immediately looked at every verse that spoke about dogs and barking. That little study showed that every time dogs were referred to in the Bible they were symbolic of evil, demons and that which is defiled! So if the devil is presented as a dog in the Bible (Psalm 22:16,20), can the barking of a dog be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit?

The fourth question is whether the teaching is new or is representative of what the church has always believed? So when the televangelist says that God consists of nine parts, we should immediately recognize that as contradictory to the commonly held doctrine on the tri-unity of God. Some times new teachings aren't quite as obvious as this, but the point is - they're new.

Off course, this presupposes that you know the basic doctrines of the faith. That is just the problem. Most Christians do not know the fundamentals of the faith and "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). If you are not able to list and describe the fundamentals of the Christian faith, then you are in danger.

I am not asking you to be a theologian, just like you do not need to be a chemist to know that protein is food and arsenic is poison. You must know the basics else you will swallow the biggest lies and be deceived. When someone presents a teaching that contradicts the basic tenets of the faith you need to be very careful. Check again. Did you misunderstand him? Did he misspeak or does he really believe what you heard him say? We do not all agree on every detail of the faith but there are certain non-negotiable doctrines that are simply not up for discussion and you need to know what those are.

The fifth question is whether the message contains flaws in logic. Our faith is logical and rational and when preachers make irrational and unproven claims they must be challenged. There are many ways in which preachers and writers break simple rules of logic. Here is one example of a "technique" that is often used: If "A" equals "B" then "C" equals "D." NO! The first part of the statement has nothing to do with the second.

Don't be fooled by a long list of things that are mentioned but that has nothing to do with the conclusion. Here is a real example. God made Abraham rich with material things; God made Isaac rich (materially); God made Jacob rich (materially); therefore God will make you rich with material things. Wrong. There is no direct link between the Patriarchs, material blessings and you - even though many like to say so.

The sixth question is whether there is evidence of dishonesty. Does the author deal with the material and evidence in an honest way or does he disregard all the verses that disproves his point and only quote those that support his idea? Does he blatantly change words or their meaning? Does he pick and choose translations to find one that will support his view? Or does he make obvious errors in fact. Remember, if he can lie to you in small things then he can lie to you in the major things - don't trust him (Galatians 2:24). I just caught you. There is no Galatians 2:24! Yet you will be surprised how often writers and preachers will quote verses that have absolutely nothing to do with the topic. They do this since they know their audience is gullible and will not open the Bible to actually check.

Next week I will deal with questions you need to ask about the author / speaker. You must check both the message and the messenger. Sometimes good preachers can bring a flawed message. In that case you must reject the message but not the preacher. But sometimes a bad preacher can bring a good message. In this case both the message and the messenger must be rejected. The only way you will know the difference is to check, check and check again.

(To be continued)

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