

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 Duties of Believers – Test All Things

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Introduction

In our Postmodern culture, intellectualism has been replaced by “feeling”. Mind and thought are seen as a dead end, after all if you need a piece of information – simply ask Google.

This has set the stage for society and tech to interpret and give meaning to information. This is a dangerous path.

Reason has been supplanted by “feelings” and “emotion”. The goal in life is not to know God, but to feel good and be happy. When a person chooses to live their lives for feelings, it dulls reason and abandons discretion. This is clearly visible in our immoral society. Right and wrong is not important as long as it make you feel good. The 60’s had a saying, “If it feels good, do it!”

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1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

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Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish God's truth from error and is essential to the Christian life.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— ²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

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The need for spiritual discernment is why the apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to **test all things**. **Test** translates a common New Testament word that refers to examining something for authenticity. It is the distinguishing between true and false, right and wrong, or good and bad. Sometimes the word denotes the process of distinguishing what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph. 5:10; cf. Rom. 12:2). **“All things”** permits no exceptions; it includes every issue and idea that might confront believers.

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Our society today is a battleground. It calls evil good and good evil. **Our society has lost its ability to discern the issues of life**. It has abandoned God’s Truth and embraced a lie. Society has lost its ability to reason and look at consequences and outcomes. It lives for the pleasure of the moment and leaps blindly into tomorrow. When consequences come, it seems that they double their efforts and/or blame others for the results. Few people look at themselves to see if they are the problem.

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Last summer we did a study regarding some of the issues that have become battlegrounds in society. We looked at racism, marriage, gender, family, government and several more.

It is easy to point the finger at others, but **we need to remember that we are part of this society.** The 60's had a "counter-culture" movement that abandoned morality. The church needs to become a "counter-culture" force for good. We do this by teaching believers, so they teach their children how to "**test all things!**"

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How do we **test all things?**

First, any individual who claims to represent and teach about God is to be tested against the Bible—the Word of God. The starting point for this testing is whether or not the teacher teaches and observes the truths of Scripture (Isaiah 8:20). Jesus Christ also admonished us to watch for false religious teachers (Matthew 7:15-16, see also 1 John 4:1).

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Secondly, to “test all things” **we must have the approach of the Bereans, testing all things by studying the Word of God**

(Acts 17:11).

Finally, **every idea or activity that comes before us in life should be scrutinized through the filter of God’s truth.** To

mature as a Christian is to become skilled at discerning between “good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14) and between what is and is not acceptable to God (Ephesians 5:10).

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Once they **test all things**, believers must then **hold fast to that which is good.** **Hold fast** means “to embrace wholeheartedly,”

“to take possession of.” **Good** denotes what is inherently genuine, true, noble, and right from God’s perspective not mans (Rom. 7:16; 1 Tim. 1:8, 18; 2:3; 4:4; 6:12–13, 19; 2 Tim. 4:7; Titus 3:8). Believers should not embrace something just what might be beautiful in appearance. When believers find what is **good**, they must embrace it and make it their own (cf. Rom. 12:9; 16:19; Phil. 4:8).

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Test all things; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil. Conversely, Paul warned the Thessalonians to **abstain from every form of evil**. **Abstain** is a strong word that means “to hold oneself away from.” The emphasis is on the believer’s complete avoidance of any evil teaching or behavior. Nowhere does Scripture permit believers to expose themselves to the influences of what is false or evil; instead, they are to **abstain** from such things, even flee them (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; cf. Pss. 34:14; 37:27; 97:10; Prov. 3:7; 8:13; 14:16; 22:3).

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Test all things; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil. **Evil** refers to something that is actively harmful or malignant. I like the definition that evil is “**anything contrary to the nature, purpose, or will of God**.” Such **evil**, which includes lies and distortions of truth as well as moral perversions, appears in many forms. Because of its many manifestations (cf. Matt. 5:11; 12:35; 15:19; Mark 7:23; John 3:19; Rom. 1:29–30; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10; James 3:16), the apostle warned the Thessalonians to avoid **every form of evil**. Paul’s exhortation was a general call for believers to discern truth from error, good from evil, righteousness from sin, and a command to abstain from any of the negative teachings, influences, or behaviors that would displease God.

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So What ...

Believers who yield to the Holy Spirit's complete control will appreciate Scripture's character. They will allow its power to sanctify their lives and will examine everything by its standards. They will fulfill three responsibilities all believers have to Jesus Christ—to honor His Spirit, obey His Word, and exercise spiritual discernment.