



2 Corinthians 13:5-14 Examine Yourself

Summary: Will you pass an examination of your spiritual health?

I need everyone to put your bags away, put your phones down, and pull out a sheet of paper – we've got a pop quiz this morning. It's open book, but you'll have to do your own work.

Anyone remember pop quizzes? Anyone still have them or give them today?

What was their purpose? They got your attention and helped you know – do I understand the material or not? Am I caught up or not? Am I ready?

Well, this morning we really do have a test, an [examination](#) to use Paul's word, and while you won't be turning your work in to me or anyone else for a grade, you should be able to see where you stand spiritually, and that's the whole point. So, if you're taking notes, you'll want to number your paper from 1-10 because we'll be evaluating ten items.

Paul is writing to the church in the city of Corinth, and he ends his letter by encouraging the people there to [examine](#) their own spiritual condition. They have examined him, and you remember, some weren't too impressed by what they saw. Well, that's because they were looking for the wrong things, Paul argued. Now, he's asking them to [examine](#) themselves instead. Read with me as Professor Paul tells them what they should be looking for:

[2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. 6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. 7 Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.](#)

There's still a wee bit of sanctified snark in here as Paul uses softened sarcasm to make a point. He tells them look, regardless of what you think about me, what about you? He says, if you think I'm weak, if you think I lack qualifications, fine, whatever, what I really care about is *you* – are you strong, are you qualified, are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus? If we have to be weak in order for you to be strong, fine – we'll do whatever it takes for the sake of your spiritual health.

[10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.](#)

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

13 All the saints greet you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

After saying everything else he has said in this letter, Paul ends with this – examine yourselves. Test yourselves. Take a good long look at yourselves. Do you measure up?

A quiz, exam, or test is meant to assess your condition, to measure and evaluate your knowledge, understanding, skill. You can use a test or examination to determine category: is this real or fake, qualified or unqualified?

You can also use a test or exam to determine quality and condition – how does this one stack up against others or against a standard, is a good one or a bad one? Does it meet the specifications or does it need to be discarded or improved?

Paul recommends both kinds of examination. First, the Corinthians should ask: am I genuinely converted? Am I really a Christian? And if so, am I healthy and growing spiritually or am I puny, weak, and frail? Today, we can ask ourselves the same questions: am I genuinely saved and how healthy am I?

Let's start by considering the question, am I genuinely saved? Am I in Christ? This is not the first question on our test. This is making sure you're taking the right exam.

Now, talking about tests reminds me of high school, and when I was in high school two things were popular that are back in style today – Doc Martens and Birkenstocks. I had both and when I see teens walking around wearing them today, I chuckle.

But I learned something recently – did you know you can't buy Birkenstocks on Amazon? You say, wait a minute, yes you can buy them online. And I agree, you can, but not from Birkenstock, and Birkenstock is not happy that they're there. You're buying from a third-party vendor, even if you're using Amazon Prime.



Birkenstock pulled out of selling on Amazon because they couldn't control the flood of counterfeits making their way onto the platform. Nike did the same thing. You might be surprised to know that somewhere between 40-50% of all sales on Amazon are through 3rd party retailers, some of whom are selling knockoff products and making a killing. They find what is popular, make it for less and sell it for less and make a huge profit.

Some forgeries are obvious – you can see they used the wrong font on that Hydroflask, or something is misspelled. Or, you get a pair of shoes and can see the gobs of glue used to attach the sole, or the feel of the material isn't quite right – the quality isn't there. Other forgeries are not quite so obvious or can't be seen.

So too, there are Christian knock-offs. They come to church. They can talk about the Bible. They know Christian songs. But something's off. The quality and feel isn't quite right. And maybe they even recognize it themselves. They're not genuine. They don't pass the test. That doesn't mean they're malicious. It doesn't mean they're two-faced fakes. They might actually like being here. They might feel like the way the church lines up with their conservative morality or cultural views.

But they're not saved. They're not born-again. They don't bear the mark of the maker on the inside. We have to see and appreciate the fact that Paul is writing a letter *to the church* at Corinth – the people who will read and hear these things are the people at that church. This isn't meant to be read at the market or the theater or the stadium. This was meant to be heard by people attending a religious service, and those people needed to [examine themselves as to whether they were really in the faith](#). Those people needed to [test themselves](#). They needed to make sure their faith was genuine, to make sure they really belonged to Christ.

So, here are ten things they needed to look for and know – ten things that apply to all Christians, all throughout time and all around the world, *including us today*. Here are the ten items you'll want to [examine](#) yourself on this morning.

Number One – do they avoid doing [evil](#)? That's Paul's prayer, vs 7, [I pray to God that you do no evil](#). Not one bit. That's the goal. Now, culturally, we think of evil as a strong word. In fact, with our emphasis on unbounded diversity and pluralism today, we've had to accept a kind of moral relativism – we don't want to label anyone as [evil](#). That would be judgmental. And yet isn't that very viewpoint judgmental? Isn't it judgmental to say that being judgmental is wrong?

Well, here's something we might not like, but which is absolutely true: God is judgmental. He categorizes. He calls some things good and some things bad. He calls some things [evil](#) and some things holy. And He tells Christians that they should have nothing to do with things that are [evil](#) – things that are base, wrong, or wicked. These things are the opposite of what is morally right, good, and pure.

And so, we need to ask ourselves – how much of what happens in me and how much of what comes out of me, is antithetical to God? How much am I drawn to things that are [evil](#) in my thinking, feeling, speech and actions? We need to evaluate them all, but let's take a moment to look at just one – our thinking.

1 Corinthians 13 contains some of Scripture's most well-known teaching on love and it says, in part:

[1 Cor 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.](#)

Love thinks no evil. So, let me ask: how are things going inside your head? Are your thoughts evil at times?

You probably know – it’s easier to fight evil in our actions than in our thoughts and feelings. You might have your life fairly well pulled together on the outside. People think you’re a good kid, or you’re a nice girl, you’re the kind of guy who has his act together – on the outside. But what about within? Do you think evil thoughts? You have to be vigilant on the inside because that’s where all the stuff that comes out of you starts.

So, is there anything you need to recognize, repent, and confess to God who wants to forgive you and cleanse you? You know what a brain looks like, a big grey mass with separations and lines in it – can you imagine asking God to reach into your mind, and cleanse you of any evil?

And then ask Him to help you fight against the thoughts when they return. Because they will. You have to learn, over time, and through repeated efforts, to recognize: that’s evil thinking and it needs to go, it doesn’t belong here.

Number Two – are your actions honorable? Again, this is Paul’s prayer in vs 7. That they would do no evil – the negative side of things to avoid. Now the question is, do you do what is honorable instead? That’s the positive side. See, it’s not just don’t do bad things, it’s go do good things. Things that are beautiful, honest, praiseworthy, noble, useful, and worthy of commendation.

Let me give you another way to look at questions one and two – do no evil and be honorable – could I tell my son or daughter to follow you around all day and learn from you? That cuts through a lot of the fluff and theory pretty quickly, doesn’t it? Could I encourage my sons or my daughter to shadow you and take notes for how they should live?

You see, we have to be clear – the goal of the Christian life is not simply to get you to pray a prayer, get baptized, come to church occasionally and avoid doing bad stuff. That’s a sad, cheap, knock-off imitation. The message of Jesus is not “get away from all that bad stuff, and knock off all that bad behavior.” It’s, “Come to Me, learn who you are, what you were made for, and make a difference.”

Church, God is not satisfied by you just avoiding evil. He wants you to thrive and flourish and do what is honorable instead. The goal of the Christian life to become fully formed, fruitful people. Jesus said we should

Matt 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good [honorable] works and glorify your Father in heaven.

This happens when we abide in Him, when we stay close to Him. If your roots are planted in the soil of Christ, that connection will naturally begin to produce good fruit– you will be honorable and honored, but, and this is important, only by those who value honorable

things. Your life is filled with people who do *not* value, honor, or esteem the kind of goodness and truth that Jesus calls you to. Those people might not appreciate, value, or understand you. But you're not living for their approval, you're living for Christ, and with His help.

Let's move on to **Number Three** – are you **strong**? This is in verse 9. Remember there were people in Corinth criticizing Paul because he didn't seem **strong**, didn't seem impressive in his public speaking or physical appearance. And he agreed, if you're looking only at the outside, at initial impressions and appearances, there's not much there. But God had promised to be Paul's strength – to show up in his weakness and make him **strong**. If you remember, we said pain was actually God's prescription for Paul. Weakness and frailty were actually the key to his power.

But make no mistake, God's plan for His people is that they should be **strong**, mighty, powerful *because of our connection to Him*. Do you remember what Paul told the Corinthians earlier, back in

2 Cor 9:8 ... God is able [strong enough] to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.

God wants to make you **strong**. Are you allowing Him?

Number Four – do you **farewell**? Now, when we hear that it sounds strange because we think of **farewell** as goodbye. But it's literally me wishing that you would **fare, well**. That all would go **well** for you and with you. And for that reason, it can also be translated as rejoice – and it is, most of the time. So, let us ask: what is the tone and tenor of your life? Are you **fairing well**? Are you able to rejoice? One of the shocking things we've noticed lately is how Paul is able to rejoice in the middle of all his difficulties *because* he is connected to Christ through it all. What about you?

Number Five – are you **complete**? This one stands out because it's mentioned twice, once as a noun in vs 9 and again as a verb in verse 11. So, what do you think? Are you **complete**? Are you perfect? Or at the very least do you sense that you are improving? Because, as some of your translations indicate, the word has a sense of being restored.

I think that's important for you to know – we're not talking about you being absolutely perfect, we're talking about you being fully formed, fully functional, even if you have a few dents, dings, and scratches you've picked up along the way.

In fact, the Greek word translated here as **complete** or restored is used in other places to describe setting a broken bone. Obviously, that's not perfect, it's been damaged, but it's being restored. In another place the word is used to describe mending fishing nets. They're not perfect either, they were broken, torn, ripped, but they're being repaired, restored, and soon they'll be ready to use again. You may have been broken, but you can still be renewed and refurbished in Christ.

In fact, Paul said the goal of his preaching is to help people become **complete**, restored, perfect – they're all different ways of saying in English what he's saying in Greek:

Colossians 1:28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man **perfect** in Christ Jesus.

This is the apostle's goal – that you might become **perfect in Christ Jesus**. Not on your own, but in Christ. So, how are you doing? You might be busted up, bent, or broken, but are you being restored, renewed, repaired in Christ? And is that process active and ongoing?

Number Six – and this is related, are you being **edified**? Are you being instructed and improved? This isn't a word that comes up in everyday conversation, but it comes from the world of architecture – it refers to construction, it's the opposite of demolition and *it's Christ's goal for every Christian*. It's what ought to happen as a result of you being here if I'm doing my job well.

Eph 4:11 [Jesus] gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ,

So, can you say you're growing, improving, maturing, being built up as the weeks, months, and years go by? Are you increasing in your understanding of God, love for God and availability to God? Are you being **edified**?

Number Seven – we're down in verse 11 now – **be of good comfort**. How's that going? And really, we can consider this in terms of giving and receiving. When your life hurts, because it will, are you comforted by something other than a bottle of bourbon or merlot or Netflix or pain killers or a shopping trip? When you need **comfort**, because you will, where do you turn?

Is it toward Jesus? Is it the fellowship of the saints? There is nothing wrong with needing **comfort**, but there might be something wrong with where you're finding it. And then, are you giving it too? Are you asking God to help you see and care enough about others to be a source of **comfort** to them?

We're examining ourselves church, and just like a pop quiz or semester final, we're not so sure what our grade will be when we're done, right?

Number Eight – **be of one mind**. Now, again, this is written to the church. *They* needed to work for unity, because *it's not automatic*. In fact, you might remember, there was actually a bit of competition and rivalry in the church in Corinth with Christians arguing over who was their favorite pastor or teacher. Paul said, 'Knock that off! Seek harmony, seek unity, move toward each other not toward your own corners.'

Let's just be real about the fact that sometimes that's difficult. Let's be real about the fact that your favorite worship song is one that someone else just has to endure and vice-versa. The things you wish the church would get fired up about or you wish the pastor would address are not the same things that someone else wishes he would talk about. In fact, maybe they love this church *because* the pastor *doesn't* get fired up about that thing. And yet, both of you love Jesus. So, we need Him to help us love each other, and maybe be patient and loving with the pastor too, 'cause he's his own mess.

Friends, the goal is unity, not uniformity. As it has been said so famously for so long - we want unity in the essentials, liberty in the non-essentials, and charity in everything.

Number Nine – do you live in [peace](#)? This kind of builds on number seven, so if you get one wrong, you might get them both wrong. The point is to get along with each other, and if it has to be said, you know there's probably a reason. Well, I have to keep making a big deal out of this because it's true: this is written *to Christians*. People, in the church, are told to live in [peace](#) with other people, in the church. Again, it's not always easy or automatic - but you've got help! Listen to this benediction

[Romans 15:13](#) Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and [peace](#) in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We say it all the time, right? Receive and then reflect. Receive [peace](#) from God and then reflect it to others.

Number Ten – Do you have connection, community, and communion with the church? It's not just you and your Bible or your podcast or your app or your Christian radio station. Are you connected to a local body of believers and the corporate Church? Notice, Paul encourages them to [greet one another with a holy kiss](#).

That's one of those things that captures your attention the first time you see it. But you don't just see it here, Jesus rebuked a rich man who had Him over for dinner because the guy didn't greet Him with a kiss, meanwhile a woman who had been forgiven of her sin was kissing Jesus' feet. Judas later betrayed Jesus by greeting Him with a kiss so the arresting soldiers would know who He was. And Paul encourages this kind of culturally appropriate greeting in four of his letters: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians. Peter repeats it in 1 Peter.

You Bible nerds might interested to know the word here for kiss is *philema*. It's rooted in *phileo*, or brotherly love and it's never used in the New Testament to describe a kiss of passion. Today, the equivalent would be a holy handshake or hug.

But having said all of that, notice this: Paul tells a church filled with divisions and cliques – [greet each other with a kiss](#). In other words, be good to each other. Love each other. And notice this – [All the saints greet you](#). In other words, even though you're a mess, you're still part of your local congregation, your local fellowship, *and* you're part of something larger, something greater and we're all in this together - [All the saints greet you](#).

So, ten questions on the test. Ten areas of evaluation. How did you do?

Well, I've got good news about the grading scale – it's either pass or fail. Go back with me to verse 5 and notice everything hinges on this: is [Christ in you?](#) [Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.](#) [Test yourselves.](#) [Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.](#)

If Christ is in you, you're qualified. If He's not, you're not. That's what really matters.

These ten questions just help us see how we're progressing, where we need to improve, where we need to grow. None of them really matter though, unless you're in Christ and He is in you. Your position and standing in Christ is what matters for all of eternity.

And that is why Paul's final words to a church filled with personalities and problems are words of kindness and blessing: [14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.](#)

This is the last note left ringing in their ears.

This Trinitarian formula shows us how God is working to save us and grow us for His glory and our joy even when we're a mess. The grace of Christ brings us close, the love of the Father compels it all, and the Spirit comes to live within us as we surrender.

If you are in Christ, all three are true. Your exam may point out that you've got some areas to grow, but you're going pass the class.

Let's pray.

The key is to follow the advice of an old Scottish pastor that said, for every look you take at yourself, look ten times to Christ.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

2 Corinthians 13:5-14 Examine Yourself

Summary: Will you pass an examination of your spiritual health?

- What memories do you have of taking tests or quizzes? How did/do you react to surprise exams?
- Where do you need to work on pursuing perfection or completion? How can others pray for you in your growth?
- Why is it a different experience to exam yourself than be examined by others? Which is Paul encouraging here?
- For more verses on the value of self-examination look up Psalm 139:23-24; Matthew 7:5 and 1 Corinthians 11:28.
- Consider the following list:
 - Do no evil
 - Be honorable
 - Be strong
 - Be complete
 - Be edified
 - Farewell
 - Be of good comfort
 - Be of one mind
 - Live at peace
 - Experience communion
- Pick three that come easily to you or that you feel you've learned well
 - Why do you do well with these? Is it a matter temperament? A lesson you've already learned? Something else?
- Pick three that you need to work on or that feel like a struggle
 - Why is that? How can God help you continue to grow?
- In 1 John 4 (vss 16 and 18) we learn that God is love. Here in 2 Cor 13:11 He is mentioned as the God of love. How is God described in Romans 15:33; 16:20, Philippians 4:9, and 1 Thessalonians 5:23?
 - What difference does this make in your life?
- Look up the following verses. What do you learn about communion with God?
 - John 14:20
 - Galatians 2:20