

Discipleship Groups — Level 6

WEEK 3

Heart Check: HABITS and DECISIONS

Welcome to week three of our discipleship small groups! We have been developing our study on 2 Corinthians 13:5, which says, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves!” We want to have a good account of our lives before Jesus when our race on the earth is ended, so, before that day arrives, we are going to examine our lives NOW so we can make the necessary corrections in order to live in a way that most pleases the Lord and develops us to be everything God created us to be. We are actively growing and maturing in our faith!

One of the biggest ways we can examine and test our faith is to evaluate our habits and decision-making processes. At the end of the day, these things have to do with our love for and trust in the Lord.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” This verse is the great setup for deepening our relationship with God. When we intentionally trust God and develop our habits, make our decisions in a way that cultivates a relationship with God and honors Him, these habits and disciplines remind us that He is in control and we are not. They remind us of our utter dependency upon Him. They remind us that “without [Him] we can do nothing.” They remind us of our frailty and our human tendency to slip back into comfortability, sloppy living, and our own strength and intelligence. These habits of seeking the Lord keep our lives constantly in front of God where, together, we can continually examine and test our lives to constantly test the genuineness of our faith.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 says, “Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So, I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”

When Paul speaks in this passage of being “disqualified,” he does not mean losing your salvation or being disqualified from heaven, but of being disqualified from the full destiny for which God created you.

What things would disqualify us from a race? One obvious thing is cheating. But what would disqualify you from being able to even run the race, or finish the race when you start? Easy. Being out of shape. You get out of shape by not practicing what you should and by eating in a way that makes you sluggish, heavy, and weak. It is the exact same thing with our spiritual lives.

Maybe our habits determine where our lives will eventually go. Galatians 6:8 says, "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

So, the obvious question is, what are you feeding yourself? Are you feeding your own fleshly desires, or are you constantly feeding your spirit? Whichever one you feed the most is what is going to be the strongest inside of you. If you can't get free from porn, maybe it is because you have stopped feeding the spirit and stopped connecting with God's Holy Spirit and the fleshly part of you is powerful and raging out of control from all the food you've given it. Stop feeding it! Whereas Psalm 105:4 says, "Seek the LORD and his strength; seek His presence continually!" God's presence equals God's strength. That is what we run after. That is what we seek. That is what will make our lives strong. If we are feeding ourselves with other things, we will become like those other things. If we seek God, we will become as He is.

Every day we have decisions to make, some are bigger than others, but regardless, we have decisions to make that affect our lives and the lives of people around us. We are taught from an early age to be individualistic and independent. There is a certain maturity to this way of thinking, in that we need to grow up and take responsibility for our lives, but that is very different than being a person who lives by their own counsel. One of the most foolish things we can do is to decide that we know best—better than God or the people God has placed in our lives.

The state of heart that we are examining has much to do with the decisions we make that form the habits we live out. So, if we make decisions without consulting God or His Word, or if we have already determined that "I know best" regardless of what anyone else in your life says, there is a disqualifying aspect in your life and needs some serious reevaluation.

Proverbs says that in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. In other words, seeking advice from a variety of godly sources gives better guidance, security, and safety than just one's own solitary opinion. At the end of the day, this comes from a

heart that chooses to humble itself and receive counsel, instead of the arrogance of self-sufficiency.

There is a very real decision we must make that will determine our habits, which in turn will determine the state of our hearts before the Lord—the very state of heart which we are examining during these weeks. This decision is seen in Exodus 3:1-3, “Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.”

Moses saw the Lord in the Burning Bush, but at first, he saw God from afar. He was close enough to see what God was doing, but not close enough to participate with God. So, Moses made the crucial decision: “I will turn aside and see this great sight.” This singular decision radically redirected the course of His life.

This decision was to come close to God, instead of carrying on life as usual. In the same way, our decision to draw near to God will create the habit of hearing from God, which will give us the direction we need for our lives.