



CRI ALOUD BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT GUIDE

What Exactly Are You Agreeing To?

THE HANDSHAKE • THE INVITATION • THE COMMITMENT

A Scripture-centered guide to greetings, recruitment, belonging, commitment, and Christian identity.

Anthony A. Jones



"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." — 1 THESSALONIANS 5:21 KJV

FACE THE RECORD. TEST BY SCRIPTURE. RESPOND ONLY TO WHAT IS TRUE.

CRI ALOUD • CHARACTER BUILDING FOR ETERNITY • v1.3 • 4 OCTOBER 2026

How to Use This Guide

A practical companion for families, students, mentors, pastors, and anyone seeking clearer discernment.

This guide is not built around fear of greetings or suspicion of people. It is designed to help you notice when an ordinary interaction begins moving toward recruitment, promises, secrecy, ritual participation, identity, or continuing allegiance.

Face the record ¹

Identify what actually happened. Use current, organization-specific documents and exact words where possible.

Respond only to what is true ³

Do not manufacture guilt, infer hidden mechanisms from ordinary touch, or treat rumor as evidence.

Test by Scripture ²

Examine worship, vows, truth, conscience, fellowship, secrecy, authority, identity, and allegiance.

Stay relational ⁴

Use questions, documentation, prayer, and wise counsel so the conversation remains honest and open.

The Christian question is not whether every greeting is dangerous. The question is whether we recognize when ordinary contact is becoming consequential commitment.

The Real Question

The handshake is a doorway into the topic. The progression is the deeper issue.

Use this model as a diagnostic map - not as a claim that every relationship follows all seven stages, and not as a claim that progression is inherently harmful.

CONTACT An introduction, greeting, invitation, or first encounter.	CONVERSATION Information is exchanged. Questions and interests emerge.	
CONNECTION A recurring relational channel develops.	BELONGING Acceptance, familiarity, or identity-based attachment grows.	
COMMITMENT Expectations, costs, promises, duties, or restrictions appear.	RITUAL / PRACTICE The commitment is embodied in repeated or ceremonial action.	IDENTITY / ALLEGIANCE Membership begins shaping how a person names loyalty, conscience, or identity.

At every stage ask: What is being offered? What am I accepting? What is expected next? What does Scripture say?

CONTEXT

Greetings Are Normal Human Behaviour

Different people. Different practices. A shared human reality.

Japan **WARMTH WITHOUT TOUCH**

Bowing is a common social greeting. Routine physical contact is generally less prominent than in many Western contexts.

South Asia **MEANING MATTERS**

Namaste is linguistically closer to “salutation/obeisance to you.” Devotional interpretations may occur, but should not be assumed every time.

Thailand **CONTEXT MATTERS**

The wai may communicate greeting, thanks, apology, respect, or religious/ceremonial reverence depending on context.

Māori pōwhiri / hongi **CEREMONY MATTERS**

Within a pōwhiri, the hongi is embedded in a wider ceremonial welcome and carries meaning beyond an ordinary Western “hello.”

FORM IS NOT MEANING. CONTEXT MATTERS.

Christian discernment should ask what a gesture means here, to these participants, in this setting - not assign a theological conclusion by visual appearance alone.

The Handshake: History, Meaning, and Limits

One familiar gesture has carried many different meanings.



Greek world - dexiosis HISTORY

Clasped hands in ancient funerary imagery can communicate farewell, family connection, or relational bonds. The image does not prove occult communication with the dead.

Roman world HISTORY

Joined right hands could symbolize trust, agreement, concord, marriage, political unity, or military unity. Not every Roman handshake invoked Fides.

Early modern / modern HISTORY

Handshaking appears in greeting, business, reconciliation, agreement, politics, and fellowship. It can operate as a limited “access ritual” into immediate social interaction.

A handshake alone does not prove membership, an oath, allegiance, occult involvement, covenant, or spiritual transfer. It may, however, signal something worth examining.

CASE STUDY

The Campus Grill

How ordinary contact can become relationship - and why the moment of commitment may arrive later than the relationship.



Imagine a student walking past an outdoor campus grill. One day someone says, "Come get something to eat." Later: "What's your name?" Then: "How are classes going?" The student returns, helps unload supplies, contributes to the routine, receives encouragement, and starts to feel known. Eventually comes the question: "Have you ever thought about joining?"

When did recruitment begin - when the application appeared, or when relationship began shaping access and belonging?

DISCUSS

- Which moments were simply hospitality or friendship?
- At what point did the student need more information before taking the next step?
- What questions could a parent or mentor have taught before commitment?
- What evidence would distinguish ordinary recruitment from manipulation or coercion?

Teach Children Before College

Prepare them before the invitation, application, oath, or initiation.



Do not merely teach:

“Don’t join fraternities.”

Teach instead:

“Recognize when a social relationship is becoming a recruitment relationship.”

Wisdom asks questions before commitment becomes expensive.

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|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Who approached you? | 6. What will you pay? |
| 2. What are they offering? | 7. What must you promise? |
| 3. Why are they interested? | 8. What must remain confidential? |
| 4. What comes next? | 9. Is there an initiation or ceremony? |
| 5. What does membership require? | 10. What identity or continuing loyalty will you assume? |

Don't Begin With Accusation

Start a conversation, not a confrontation.

James 1:19 gives the tone: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Curiosity keeps the door open long enough to learn what is actually happening.

Start here CURIOSITY

"I noticed you're involved with _____. Tell me about it."

Explore motive LISTEN

"What attracted you?"

Acknowledge good RESPECT

"What has been good about your experience?"

Clarify the record DOCUMENT

"What does membership involve?"

Bring in Scripture TEST

"Have you examined what you are being asked to promise or participate in by Scripture?"

A boundary does not require an accusation. You can decline a ritual, practice, or commitment without claiming to know another person's hidden motive.

The Seven CRi Questions

A reusable framework for almost any invitation, organization, ritual, or commitment.

What is being offered? 1 A greeting, friendship, mentorship, service opportunity, membership invitation, spiritual practice, or something else?	What is expected next? 2 Meeting, payment, promise, secrecy rule, ceremony, or recruitment step?	
What am I actually agreeing to? 3 Separate politeness from contract, attendance from membership, curiosity from affirmation, and membership from allegiance.	What is the record? 4 Obtain current documents, exact words, policies, ritual text where legitimately available, and first-person facts.	
What does Scripture say? 5 Test worship, vows, truth, idolatry, conscience, fellowship, secrecy, authority, and identity.	What is conviction asking me to do? 6 Continue, ask more questions, decline, withdraw, confess, repair harm, seek counsel, or establish a boundary.	How do I respond without fear? 7 Pray in submission, remain truthful, avoid speculation, and seek appropriate qualified help when needed.

Differentiate the Levels of Involvement

Same context. Different meaning. Greater clarity.

EXPOSURE NOT COMMITMENT "I saw it." I encountered or learned about something.	PARTICIPATION INVOLVEMENT "I did it." I took part in an act or practice.
ENDORSEMENT PUBLIC ALIGNMENT "I represented or supported it." I publicly approved, supported, or represented it.	ALLEGIANCE CONTINUING LOYALTY "I bound identity, loyalty, conscience, or worship to it."

EXPOSURE SHOULD NOT BE TREATED AS ALLEGIANCE.

ADULTS NEED THE SAME DISCERNMENT

You can be 18 and approached on a university campus. You can also be 48 and approached through business, ministry, politics, professional networks, civic groups, service organizations, or social relationships. The context changes; the question does not:

What is being offered - and what comes next?

If You or Someone You Love Is Already Involved

Examine the actual record. Do not borrow another person's confession.

Current member EXAMINE

What did I actually say or promise? What did I agree to keep private? What practices or ceremonies did I participate in? What continuing duties remain?

Former member CLARIFY

Do not manufacture guilt from someone else's testimony. Identify what was truly yours: beliefs, promises, practices, harm, representation, or continuing obligation.

Pastor or mentor CARE

Ask for the actual record before giving conclusions. Separate organizational fact from testimony and theological interpretation. Help the person move toward truth, repentance where warranted, repair, and faithful discipleship.

WHEN THE QUESTION BECOMES "IS THIS OCCULT?"

Do not stop at the label. Biblical concerns become concrete where there is actual participation in divination, sorcery, magic, invocation, consultation of spirits, idolatry, false worship, conflicting spiritual mediation, deceptive spiritual claims, or oaths and allegiances that conflict with loyalty to Christ.

The strongest evaluation asks what is actually believed, practiced, promised, concealed, represented, and worshiped.

What Am I Actually Agreeing To?

Use this before signing, joining, promising, paying, participating, or withdrawing.

1. What is being offered?

2. What is expected next?

3. What documents or exact words have I reviewed?

4. What am I being asked to pay, attend, promise, keep private, or represent?

5. Is there a ceremony, initiation, oath, ritual, or repeated practice? What do I know about it?

6. Which level best describes my involvement: exposure, participation, endorsement, or allegiance?

7. What does Scripture say about the actual practice or promise?

8. What is my conscience telling me, and what counsel have I sought?

9. What is the wisest next step?

Key Texts for Discernment and Conversation

KJV references that govern the posture of this resource.

<p>1 Thessalonians 5:21</p> <p>“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Test claims and keep what is good.</p>	<p>James 1:19</p> <p>“Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” Begin with listening.</p>
<p>Isaiah 8:20</p> <p>“To the law and to the testimony...” Measure claims by revealed truth.</p>	<p>Acts 17:11</p> <p>They “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Verify rather than assume.</p>
<p>Romans 12:2</p> <p>“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed...” Test culture under renewed thinking.</p>	<p>Colossians 2:8</p> <p>“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit...” Examine traditions and teachings against Christ.</p>
<p>1 Corinthians 10</p> <p>A boundary is drawn at participation in idolatrous worship and communion. Distinguish adaptation from worship.</p>	<p>James 4:7</p> <p>“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil...” Submission precedes resistance.</p>

Identity before warfare. Truth before interpretation. Christ before fear.

Selected Sources

The full CRi ALOUD research dossier contains the complete annotated bibliography.

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Recognize when an ordinary interaction is becoming a consequential commitment.

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Prepared by Anthony A. Jones | CRi ALOUD | Biblical Discernment Guide | Character Building for Eternity | v1.3 | 4 October 2026

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FROM
DARKNESS
TO
TRUE
LIGHT

A SAFER
BRIGHTER
TOMORROW



*"Your word
is a lamp to my feet
and a light
to my path."*

PSALM 119:105

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