



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: 1 John 5:7

Bible Reading: 1 John 5:7-8 (CSB & NKJV)

- “For there are 3 that testify: 8 the Spirit, the water, & the blood—and these 3 are in agreement.” (1 Jn 5:7-8 CSB)
- “For there are 3 that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, & the Holy Spirit; & these 3 are one. 8 And there are 3 that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, & the blood; & these 3 agree as one.” (5:7-8 NKJV)

• **SUMMARY:**

• The Bible text, 1 John 5:7 has sparked controversy for 500 years. The longer reading in the King James Version (KJV) offers the Bible’s clearest proof text for the Trinity, yet its absence from early Greek & Latin manuscripts suggests it was never part of John’s original letter. Known as the ‘Johannine Comma’, this passage first appeared in Latin texts around the 7th century and Greek manuscripts not until the 14th. Erasmus initially excluded it from his Greek New Testament but later, under pressure from religious authorities, included it, which eventually influenced the Authorized KJV (1611) – the dominant English Bible for 400 years.

Modern Bible translations omit the Comma, yet it remains a flashpoint for debate. Skeptical scholar Bart Ehrman points to 1 John 5:7 as evidence of scribal alterations that enforced orthodoxy, arguing that such changes and copying errors corrupt the New Testament and frustrate access to the original “God-inspired” Scriptures. Here, we examine Dr. Ehrman’s widely-publicized claims in his best-selling books, alongside respected evangelical scholars’ responses, which will reaffirm our confidence in the reliability of Scripture.

Discussion Questions (pick & choose):

1. Here are 2 key statements regarding God’s role inspiring Scripture:
 - i. “All Scripture is [lit. ‘God-breathed’] inspired by God & is profitable for teaching, for rebuking...” (2

Tim. 3:16)

ii. “No prophecy of Scripture... ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

a. Both sentences describe God’s role in Scripture’s production, but differently. What are the differences?

b. If we only had statement i. (above) could that minimize the role for human agents (e.g. prophets)?

c. What is the role of human agents in the process described in statement ii. (above)? Discuss.

2. Evangelical Christians believe Scripture is God’s inspired Word as recorded by the original authors (e.g. John).

a. Why this emphasis on Scripture’s original writings by the authors? Discuss.

b. We don’t have the original writings (‘autographs’) by the NT authors, but only copies & ‘copies of copies,’ what issues/problems arise from the missing original writings (‘autographs’)? Discuss.

c. How might those issues/problems be resolved? Discuss.

3. Consider the 2 versions of 1 John 5:7-8 (CSB & NKJV) above. (Assume they perfectly reflect the underlying Greek)

4. How would Bible scholars decide which version (CSB or NKJV) is authentic? Based on what criteria (principles)?

5. All modern English NT translations exclude the longer reading (‘Johannine Comma’) found in the NKJV. On what basis was it excluded? Do you agree with that decision? Discuss.

6. What if someone argues that “Yes, the CSB reflects the original text; however, the added words in NKJV are also God-inspired, so they also ought also to be included (as in the NKJV).” Is this reasoning valid? Discuss.