

That You May Know

Testing the Spirits — 1 John 4:1-6

May 19, 2019

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God... - **1 John 4:1**

I. CRITICAL THINKING

- The command of God is that we believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Not, however, in every spirit's conception of him (John 6:29; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:1).
- These "spirits" may include angels/demons, but likely refer first to teachers and prophets, and even our own spirit (1 John 3:19).
- Every prophet claims to speak for God. How do we discern the truth or falsehood of these spirits?
*In the Old Testament:
 1. What is the outcome of the prediction or prophecy? (Deut. 18:20-22; 1 Kings 22:28; Jer. 28:9)
 2. What does the prophecy teach about serving God? (Deut. 13:1-5)*In the New Testament:
 1. What testimony does any prophecy or message bear upon Jesus, who is the Christ? (vs. 1-3; 1 Cor. 12:1-3)
- We must be clear on this—the "gods" or "spirits" that false teachers rely upon are demons (1 Cor. 10:19-21).

II. THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE

- The false teachers in the churches John is addressing had not succeeded in deceiving the original hearers (vs. 4; Ps. 16:4).
- They, and we, overcome false teaching (human and non-human) via sound thinking and the power of the Spirit of God (Eph. 1:13; Phil 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:7).
- The Spirit of God is greater than the spirit of this world; and/or, the Holy Spirit is greater than the devil (vs. 4; 1 Cor. 1:20-25).
- Those who wish to know God will do so via the testimony of the apostles of Jesus—not, ultimately, from any other means (vs.6).

KNOW: A discerning ear enlightened by the Holy Spirit in the Christ-follower can tell the difference between true and false teaching. Christ-centered teaching and preaching is profoundly different than the false prophesy of man-centered teaching.

DO: Listen intently for the Spirit of truth.

Suggested Reading:

A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible by Robert H. Stein (LifePoint Library #220.7 STE)

Dig Deeper: Tools for Understanding God's Word by Nigel Beynon (LifePoint Library #220.7 BEY)

Questions/Discovery Points for Life Groups/Families

Please Read 1 John 4:1-6

1. What is John's overall concern in this passage?
2. Why would he be concerned about this?
3. How does one "test the spirits"?
4. What is so important about the doctrine that "Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh"?
5. What is the "spirit of the antichrist" teaching?
6. What is John's encouragement to us in verses 4-6?
7. What steps can you take to insulate yourself from false teaching?