

Test the spirits

In this day and age we can so easily be swayed by falsehood as it's rife in the world and in the church. The problem is when we become so focused on false prophets, false teachings and false practices that our lives can become one big witch hunt. If that happens then the devil has won, because he has distracted us from the fullness of life in Christ. Jesus should be the focus of our lives.

1 John 4: 1 – 6

1) A command to test the spirits

- It is a command to test the spirits. We shouldn't accept everything that we hear and see, regardless of who or where it comes from.
 - Acts 17: 11 Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.
 - Truth and falsehood was tested through studying the scriptures
 - The Bible is our standard by which we test truth and error
 - 2 Timothy 3: 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.
- We have to test to see whether someone is a false prophet, or not.
 - Jesus called the wolves in sheep's' clothing.
 - The danger is that they look, and sound authentic to the ignorant, but they lead people astray by their false teaching.
- Paul highlights some characteristics of false prophets in Philippians 3: 18 – 19
 - For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.
 - They live as enemies of the cross.
 - Their god is their stomach.
 - Their glory is their shame
 - Their mind is set on earthly things
- However, we aren't commanded to only test the spirits on others, but also in ourselves
 - Are we walking in the spirit of Christ?
- David was a man after God's own heart and wanted God to test his heart
 - Psalm 139: 23 – 24 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
- Paul also tells us to test ourselves in 2 Corinthians 13: 5
 - Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?
- It is obvious that none of the Old or New Testament men of God took their faith and walk with the Lord for granted. That means that neither should we always just assume that we're walking right with the Lord. Let us heed their instructions and test the spirit by which we live and keep our lives in check.

2) Jesus our plumb line of truth

- Although we have already spoken about studying the scriptures as the measure by which we discern truth from falsehood, Jesus is our ultimate plumb line by which we measure our lives. The two are inseparable because neither contradicts the other.
- However, John focuses in on Jesus as the prime test of truth
 - 1 John 4: 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.
 - This is how you know!
- Although John was referring to a certain group who claimed that Jesus didn't actually come physically in the flesh, it can also mean the denial of who Jesus was, his work, and the resulting implications in our lives.
- It is the Spirit who points to Jesus
 - John 16: 13 – 14 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.
- It is thus the Spirit of truth who dwells within us testifies of the truth of Jesus.
 - He testifies of the truthfulness of the scriptures regarding Jesus.
 - He testifies to the work of Jesus in our lives
 - His transforming power enables us to be transformed into the image of Jesus and live lives that reflect Jesus in action and attitude.
- As we have seen the acknowledgment of Jesus goes beyond an acknowledgment with our lips, but an acknowledgment that affects us in every way.
- False teachers aren't holistic in their approach to Jesus. They often seek self-glory than the glory of Jesus, whereas the spirit of truth seeks only the glory of Jesus.

3) Conveyers of truth and falsehood

- We overcome the world and all falsehood because He – the Spirit of truth – who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world.
 - We don't fight the fight of faith in our own strength, but by his strength that is within us.
- The world listens to false teachers because they teach what the world loves to hear.
 - 2 Timothy 4: 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.
- We are to teach whatever is in accordance with the truth of God even if it makes us unpopular.
- However, we need to convey truth in love as these are both qualities of Christ.
 - Ephesians 4: 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.