

# Testing the Spirits

**Text:** 1 John 4:1-6

**Topics:** Discernment, False Teachers, Cults

**Series:** Bold Assurance

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## What does “testing the spirits” mean?

“Behind every prophet stands a spirit, either the Spirit of God or the demonic spirit of antichrist.” (James Montgomery Boice)

## As you test a person who claims to be speaking for God...

1. Survey their \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ (1 John 4:1-3)
  - A. What do they say about Jesus? Is He alone the savior (Acts 4:12; John 14:6)? Is He God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14)? Is His blood sufficient for our salvation (1 John 1:7)? Is He co-eternal with the Father (John 1:1; Colossians 1:17)?
  - B. “There can never be an authentic gospel without a true teaching concerning Jesus, the Son of God come in the flesh. Any true gospel must at the very least boldly blaze abroad that the man Jesus is ‘the Christ’, the divine Savior. The Son of God has come *in the flesh*. He is as much God as the Father is God. He is as much human as we are human, in all things except sin. Only such a One can be our Savior.” Michael Eaton, *1, 2, 3 John*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland; Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1996), 134.
  - C. Is your faith in a salvation that is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by the Bible alone?
2. Stand your \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 4:4-5)
  - A. John reminds the churches that they have already overcome false prophets. The Holy Spirit in them is stronger than the demonic and satanic influences that come through false teachers.
  - B. The church has survived 2000 years of attack. We do not need to be swayed by any antichristian philosophies.
  - C. Do you sense the discerning work of the Holy Spirit in your life as you interact with antichristian philosophies?
3. Study their acceptance of the \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 4:6)
  - A. Is the apostolic writing of the New Testament enough or do they encourage the reading of extra-biblical books? Do they try to divide the teachings of Paul from the teachings of Jesus?
  - B. How well are you holding onto the apostolic testimony of the New Testament?

## **Biblical Tests for false prophets:**

1. **The Moral Test.** “By their fruit you will recognize them” Matthew 7:16. (See also 1 John 3:10; 1 John 4:8; and Matthew 7:15-20)
2. **The Theological Test.** Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 1 John 4:3. If the prophet tries to lead you into worship of other gods or subtracts from the God of the Bible - he is to be avoided. How clearly do they support the fact of the deity of Christ (Jesus is God)?
3. **The Test of Non-Fulfillment.** When a prophet speaks in the Lord’s name, and the message does not come true or is not fulfilled, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. Deuteronomy 18:22 (HCSB)

## ***Application Questions***

1. Who did John say had gone into the world? (4:1)
2. How can we distinguish truth from error in spiritual matters? (4:2-3)
3. What spirit does not acknowledge that Jesus is from God? (4:3)
4. Where is the spirit of the antichrist from? (4:5)
5. From what viewpoint does the spirit of the antichrist speak? (4:5)
6. Who does and does not listen to those who are from God? (4:6)
7. How are the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood recognized? (4:6)
8. What spirits should we be testing today?
9. What false prophets are in the world today?
10. What segments of our society would you say are influenced or controlled by the spirit of the antichrist?
11. What is the significance of acknowledging that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh?
12. In what way have you overcome the world?
13. How does the truth that Christ is greater than the devil make you feel?
14. How can we reflect our confidence in Christ’s supremacy over the devil?
15. How would you distinguish between seeing from the world’s viewpoint and seeing from God’s viewpoint?
16. What influences in your life (for example, books, movies, music, ideas, etc.) will you "put to the test" this week to see whether they are from God?
17. What false prophets do you need to guard yourself against this week?