



Testing the Spirits

Lesson 7 (1 John 4:1-6)

The church wasn't sure how to reconcile different teachings and who to trust. Although we might not be facing the exact same threats today, we too face wrong teaching and the principles behind John's instructions will help the church today as they did for the church during John's time.

I. The Test of Doctrinal Orthodoxy (4:1-3)

The problem arose, when some claimed the Spirit revealed things that clearly contradicted what they had been told before.

A. The _____ of false teachers (4:1, 3b)

False teachers exist, the Holy Spirit is not behind them, and they must be avoided. Some ideas are dangerous and destructive, regardless of the friendliness of the person sharing them.

B. The _____ of right doctrine (4:2-3a)

Getting Jesus right is crucially important. Other major issues include the nature of the trinity, salvation by faith apart from works, and the authority of God's Word.

II. The Confidence for Testing the Spirits (4:4)

Our caution is not out of fear but out of love for God and others. John warns his readers, but also pauses to give encouragement.

A. The confidence of a _____ with God (4:4a)

When we are saved, the Holy Spirit is the one who keeps us back from the edge of false teaching (cf 1 John 3:24).

B. The confidence in God's _____ (4:4b)

John wants his readers to have a confidence, not in their own ability to avoid adopting false teaching, but in their God's ability to keep and preserve them.



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III. The Test of Fellowship (4:5-6)

You should pay careful attention to whom you are listening, because who else listens to them reveals a lot about which team they are on.

A. Beware listening to the _____ sources (4:5)

The life of the person teaching matters and should line up with the teaching they bring forward (cf Jude 4-8; 2 Peter 1-3, 10, 14; 2 Timothy 3:1-8).

Those who present a gospel that looks like and sounds like the world are dangerous. Don't just pay attention to what is being said, pay attention to who is saying it.

B. Be sure to listen to the _____ sources (4:6)

Living rightly means more than ignoring the wrong voices, it also means listening to God's voice. Being born again means that we have the Holy Spirit who leads and guides us into the truth of God's Word.

We began by asking the question "Who's telling the truth?" First, we can trust teachers who teach what lines up with God's Word: our record of the witness of apostles like John who were commissioned by Christ to give His truth. Secondly, we should pay attention to how teachers live and conduct themselves. In all of this, God's wants us to have the confidence that by the power of the Spirit He dwells in us, and greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world.

Next Week: We Should Love One Another Part 2 (1 John 4:7-21)

What does it mean to have God's love perfected [brought to completion] in us?

Why do you think it is that love for God is tied so closely to the love of believers?

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