

1 John 4

Church, do you know who God is? Do you know Him well enough to know when you are hearing truth about Him or lies? Some lies are obvious to us: there is no God, or God is dead; Jesus was just a nice guy and a great teacher, but He was NOT God.

How about these:

- God is whatever we want him to be.
- Many paths lead into God's presence.
- God in the NT is nice and loving, but in the OT He was angry and wrathful
- God has no idea of what it's like to be human.
- Since God is Love and Gracious and Merciful, He will save everyone, even those who don't believe in Him.
- God took 15 billion years to create everything but then just sat back and let it evolve on its own.
- God is often surprised by our actions and therefore always has a plan B.
- God is cruel to let people suffer; to let babies die;
- God helps those who help themselves.
- God lies – He told me that He would heal my father/mother/sister/brother etc and then she/he died

What do we do to protect ourselves? How do we discern the Truth when we hear something that sounds reasonable and true to our experiences?

Let's find out!

PRAY

[\(1 John 4:1 NKJV\)](#) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Don't be too literal in the sense that the 'spirits' to which John refers are influencing people not in 'possession' of them.

All teaching from ANYONE, believer and unbeliever must be tested against the Word of God; One other test that I use is "is what I am reading or hearing a correct understanding of the character and person of God. An example of this is seen during our study of Jeremiah. God is pouring out His anger and wrath on those idolaters living in Judah and Jerusalem. Is God out of control? Is God responding in an emotional outburst? No, the anger of God and even His wrath are measured responses to the depth and breadth of our rebellious and sinful ways!

Two other apostles are in agreement with John:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 NKJV (19) Do not quench the Spirit. (20) Do not despise prophecies. (21) **Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

Paul is talking to the church, not just to leadership! Don't judge others on their proper use of spiritual gifts so as to quench the Spirit, that is, to try to muzzle Him or handcuff Him (so to speak).

2 Peter 1:20-21 NKJV knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, (21) for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

If someone has a true word of prophesy, it comes not from their own heart and mind but by the will of God spoken thru a child of God. Prophecy is not always predictive. It can be a word of correction or encouragement that the church needs to hear!

(1 John 4:2 NKJV) By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus **Christ** has come in the **flesh** is of God, (1 John 4:3 NKJV) and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

We talked about the various Gnostic beliefs that tried to deny that Jesus came in human form. They tried to teach that Jesus was really a Spirit and only appeared to be in a body.

And don't skim by the word "Christ" in this verse. The confession or declaration is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One and God's Begotten Son.

Verse 3: a person under the influence of a spirit who opposes the work and person of Jesus the Christ and therefore John calls them "antichrist"

Does not confess: might also be thought of as "refuses" to confess.

And like 1 John 1:9, confess means that we come into agreement with God, in this case, about the person and work of His Son.

(1 John 4:4 NKJV) You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:5 NKJV) They are of the world. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. (1 John 4:6 NKJV) We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We have learned and know that by our confession and declaration that Jesus is our Savior, we are children of God. In that one act of faith (don't boast!), we have overcome the lies of the devil and the

worldly philosophies. The Spirit of Christ in us is so much greater than the puny spirit of Satan. Those people under his influence speak lies and those in the world actually believe them. And, those in the world don't want to hear us...unless the Holy Spirit is convicting them and drawing them away.

The spirit of truth vs the spirit of error: is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God who came in the flesh to save the world from Satan, self and sin? One who has been born again of God will always answer YES!

[\(1 John 4:7 NKJV\)](#) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Some believe that they are born again but are not. We can't judge their hearts. Only God can. But, once again, John gets practical. If we are born again of God, having the Holy Spirit living in us, we become motivated by awe-struck wonder of our salvation that was given out of His love for us. Our desires change from being selfish to selfless. Our thoughts are towards Him and with the measure of faith given to us, we want to please Him – not out of FEAR, but out of love!

[\(1 John 4:8 NKJV\)](#) He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Knowing God as we do as His children, we are to do as our Father does: He loves; If you have a root of bitterness, unforgiveness or even hatred in your heart, how can you say you "know" Him?

To know Him is to know that He is Love.

God is love: this is nearly inconceivable and certainly just as inexpressible on our part! Why? Because we are part of His creation; We don't have the capacity to understand Him fully, especially here on this earth!

In our minds we sometimes think that when we say "God is Love" that it somehow means "He's 100% love; He is ALL love – that's who He is". But God is also 100% righteous, God is 100% holy, God demonstrates perfect justice. These aspects of His character are all fully integrated with His Love.

So, we have also read us that God is *spirit* ([Joh 4:24](#)), God is *light* ([1Jn 1:5](#)), and that God is a *consuming fire* ([Heb 12:29](#)).

And like the Hebrews 12:29 verse, Jesus also spoke what is commonly called "the 7 I AM's". These are metaphorical, that is, He is "like" the following things all found in the Gospel of John:

1. I am the bread of life [6:35, 48, 51](#)
2. I am the light of the world [8:12; 9:5](#)
3. I am the door of the sheep [10:7, 9](#)
4. I am the good shepherd [10:11, 14](#)

5. I am the resurrection and the life [11:25](#)
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life [14:6](#)
7. I am the true vine [15:1](#)

And if that's not enough for you, in John's Gospel he spoke 5 times of Him being the absolute "I AM". Here's three of them:

Joh 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Joh 8:28 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. **Joh**

8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

[John 6:20](#); [John 18:5](#)

ALL of these attributes flow from His Love. And while He is Love, He also doesn't just keep it inside of Himself. This is the essence of John 3:16: "God Loved, God Gave".

(1 John 4:9 NKJV) In this, the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

(1 John 4:10 NKJV) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

(1 John 4:11 NKJV) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

So how do we know that what we're reading and what we're hearing is TRUTH?

1. The Word – it must line up with Scripture!

a. I once heard that God sings about us; when I told someone, she said, where's that in Scripture? I didn't know so I just figured it was a nice thing to think about...

b. I then came across this verse in Zephaniah:

- i. [Zep 3:17](#) The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

2. Being a born-again Child of God

- a. We have the Holy Spirit living in us. He will give us ‘red flags’ or ‘checks in our spirit’ when we hear something that might sound good, but might be a lie. This is discernment. It’s a good gift to request from God!

3. Pray, Pray and Pray some more.

4. Fellowship of believers;

- a. Strong, mature believers will teach us many things and in love, correct us, encourage us, and even challenge us!

5. Humble yourself in the sight of the LORD!

a. Ask for help when you don’t understand something!

b. Ask for prayer if you are struggling with something

c. Remember, in our body, there are mature believers and young believers. Don’t be haughty! Help those who need help!

And remember what John said? Knowing the TRUTH comes with a self-test: Are you loving your brothers and sisters with the same love that Jesus has towards us? Don’t say “not yet”, but say “Jesus, I am willing! Help me to love others”. It’s a journey;

2 Peter 1:2-8 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His **divine power has given to us** all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, **through the knowledge of Him** who called us by glory and virtue, (4) by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature (**don’t get nervous, this is resembling Him, not having any divinity**), having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. (5) But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add **to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, (6) to knowledge self-control, to selfcontrol perseverance, to perseverance godliness, (7) to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.** (8) For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be encouraged. Do NOT ever feel defeated! Our journey is one of progress made, not perfection gained. When you are called to be “perfect”, you are being called to be complete in Him. Perfection is not possible, completeness, wholeness is!

We will “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” as Peter teaches (2 Peter 3:18), and in our maturing as believers we being to love one another in the same way Jesus loved us.

PRAY