

“Test the Spirits”

I John 4:1-6

True & False spirits (4:1)... John’s churches were communities who put great emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst. Also, they were highly dependent upon oral communicators of God’s truth because the New Testament canon of Scripture was not yet complete. Such circumstances caused these churches to be very vulnerable to false prophets/teachers who spoke messages of deception that originated with evil spirits rather than the Holy Spirit of God. John warns his churches that they must be discerning and he gives them two ways that they can test the spirits.

The First Test (4:2-3)... John encourages his churches to be discerning by looking closely at what the prophet/teacher says about Jesus Christ. Does the teacher deny cardinal truths about Jesus’ identity such as his humanity? If so, then we can be sure that this person speaks from the spirit of the antichrist.

The Second Test (4:4-6)... The second way that John’s churches can test the spirits is by considering the audience that the so-called prophet attracts. If the unbelieving world finds the prophet’s message attractive, then we have reason to doubt that they speak for God.

***Questions for Discussion:**

- 1. What experiences have you had with false prophets/teachers? How did you discern that they were false?**
- 2. Why is it important that we affirm both Jesus’ humanity and divinity? Have you considered this before?**
- 3. How does it encourage you to know that the Spirit within us is greater than the one that is in the world?**