

1 John 4:1-6 4Easter Sermon 2024

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and is already in the world. ⁴You are from God, dear children, and you have overcome the false prophets, because the one in you is greater than the one in the world. ⁵They are from the world. That is why they speak from a worldly perspective and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. That is how we can distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

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We are from God, Dear Friends.

Have you ever heard of a discount cheap or bargain bank? Why should we care so far less about our souls than our money? Why should we care so far less about our spiritual health than our physical health? Why should we care...because Jesus does, that's why. Spiritual health matters forever as we listen to the spirit of **truth** and turn away from the spirit of **error**.

All money had to be carefully examined for counterfeits in the days of the Apostles. This word for testing money is a favorite used by the Apostles for testing truth from error in teaching and learning God's Holy Word.

Watch out! Jesus says that many, many false prophets will be out in our world and do their best to turn many away from the spirit of truth to instead believe their spirit of error and deception.

They are wolves in sheep's clothing, ferocious, hungry, and care nothing for the sheep. Jesus cares for everyone and enough of his care is given in the Bible to warn us also to take care. Test the spirits to make sure they are not teaching you in a spirit of error instead of the truth. Test the spirits to see if they are merely a hired hand and care nothing for the sheep. Test the spirits to see if they are from God or from something else.

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For the sake of Jesus, don't merely believe me – read your Bible also so your Good Shepherd's Words can be heard by the sheep for which he directly cares. But with that said ... why doesn't Jesus just command us to read the Bible and let that be enough? Because God commands, for your good, that there be a 'we' and that friends can be 'dear' to and with and for each other. We are a fellowship, we are a communion of saints, gathered under God's forgiveness of sins – by Jesus the Good Shepherd who commands pastors to serve his church as under-shepherds.

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We live in a cosmos/world (6 times) where people 'feel' that something is right or something is wrong. That's not how God tells us His truth works. People feel a lot of stuff a lot and that stuff changes quickly with the wind. (read Ecclesiastes) Souls need to know instead of feel. **Souls need to know God** and by that knowing listen to us who 'are from God.' Reading the Bible is knowing. Learning the Bible is knowing. Testing the spirits by the Bible is what Jesus the Good Shepherd wants everyone to do, including pastors.

1 Corinthians 12:3 says, "**no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.**" Be aware and beware of a church that says 'only pastors can say Jesus is Lord' when it clearly says 'no one.' Dear friends learn these words from Jesus our Good Shepherd directly. Dear friends, are careful about sharing the spirit of truth from God's Holy Word.

All of God's Word must be listened to, learned and shared in the Spirit of truth – even when the spirit of truth hurts – God intends for it to heal by his Word of Truth.

My family went to pick up some 1 hour photos. But after about 10 hours and then a face-to-face conversation we found out that they didn't have any ink to print our photographs. 1 hour photo became 4 day or more photo. Trust is something that should be built and never given away. The more we read God's Word the more we can learn to trust Jesus who speaks to us through the Bible. Today in the Bible Jesus through John says, watch out for bad shepherds, that is false prophets.

Now don't you think it strange that I would encourage you to question me as your pastor? Don't you think it weird that I preach on a lesson that says there can be a spirit of error from people who serve the church?

That might threaten my job security, right? It's like I'm the worker at the one hour telling you not to trust me to get your photos done in one hour. A hired man who works for the church might avoid all kinds of Bible passages that can uncover any kind of spirit of error that he wishes to hide.

Not this guy.

Your soul is too important for me to skip today's Bible readings. Your eternal salvation is too precious for me to lead you in any direction away from Jesus' perspective of truth. Jesus is not only your Good Shepherd – he's mine too! It is true that I might make little sacrifices for the sake of members of this church that need me to help them with spiritual well-being. But it is also true that I may not lay down my life for the sheep because I can't take it up again. Only Jesus can, only Jesus did. Only Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares more about the sheep than he does himself. Jesus is the One who is commissioned by his Father. Jesus is the One who is given All Authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus is God our Good Shepherd to whom 'we' listen and learn.

Jesus is from God. Jesus is God. So God himself laid down his life to save sheep like you and me. God himself speaks to every soul through this Spirit of his Truth in the Holy Bible. So when along comes a spiritual leader or servant who does not fully confess, who does not fully speak from a heavenly perspective, who does not speak the Spirit of Truth. Do not believe someone who does not themselves believe all of God's Word, as the spirit of truth.

Every Bible pastor should subject himself willingly to these Words of God that hold him to account. Every Bible pastor should teach the souls entrusted to their care about how to test the spirits and see if they are false or true. Do the words of a believer match their actions?

Jesus matters the most. Jesus matters more than a location, a pastor, more than even the world. Souls who belong to the spirit of truth listen to others who speak the Word of God because they are saved by that same Word of God. We are from God when in fellowship we read the Bible. We are from God when we gather together as his communion of saints. We are from God when we recognize the spirit of God as people speak the Bible from a heavenly perspective.

Care needs to be considered so that believers do not fall into a pattern of being 'from the world' instead of 'from heaven.' A heavenly perspective is needed – not a worldly one.

Someone could say, 'pastor, that's a bit presumptuous of you!' How can you say on the same level of confidence that you are included in 1 John 4:6? How can you be 'we' who are from God? My answer to that would be, "If I'm not from God then where else am I from? Who else might I speak for if not from God?" John doesn't leave much wiggle room by saying that it is either the spirit of truth or the spirit of error that people can speak. But how can we know which is which?

To be **from God** is to read the Bible. To be **from God** is to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. To be **from God** is to speak in a heavenly perspective instead of a worldly one. Test the spirits by what they say for or against the Bible. Test the spirits by how they act against or line with the Bible. Test the spirits in how they care for the sheep given into their care modeled after the Good Shepherd who cares about His sheep, knows the sheep and the sheep know his voice by how he teaches them the Word of God.

Paul teaches everyone that God's Word has the power to build us up in faith and strengthen our faith. The Word of his grace needs to stay unfiltered, unchanged, uncommented, and raw. Yes, the Law of God is the Spirit of truth that hurts but it serves a purpose for the healing truth of the Gospel to be included in the whole message.

Some complain that our church body is too strict. Well, this part of the Bible today tells us to be strict, God through John tells us to be very careful in handling God's Word without excuse. Paul agrees that people inside the church can be the most dangerous when it comes to feelings. Know the truth of Jesus by reading and learning. Know the truth of Jesus instead of feeling the truth. God speaks for himself as the Bible speaks for God. We as believing friends who care for and about one another need to test the spirits to see if they are from God.

Some say strict – I say loving. It is loving enough of John to give warnings so that souls do not lose their place in heaven. It is loving for Jesus to say that He remains the Good Shepherd, even when under-shepherds fail to honor and serve him in the ways that He expects. Jesus knows his sheep who listen carefully, closely and consistently to the spirit of his truth. Jesus cares about his sheep here and his other sheep that need him too.

Jesus is your Good Shepherd. Learn His Words with me. Listen to His Words with me. Share His Words with me to a world that wants to feel – when souls need to know and trust God's Holy Word of Truth.