

# 1 John - Defending Our Fellowship

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's read from God's Word, Deuteronomy 13, and we're just going to read the first four verses. If a prophet or one who foretells by dreams appears among you and denounces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place and he says, let us follow other gods, gods you have not known, and let us worship them, you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.

The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the Lord your God you must follow and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him. Serve him and hold fast to him. Now with that in mind, please turn to 1 John chapter 4, which is on page 1227.

1 John chapter 4, verses 1 to 6.

On page 1227, 1 John chapter 4, verses 1 to 6.

[ 1 : 45 ] Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirit to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This is how you can recognise the spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

They are from God.

[ 3 : 15 ] Well, we have scripture before us. Let us pray for God's spirit to be at work within us. Let's pray.

The Apostle Paul writes, We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

Father, we ask that we would know the power of your spirit, working amongst us, working in our lives, so that we know more about Jesus, but also that we would experience Jesus, that we would know the deep, intimate joy of fellowship with God to share in the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

we long to know that. And so we ask for your spirit to make that come about.

we pray it in his name. Amen. Amen. So is your computer virus protection in good order?

[ 4 : 58 ] When was the last time you did an update? Every so often I get sent a bogus email or a corrupt file, but because my virus defense is up to date, it immediately identifies the problem.

A little box will appear in the corner, a pop-up, and tell me that something wrong has arrived. It tells me what it is and what needs to be deleted or removed.

Now we need to make sure that we defend our fellowship with God from nasty attacks because look at the end of verse 1, chapter 4, end of verse 1, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

You see, there are many false teachers who want to download their false message into our lives. And if we are not careful, they will corrupt and destroy our fellowship with God.

John's great introduction, if you have a look back to chapter 1, his great introduction to this letter tells us, chapter 1, verse 3, he's been talking about or introducing Jesus.

[ 6 : 21 ] He says, we proclaim to you what we have seen and what we have heard so that you also may have fellowship with us.

And here it is. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And we write this to make your or our joy complete.

we have been invited to join in the fellowship the Father has with the Son and the Son has with the Father. We can share in and we can experience this deep, personal and intimate relationship. And it's within the relationship of the Father and the Son that our joy is made complete. but it is under attack.

Look at chapter 2, verse 26. Chapter 2, verse 26, he says, I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.

[ 7 : 30 ] Chapter 3, verse 7. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.

False prophets, you see, have gone out into the world and through their message they are spreading a nasty virus that can infect, corrupt and seriously damage our relationship with God. So we need to be able to protect our joy. we need to be able to defend our fellowship with God so that we continue to live in and thrive in that deep relationship with Him.

So how are we going to do that? Well, first of all, we need to test the spirits. We need to test the spirits.

Let's read verse 1 of chapter 4. Dear friends, this is a real kind of deep, loving, intimate letter to the church.

[ 8 : 41 ] He's saying to them, I love you so much. The reason I'm writing this to you is because I'm deeply concerned for you. Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

You see, there are two kinds of spirits that we need to be aware of. There is, verse 2, the spirit of God.

And then if we look at verse 3, we're told in the middle of verse 3 that there is the spirit of the Antichrist. So the spirit of God and the spirit of the Antichrist.

And we've already come across that term before, Antichrist. Have a look back at chapter 2, verse 18. He reminded them there, Dear children, this is the last hour, and as you have heard, that the Antichrist is coming, and even now many Antichrists have come.

And as the name suggests, Antichrist is one who stands in direct opposition to Jesus Christ and the ways of Jesus Christ. So in chapter 4, when he starts talking about the spirit of God or the spirit of the Antichrist, he's talking about what and who is behind the teachers.

[ 10 : 07 ] Who's influencing what they have to say? Who's guiding their teaching? Who's directing their message? What is the source of their message? In fact, in verse 6, we're told what their influence is.

Look at the end of verse 6 of chapter 4. This is how we recognise the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. You see, the spirit of God is a spirit of truth and the spirit of Antichrist is a spirit of falsehood.

We have to recognise these two spirits. spirits. Now, the problem is, these spirits of influence that stand behind the teachers and are at work in the lives of the teachers are alive and well today. Have a look at 2 John. Just turn over your page there. I'm sure it's just turning over one page. 2 John verse 7. 2 John verse 7.

Here's what he writes. Verse 10.

[ 11 : 38 ] Verse 10. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, that is the true teaching about Jesus, do not take him into your house or welcome him.

Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work. You see, it wasn't uncommon for a teacher to arrive at some unsuspecting house church, so turning up at home group on a Wednesday night, claiming to have a message from God.

And the church wouldn't know them from Adam. So they had to be able to discern who this teacher was. Was this teacher influenced by the spirit of God or were they a teacher that was influenced by the spirit of the Antichrist?

Was this message they were going to bring to the church family true or was it false? Now we might think we don't have that problem anymore. Well I actually think it's got worse.

Any one of us can turn on the God channel or we can turn on or look up a church or a speaker on the internet but the question is are we able to discern and test who are the deceivers?

[ 12 : 51 ] Who are the true teachers and who are the false teachers? Can you do that? Suppose one of you gets an email about an amazing speaker.

You look it up on YouTube at your friend's recommendation. You don't necessarily recognise the speaker's name but it comes with this title at the bottom of the screen Spirit Inspired Ministry.

Or you order a book off Amazon and the blurb on the cover gets your attention. You're told that the author is Spirit Anointed. You see today if you want to authenticate your message or your ministry all you have to do is attach the word Spirit.

Spirit Carigoline Baptist Church Spirit filled Spirit empowered Spirit driven But here's the question Can you discern what kind of spirit they are filled empowered and driven by?

Or are we just so immature and gullible that we will believe anything and everything that comes out of their mouth or what's written in a book simply because it says Spirit.

[14:16] Go back to chapter 4 verse 1. Dear friends do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

So how are we going to test these spirits? Well in a similar vein we must discern the spirits carefully.

We've got to apply a very simple test to everything that we listen to and everything that we hear including the person that you are listening to right now.

Just because I say it doesn't mean to say it's true. We need to be listening carefully discerning what are the spirits saying.

The first test is this. What do they say about Jesus? What do they say about Jesus? These are the tests to discern who the spirits are.

[15:32] Verse 2 chapter 4 This is how you can recognise the spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. Now two things are implied here. First it's telling us something about the identity of Jesus.

So look again at verse 2 it says Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. He's come from heaven. He's come to earth in the flesh as a person.

That means Jesus is both fully God and fully man. He's not a half man and a half God. He's fully God. He is the divine God walking on planet earth.

Keep your finger there in 1 John chapter 4 and go back to the other book that John wrote John's Gospel. John chapter 14 14 verse 10 Don't you believe, says Jesus, that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?

[17:14] The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father living in me who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

Jesus coming in the flesh is God in human form. That's how we know who God is. If we want to know who God is, well, we look at who Jesus is, because Jesus reveals God to us.

Through the miracles, Jesus has proved that he is God with absolute power and supreme authority. Jesus is the God man and that is why we worship him, because he is God.

So listen carefully to what the teachers say about the identity of Jesus. Do they say that Jesus is God? The second thing is what do they say about his mission?

You see, here's the connection. If we get the identity of Jesus wrong, we're going to get the mission of Jesus wrong. Because the primary reason, the primary mission of Jesus as the God man coming into the world was to do what?

[18:41] To deal with our sin. That is the primary reason. That is what everything that Jesus did points to and flows to. That is the reason. So have a look at 1 John chapter 2 verse 2.

We've already looked at this in past weeks. 1 John chapter 2 verse 2. We're told there, chapter 2 verse 2, that Jesus Christ is the righteous one.

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, but not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world. How can Jesus take on the whole sins of all the world? Not just mine, not just yours, but how can he take all the sins of the whole world upon himself and die for us?

Well, Jesus came as a man to identify with us. He came as a human being. Jesus as man takes on the sin of me unto himself and he takes my place on the cross.

[19:53] He stands in for me as my representative as a human being as a man he stands in for me. How can he do it for everyone? Jesus came as God to die our death.

Jesus as God takes the punishment for our sins and he removes the judgment from us so that we can be set free and live with him and know him.

That is the primary reason why Jesus came as the God man to die for our sins. So what do they say about the identity of Jesus?

What do they say about the mission of Jesus? Now the teachers who are distorting this true message of Jesus go back to chapter 4 verse 3 chapter 4 the end of verse 3 the teachers who do not accept or distort this true message of Jesus he says this is the spirit of the antichrist which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world they might mention the name Jesus they might start talking about Jesus but be careful it's a different instead of talking about Jesus as God man who is worthy of our worship they talk about Jesus as some benefactor Jesus will do whatever you ask him to do they'll say you just need to tell Jesus command Jesus and he will give you whatever you need and whatever you want just tell him and instead of talking about Jesus who has come to die for our sins they talk about the personal success that Jesus will bring to your life Jesus has come to give you health and wealth in abundance just tell him claim it it's all yours right here right now this teaching is often called the prosperity gospel it is the spirit of the antichrist it is false so listen to what they say what do they say about Jesus the second test that we must apply is this how do they treat scripture how do they treat scripture so look at verse five they that is those who have been influenced by the spirit of the antichrist they are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world and the world listens to them their message that they have to share is based on their own authority their own words they ignore what scripture has to say on the other hand look at verse six we that is

[ 22 : 56 ] John and the other apostles so John who's writing this letter we John and the other apostles he says we are from God and whoever knows God listens to us but whoever is not from God does not listen to us he's making it very clear he says we don't speak by our own authority we're speaking the words of God the words that we have are words that have come from God now here's a question how do we know they spoke from God because they're all claiming to me this let me tell you how do we know well John is part of what is called the apostolic witness go back to chapter 1 verse 1 this is how he introduces his whole letter he wants us to be clear that what he has is not made up it's not from his source it comes from Jesus so look at verse 1 of chapter 1 he's talking about

Christ that which we have heard so they heard with their own ears what Jesus taught about his identity and mission which we have seen with our eyes they saw Jesus walking they saw him crucified and killed they were witnesses of him as he was raised again from the dead we have looked at him they saw Jesus heal the sick they saw Jesus calm the storms they saw Jesus silence the demons which we have looked at and our hands have touched they embraced Jesus they could touch him they carried him when he was risen from the dead they could put his fingers where his nail prints were John and his fellow apostles were first witnesses to the person of Jesus this is not made up it is true so chapter 1 verse 2 the life appeared

Jesus appeared we have seen it we testify to it and now we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the father and has now appeared to us well you say that was great for those who knew John and who were alive when John was saying these things what about for us because John is long since dead how do we know who speaks from God today well what they heard and what they saw and what they looked at and what they touched they wrote down so we can read their testimony for themselves that's what John has done here he's written it down in his letter and he wrote it down in his gospel and we've got this testimony for ourselves and it's what we call scripture that means we must weigh up everything we hear against scripture including what you're listening to right now is what we're saying from scripture so when you listen to somebody speak on the internet and somebody says if you listen to this guy speak have you heard this on the internet or they give you a book and they say you should read this you need to ask two really important questions here's the first one does it come from scripture or does it come from another source are the teachers opening up their bible and teaching from god's word are they using scripture here's the second question does what they have to say come from scripture or is it made up you see many teachers will come along and they will actually open up their bibles the same kind of bible that you and i have right now but what they're saying is not actually in the bible they distort it they deceive people by making all kinds of false promises about financial blessing and successful living and how everything can all be made nice and right be very very careful of those who say with such commanding authority the spirit has told me to tell you if anybody ever says that to you be very very careful the spirit has told me to tell you that shorthand for saying i have something to say from my own thoughts but it's got nothing to do with what the bible has to say because god has given to us his apostolic witness he has given to us scripture so that we can discern the spirit so that we know

what is right and what is wrong of course if the spirit says and he's speaking and saying this is what i have to say and somebody reads from the bible that is what the spirit has to say because it is god's word but if it's got nothing to do with it it's got nothing to do with god's word so can you recognize the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood listen to what they say about

Jesus and examine everything by scripture now while we must treat all of this very seriously we need not be afraid you see the danger is people can become so afraid of false teachers false prophets that they dare not listen to another sermon they'll stop going to church and stop reading books because well how am I going to know I'm so scared that I'm going to hear the wrong thing well the children of God can have absolute confidence that we will not get led astray have a look at verse four you dear children are from God and have overcome them that is the false teachers because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world the spirit of the antichrist and a falsehood we are he says from

God if we're from God that means God has given to us a new status we're from God we are his children and he is our father look back at chapter three verse one this brilliant amazing statement how great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are we now belong to God we're incorporated into his family and he's telling us here in chapter 4 verse 4 that if we belong to God if we're belongers we're also overcomers just as God has overcome the evil one so all of his children have overcome the spirit of falsehood and the spirit of the antichrist because we're in God's family we no longer believe the lies and the distorted truth we belong to the father and we now listen to him but that's not all we're not only from

[ 30 : 40 ] God we also have the Holy Spirit so look that's love the God and here's the reason because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world we belong to God that's true but God is also in you if you are a Christian God lives in your life. Chapter 4 verse 13. We know that we live in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit. Verse 15. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the son of God, God lives in him and he in God. God has literally moved into our lives. You see the influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's children is far greater than the influence of the world, the spirit of falsehood and the spirit of Antichrist. Because God is giving you his spirit, that is far greater than anything else that may try and influence us. And God's spirit brings great confidence to God's children.

He enables us on the one hand to test and discern what is true as we examine scripture, as we read it, as we listen to it. Then God by his spirit gives us understanding. He unveils our eyes so that we can understand and grasp. But not only is it an intellectual truth that we can gather with our minds, the spirit also enables us to experience the truth about Jesus.

The spirit not only opens up our eyes to the truth about God, he opens up our hearts to experience God. That is what the spirit. That is what the spirit does. He brings the words alive so that it changes us on the inside and helps us to see Jesus for who he is.

So let me encourage us all to be people who have got what we need. The two things that we need. Scripture and the spirit. The holy word of God and holy scripture together. And those two working together, we get to see Jesus for who he is in all his glory, in all his wonder. But not only do we just understand it.

[ 33 : 34 ] God takes the truth about Jesus and makes it real in our lives. So that we can love him, know him, enjoy him, and enter into that deep relationship between the father and the son. We have all of this.

children of God, we can be confident. But be careful. Test everything that you hear and listen to. Let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you that you have given to us scripture, the very words of God.

And you have given to us your Holy Spirit. Breathing life into these words on the page. And breathing new life in our lives. So that we can know you and enjoy you. Father, please help us to be discerning.

[ 34 : 44 ] Help us to be testing. And help us to know Jesus. In all his greatness. And in all his goodness. Amen. Well, we're going to sing a song which reflects what we've...