

November 24/25, 2001

Study Questions

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community: A Study in 1 John

Test the Spirits

1 John 4:1-6

Opening Discussion

1. What has been your experience with false teachers? Have you ever been led astray? Have you ever been tempted to follow a group you now understand to be a cult?
2. Why do you think people are vulnerable to false teaching? Why would people follow someone like David Koresh or Jim Jones?
3. Do you think people today assume if there is some manifestation of supernatural power that it must be from God? What is the danger in this? Have you ever experienced or seen on television strange manifestations of power and wondered what is actually going on? What do you think is happening?

Bible Study

1. John has talked a lot about the Spirit of Christ in us. Review these verses:
1 John 2:20
1 John 3:9
1 John 3:24
2. John seems to indicate that spirits were at work, only they were not the spirit of Christ. Notice the counterfeit powers displayed in these passages.
Ex. 7-11: plagues in Egypt
Acts 8:9-13: Simon the magician

What is the source of these powers? Does a supernatural demonstration of power mean the spirit is from God?

3. According to 4:3-4, what is the test to identify the origin of the spirit?

Do you see the person and work of Jesus to be a battleground in our culture today?
In what way?

What truths about the person and work of Jesus do you believe are nonnegotiable?

4. John reminds us in 4:4 that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. What does that mean?

How should this truth affect our confidence and focus in the world?

5. What did John say was the key to “growing Christians” overcoming the evil one in 2:13-14?

How is that consistent with what he is saying in 4:1-3?

6. Compare 4:5-6 with John 10:4, John 15:19, and 2 Tim. 4:1-4. Another test of the spirits is to notice who is receiving the message. What will happen if we water down the truth to the extent that unbelievers feel comfortable with it?

Is there a sense in which we accept the fact that our message will always be offensive to the world?

7. Summarize the two ways John says we should test the spirits to determine their origin.

What does this mean in practical terms?

Application

1. The only way to expose error is to know the truth. How diligent are you at learning what is true according to the Bible?

What are 2 practical things you could do to grow in your understanding of the truth?

2. What is your role in this group and this church to “test” the spirits?

What does this mean to you in practical terms? (Notice John addresses 4:1-6 to the “beloved”—meaning everyone in the family of God.)

3. Spend time praying that God will teach you His truth and protect you from error.