

v1 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. v2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, v3 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. v4 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. v5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. v6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. 1 John 4:1-6

During this week we will go to vote for a new Government as a country. We have been, and continue to be, faced with many choices. Every political party is wanting us to vote for them. People have been trying to attract our attention all our lives.

Today's passage speaks into these situations. A group of people, under the leadership of Cerinthus, were trying to mislead the Followers of Jesus by spreading lies about Jesus, so that they would stop believing what the Apostle John and the original Apostles had taught about Jesus.

While this passage does not talk about Politics, I do believe it provides some very helpful guidelines to make good, biblical and God honouring decisions in life. What John wrote to the church almost 2000 years ago is still relevant for today. I have called today's message:

HOW DISCERNING ARE YOU AS A CHRISTIAN?

I FIRSTLY, YOU ARE DISCERNING AS A CHRISTIAN IF: YOU EARNESTLY SEEK TO KNOW WHAT IS TRUTH.

v1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God,

We are living in a time of much misinformation.

1. The ability of Media, Mainstream or Social, to spread false information is profound.
2. The recent rise of AI (Artificial Intelligence) programs has complicated the issue even further. Universities have had to develop Computer Software to test if Assignments submitted by student is their own work or something written by some AI assisted program.

We should not be surprised as Christians. Jesus predicted the spreading of LIES.

*John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. **When he lies, he speaks his natural language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.***

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

We need Christians that are **DISCERNING**.

1. This is vital in **SPIRITUAL THINKING**. There are a growing number of false “Teachers and Prophets”. Many of these false “Teachers and Prophets” are gifted individuals, with great skills in communication. As the **CHURCH OF GOD**, each of us has the responsibility “**TEST THE SPIRITS**”.
2. This is equally valid in **ALL THINKING**. Many Christian like to divide their life into little boxes, so that Spiritual Thinking is divorced of “**SECULAR**” Thinking.

We need Christians that are **DETERMINED**.

We need Christian that will stand up for the **TRUTH**.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Attributed to Edmund Burke, including by John F Kennedy in a speech in 1961. Burke didn’t say it, and its earliest form was by John Stuart Mill, who said in 1867: “Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.” (<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-top-10-misattributed-quotations-a7910361.html>)

II SECONDLY, YOU ARE DISCERNING AS A CHRISTIAN IF: YOU USE JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR STANDARD OF TRUTH.

v1 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. v2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, v3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

HOW CAN WE TEST IF SOMETHING IS TRUE OR NOT?

The criteria listed represent those most commonly used by scholars and the general public. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criteria_of_truth)

Authority - The opinions of those with significant experience, highly trained or possessing an advanced degree are often considered a form of proof.

Coherence - Coherence refers to a consistent and overarching explanation for all facts. To be coherent, all pertinent facts must be arranged in a consistent and cohesive fashion as an integrated whole.

Consensus gentium - According to *consensus gentium*, the universal consent of all mankind (all humans holding a distinct belief), proves it is true.

Consistency (mere) - Mere consistency is when correct statements do not contradict but are not necessarily related. Accordingly, an individual is consistent if he does not contradict himself.

Consistency (strict) - Strict consistency is when claims are connected in such a fashion that one statement follows from another.

Correspondence - Correspondence is quite simply when a claim corresponds with its object. For example, the claim that the White House is in Washington, D.C. is true, if the White House is actually located in Washington.

Custom - Most people consciously or unknowingly employ custom as a criterion of truth, based on the assumption that doing what is customary will prevent error.

Emotions - Many people allow feelings to determine judgment, often in the face of contrary evidence or without even attempting to collect evidence and facts.

Instinct - The existence of distinct instincts has long been debated.

Intuition - Intuition is an assumed truth with an unknown, or possibly unexamined, source.

Majority rule - Majority rule is a statistical method of accepting assertions and proposals.

Naïve realism - Naïve realism posits that only that which is directly observable by the human senses is true.

Pragmatic - If an idea works then it must be true, to the Pragmatist.

Revelation - The principal distinction between intuition and revelation is that revelation has an assumed source: God (or another higher power).

Time - Time is a criterion commonly appealed to in debate, often referred to as "the test of time".

Tradition - Tradition, closely related to custom, is the standard stating that which is held for generations is true.

THE CRITERIA THAT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS

1. **WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT WHO JESUS IS?** Verse 2 says, *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: **Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*** For the Christian, JESUS IS TRUTH.
2. **DOES IT HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS?** Verse 3 says, *"but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.* Another defining characteristic of TRUTH is acceptance of Jesus as LORD.

III THIRDLY, YOU ARE DISCERNING AS A CHRISTIAN IF: YOU LISTEN TO GOD RATHER THAT THE WORLD.

v4 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. v5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. v6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

THERE IS ONE MAJOR CLUE BETWEEN TRUTH AND ERROR.

1. **THEY SPEAK FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE WORLD**
Their focus is the world.
2. **THEY SPEAK FROM THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD**
Their focus is JESUS.

CONCLUSION

HOW DISCERNING ARE YOU AS A CHRISTIAN?