



Part 8: Telling Truth from Lies

1 John 4:1-6

Today John deals with so-called religious or spiritual teachers who prey on their followers. He also talks about Christians gullible enough to believe anything!

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. 1 John 4:1

Peter: *...there will be false teachers among you... In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. 2 Pet. 2:1,3*

Jesus: *Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Matt. 7:15*

Two often forgotten principles about life-changing faith :

1. Faith is not believing something _____ true;
faith is believing something _____ true.
2. Every Christian is called to be a _____;
and every Christian is called to be an _____.

Four keys to long-term security:

I must stay...

1. _____ about what I believe

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, 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. 1 John 4:2,3

Is this teacher staying _____?

2. _____ about what I face

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. 1 John 4:4

3. _____ about what I hear

They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 1 John 4:5

4. _____ in God's Word

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 4:6

Conclusion: Be _____ but not _____;
and be _____ but not _____.

Daily Meditations

Brief daily Bible studies and questions for reflection on today's topic!

This week's memory verse:

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. 1 John 4:1

Monday

Look over the notes and verses from this past weekend. How do you respond to the first two "oft-forgotten truths" at the top of your notes?

What do you think a Christian is supposed to *disbelieve*?

Some Christians would be too gullible by John's standard (they believe every "spiritual" teaching), while others would be too cynical (they would be pessimistic about the power of God). How do you think you can maintain a healthy balance between skepticism of spiritual claims and confident faith in the power of God?

Ask God to help you be discerning without cynicism, and optimistic without gullibility!

Tuesday

Read 1 John 4:2,3. John is specifically talking about teachers who are claiming to be *Christian* and yet deny that Jesus is God in the flesh, deny His mission on our behalf. From your observations, how do allegedly Christian teachers deny this?

What can teachers or religious groups emphasize instead of Jesus?

Do you think Christians today are equipped to discern false teaching? Why or why not?

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3, Jesus, John, Paul, James and the other teachers all place an enormous importance on being on guard against false teachers. It's one of the main emphases of the New Testament. How can *you* become better equipped to discern false teaching?

Why is it important to believe what is true rather than just what sounds good?

Thank God today that His Word, the Bible, helps you discern truth from error. Ask Him to guide you through the day today!

Wednesday

Read 1 John 4:4. Is there an area of your life where you have forgotten that “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world?”

When we forget this truth, what are the results emotionally and practically?

Ask God to help you remember that He is greater than anything! Specifically, ask Him to reassure you that He is greater than the threats to Christianity that are out there, since that was John's specific point.

Thursday

Read 1 John 4:5. When I watch television or read newspapers, it seems the world is increasingly skeptical about Biblical claims, but more gullible about other claims. There is more skepticism about the Bible, but less discernment about fad diets, revisionist historians, spiritual advice from nontraditional sources. Why do you suppose this is?

What would John say is at least one reason behind this?

Is there a teaching of the world on any subject-- materialism, sex, aggression, success-- where you have “bought in” without practicing biblical discernment?

Ask God to help you see the teaching of the world for what it is, rather than be fooled by its trappings and acceptance by the majority.

Friday

Read 1 John 4:6. John is saying that the way to gauge truth from falsehood is whether the teaching is based on the teaching of the apostles and Jesus, the foundation of the church. The only way to know this, of course, is to spend time in the Word.

If you are already doing these daily meditations, you are way ahead of where most of us are, in terms of spending time in the Word. But is there a way you can even incrementally improve the time you spend in the “teaching of the apostles”? How?

Ask God to bring to mind the Scriptures you have studied this week throughout the day today. Thank Him for His grace and ask Him to guide you!

Saturday

Take the time today to go over any devotions you may have missed and to complete your memorization of this week's verse. Pray for the ministry this weekend! Thanks!