

## Do They Pass the Test?

1 Jn 4:1-6

Can a Jew, Muslim and a Christian call each other brother? I believe scripture says it's impossible! However, there is a call today to put doctrine aside and everyone just love each other because God loves us. We can just pick our own path to God and he is happy with that. That sounds great on the surface...that is, until you read scriptures like our text.

Chapter four raises a question with which many people struggle. How do we know what is a right teaching and what isn't? This is especially true today when you see churches of all kinds coming together and calling each other brother. There are churches around here that I can call their members brothers and sisters, but there are also several that I could not call spiritual family. A few years ago, I had a conversation with a person who left a church because that person felt they were teaching unbiblical things and that there were controlling spirits in the congregation. The person strongly believed God told them to leave that church.

How do you test the spirits to see if they are from God or not? Can all churches and their doctrines be right? Those are a couple of the questions I want us to look at today in light of our text and the message of 1 John.

## PRAYER

### I. Testing Spirits

#### A. Some are real and some are not

1. By the mere fact that John tells Christians to test spirits means that not everyone who calls himself or herself Christians are acceptable to Christ.
2. Not every teaching you hear from preachers and teachers is God-given.
3. Jesus made that pretty clear in his own words in Matt 7 - Matthew 7:21 (ESV) — 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the

kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

4. Paul echoes the same thought in passages like 2 Cor 11:3-4
5. Many people profess to worship God, but unless they are united on the fundamentals of the faith, the most important ingredient is missing.
6. If they aren't directing you to Jesus as the only savior of your soul, they are false spirits.

#### B. Stop believing

1. In our text, it says in vs 1 "do not believe in every spirit"
2. The original text says, "stop believing"
3. The janitor of a large church was talking to a friend one day about some of the frustrations of his job. After listening intently, the man responded, "How in the world do you manage when you are given so many contrary orders and instructions?" "Well," replied the janitor, "I just put my mind in neutral and let them push me around."
4. The Christians that John was writing to, were getting pulled in every direction by every teacher who said that they were teaching the gospel. They were spiritually doing what that janitor was doing.
5. John tells them to test these teachers for the truth.
6. Stop believing everything you are told as fact and see if it matches scripture.
7. Christians, with all the resources we have available to us today, rarely do what John tells these Christians to do.
  - a) If preacher X says it, and he's popular or famous, well it must be right then.
  - b) We don't study like we should to see if what they are saying is true or has real merit.
8. John uses the word "test" that was used for metallurgy.
  - a) Coinage during ancient times were not nearly as regulated as they are today. Depending on the king or emperor, they would mix lead with the gold to make it seem pure. Merchants quickly learned to

examine a coin carefully and sometimes even putting a drop of acid on it to see if the gold was pure.

- b) John tells these Christians to be just as diligent with teachers coming into their midst as they are with making sure their money was real.
  - c) Just because someone claimed their teachings were from God didn't make it so.
  - d) Those teachings should be compared with what John and the apostles were teaching.
  - e) It was mentioned on a Wednesday night about how a church allowed false teaching to creep into the church without being challenged and the church eventually left our fellowship.
  - f) It's easy to blame those who taught a false gospel and rightly so, but John reminds us we have an obligation in all this too. We need to test the spirits.
9. These Christians that John writes to probably had a group of people who were called Gnostics.
- a) Basically, Gnostics believed that the body was evil and the spirit was holy.
  - b) So, you treated your body harshly or did every pleasure you wanted because the body was evil and so it didn't matter if the body broke God's laws as long as the spirit didn't.
  - c) They also denied that Jesus was human
  - d) Sounds really weird, doesn't it?
  - e) Almost as strange and contradictory to Biblical teachings as what we have today.
  - f) Try tuning in to a Christian radio or TV station for a day and see how many contradictory teachings there are.
  - g) And Christians head in every direction with those teachers.
10. A key test is consistency of a thought.
- a) Anyone can take a scripture and make it say just about whatever they want.

- b) One man told me he dealt with a guy who used the Bible to say smoking marijuana was okay because man was given authority over the plants of the earth.
  - c) The KKK uses the Bible to teach hatred of other races.
  - d) Many religious groups use parts of the Bible to create a doctrine that fits what they want to believe.
  - e) Even in our own fellowship, we have those who string together groups of passages to make a doctrine that doesn't really match Biblical teaching.
  - f) That doesn't work when you compare a doctrine to the Bible as a whole.
11. We need to constantly ask "Have I taken a passage out of its contextual meaning to create a new meaning?"
  12. Does the Bible consistently uphold a doctrinal thinking?
  13. If it doesn't you need to change your beliefs to match the Bible, not the Bible to match your beliefs.

## II. We are overcomers

### A. I love vs 4 –

1. 1 John 4:4 (ESV) — 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
2. The message is an awesome thought.
3. Not just the fact that God is greater than false teachers; but that he is also greater than Satan, the Prince of the World, The Deceiver.
4. That power is realized in the acts of martyrs time.
  - a) In 2014 we read in horror of 21 Christians beheaded by ISIS on a beach. You would think they would be crying out in terror, but the victims were calm: No outbursts. No cries. Instead, the men gazed

up, and prayers tumbled out in whispered final words: "Ya Rabbi Yasou." Translation: "My Lord Jesus."

- b) To me it was a display that the one who was in them was greater than the one who was in the world.
5. That's the extreme that we hope and pray we will never have to face, but what about the day to day challenges of Satan?
  6. Do you seek the strength of God to overcome the ridicule of fellow worker, students or others who mock you for your faith?
- B. You can use this passage to help you overcome temptation as well.
1. Do you seek the strength of God to overcome temptation?
  2. When you are tempted to do wrong, start saying this verse over and over.
  3. You would be surprised what you can overcome.
    - a) When I lived in Fairbanks, I lived just outside the gates of an Army base called Fort Wainwright.
    - b) Listen to a story of whom the base was named for.
    - c) In his book *Forever Triumphant*, F. J. Huegel told a story about the World War II General, Johnathan Wainwright. After General Wainwright was captured by the Japanese, he was held prisoner in a Manchurian concentration camp. Cruelly treated, he became "a broken, crushed, hopeless, starving man." Finally, the Japanese surrendered and the war ended. A United States army colonel was sent to the camp to announce personally to the general that Japan had been defeated and that he was free and in command of the camp until they could be returned home. After Wainwright heard the news, he returned to his quarters and was confronted by some guards who began to mistreat him as they had done in the past. Wainwright, however, with the news of the allied victory still fresh in his mind, declared with authority, "No, I am in command here! These are my orders." Huegel observed that from that moment on, General Wainwright was in control.
    - d) Mr. Huegel then made this application: "Have you been informed of the victory of your Savior in the greatest conflict of the ages? Then rise up to assert your rights. Never again go under when enemy comes to oppress. Claim the victory in Jesus' name."
  4. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV) — 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted

beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

5. Fight the one who is in the world and you will overcome.
6. Not because you are stronger, but because the One who is in you is stronger.

C. Our God is an awesome God

1. Psalm 66:1–5 (ESV) — 1 Shout for joy to God, all the earth; 2 sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! 3 Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. 4 All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.” Selah 5 Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.
2. Psalm 68:32–35 (ESV) — 32 O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah 33 to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice. 34 Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the

skies. 35 Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

3. Do you really want to overcome the world? Then THERE is your power; the God that is greater than anything in this world.

4. Will you embrace it?

### III. Concl

A. As Christians, we need to be a people of the Bible.

1. Not pulled by every fad teaching or convenient doctrine.

2. If I preach something wrong or the elders teach something that is wrong, You MUST let us know.

3. Our souls rest on it.

4. We must stand strong in God's teachings

B. Hang in there

1. the gist of vs 4-6 is no matter how bad things seem, hang in there.

2. If Satan is attacking you viciously, hang in there.

3. If people mock you for your stance on the truth, hang in there.

4. If you feel tempted to give in to sin, hang in there.

5. He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

6. The question you need to wrestle with right now is this: Is Christ in you?