

1, 2, 3 JOHN
THIS IS THE LIFE
SMALL GROUP STUDY #8
TEST THE SPIRITS
1John 4:1-6

Ice Breaker: How can you determine if something is good to eat, or if it is bad?

INTRO: We have all faced times when we have heard many conflicting voices shouting which way to go. Who do you listen to? Who do you ignore? It can be very difficult to know which is the right voice to listen to.

When it comes to worshiping God, there are all kinds of voices saying different and sometimes totally opposite things. John's original readers had no shortage of voices claiming to know the truth, and all leading in different directions. Things haven't change much in the last 2000 years. How do you know who is right? Who do you listen to? John gives us directions on how to decide.

READ: 1John 4:1-6

*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. 2 **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,** 3 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.*

*4 **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.** 5 **They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.** 6 **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.***

Q: What is discernment?

- The process of determining God's desire in a situation or for one's life.

Q: Why must we develop discernment?

- How do you develop discernment?
- Some people think discernment is a gift of the Spirit. Nowhere in scripture is discernment called a gift.
- Heb. 5:14 describes discernment as a product of being trained by scripture.
- We must take responsibility to develop discernment.

Q: According to verses 2-3, how can you recognize the Spirit of God in someone?

- What is the difference between the "Spirit of God" and "Every spirit?" Why does this matter?

- Every living being has a spirit.
- Only those spirits led by the Holy Spirit are from God.
- Acknowledging Jesus as the apostles testified about Him is one of the evidences of the Holy Spirit being in a person. If they deny this basic truth, nothing else would be worth considering.

Q: Why is verse 4 such an encouragement?

- The phrase “from God” means having God as your origin, or source. That’s very different than just representing yourself and your own beliefs.
- People with no sense of taste or smell are always eating things that are bad for them. The spirit of the world handicaps people in a similar way.
- The Spirit of God is more powerful than the spirit of the world and teaches us to say no to ungodly things. (Titus 2:12)

Q: What does verse 5 tell us about spirits that are from the world?

Q: According verse 6, who is it that listens to the apostles?

- Listening to the apostles is one evidence that a person is saved.

Q: Is it possible for a Christian magazine, television show, or minister to be a voice for the spirit of the antichrist (or the spirit of falsehood)? If so, how can we discern this?

- 1 Cor. 3:10-15 sheds some light on this.
- It is entirely possible for Christians to carry messages that are in opposition to God’s word.
- We are warned to be cautious about the nature of our works. Some of us will suffer loss because our deeds were worthless to the Kingdom.
- Most of the New Testament letters contain warnings about making sure we convey the truth with our lives and don’t allow ourselves to be led astray by lies or distracted with the unimportant.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. Are you developing discernment? If so how?
 - a. Ask your discipler or discipleship group members to evaluate your ability to discern.
2. Some messages, by sheer repetition, invade our minds and persuade us. List some verbal or visual messages you have been negatively influenced by.
3. What limits do you place on the amount of time you spend being exposed to voices that are contrary to God?
 - a. What limits do you place on your children?
 - b. What guidelines have you found to be helpful?