



WEEK 8: **Christ, Our Test For Authenticity**

February 26, 2015

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. – 1 John 4:2-3
ESV

The world in which we live is full of all kinds of half-truths and flat-out lies. Jesus describe Satan as the father of lies and one of his primary tactics has always been to influence the church with false teaching regarding Jesus. He doesn't necessarily want us to deny Jesus. He simply wants us to believe in a watered-down version of the real thing. If he can get us to see Jesus as merely a good man who lived a moral life and left us with some wise teachings to follow, he has won. Paul had some harsh words for the believers in Corinth: "You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed" (2 Corinthians 11:4 NLT). He warned the believers in Galatia: "Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you" (Galatians 1:8 NLT).

Take Notes (Teaching):

As you listen to today's lesson, write down anything significant that you hear. Be ready to share them with the men at your table during the discussion time.

- **Take Part (Discussion):**

Sometimes God has a way of speaking through others as they provide insights or different applications from the lessons. As you discuss around your table, write down anything you hear that makes an impact on you. Or if you hear another man share a struggle or concern, write it down so that you can pray for him during the week.

- **Take Time (Prayer):**

Be sure and leave a few minutes for the sharing of prayer requests. Remember, keep your requests short and sweet. Don't let the details bog you down. We don't have to understand all that is going on to pray effectively.

HOMework

Homework for week 9: Christ, Our Motivation to Love

Read 1 John 4:7-21

Once again, John raises the topic of brotherly love. At this point, we may be wondering why he keeps hammering away at this single thought.

- Why do you think he is spending so much time reminding his readers of their need to love one another?

- Why would this commandment be just as important for us today?

- What does he give as the source of love?

- Look at verses 8-9 again. How was the love of God “made manifest” or visible to us?

- Read the following passages and write down what they teach us about God’s love:
John 3:16

Romans 5:8

Romans 8:38-39

Galatians 2:20

Ephesians 5:1-2

- According to John, what should our natural response be to God’s incredible love for us as expressed in His Son’s death on our behalf?

- According to verse 12, no one has ever seen God, but how is He made visible to the world around us as we love one another?

Read the following quote from the NET Bible study notes on 1 John 4:12:

“The love that comes from God, the love that he has for us, reaches perfection in our love for others, which is what God wants and what believers are commanded to do.”

- If God loved us by sending His Son to die for us, and Christ loved us by willingly sacrificing His life on the cross on our behalf, why would our refusal to love others be so significant?

In verse 13, John once again uses his familiar and seemingly favorite phrase, “By this we know.”

- How can we know that we have an abiding relationship with Christ?
- In verse 15, what does John give as the only requirement for having an abiding, unending relationship with God the Father?
- Why would Satan want to get believers to doubt their relationship with God?
- Have you ever struggled with doubting your salvation? When those doubts show up, what form do they take?
- When John says, “there is no fear in love,” what do you think he is talking about?

Some of us fear punishment. We fear losing our salvation. We fear that we might not make it to heaven.

- According to John, what should the love of God, as expressed through the gift of His Son, do to our fears?
- Why would it be ridiculous to say you love God while you refuse to love your brother or sister in Christ? What’s wrong with that picture?



What's true anymore? Everything has become so subjective and relative that it seems next to impossible to determine what's fact and what's fiction. We live in a sea of grey, where the idea of black and white, right or wrong is a throw-back to some kind of archaic, legalistic epoch long gone and best forgotten. Even within Christianity, we have seen an increasing move toward tolerance and subjectivity, at the cost of accurate Biblical interpretation and doctrinal integrity. In a quest to remain relevant, many pastors and teachers have compromised the Word and their convictions in order to gain an audience and enhance their reputations. John would have us aware of the fact that false teachers are alive, well, and active among us. They write best-selling books, preach from the pulpits of growing congregations, fill auditoriums, and influence tens of thousands of people each and every day. But John says we are to test the spirits. Because not everybody who claims to speak on behalf of God has been sent by God. The question we need to ask is not whether they believe *in* Jesus, but what they believe *about* Him.

- **Beware of false prophets** – 1 John 4:1-6

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. – Matthew 7:15-16 ESV

- Jesus warned us about them
- John carries the message of Jesus
- He uses the word "spirit" 8X in six verses

Pneuma – Greek

A breeze or movement of air

The soul of a man

The source of any power, affection, emotion, or desire

An angel or demon

The Spirit of God

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. – 1 John 3:24 ESV

The Spirit of God

- We have the Spirit of God
- But there are other "spirits" or influences
- They come as "prophets of God" claiming to speak for God
- But these "winds" are to be avoided at all costs

- **Test the spirits**

dokimazō – to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not)

- Because these “spirits” are deceptive and dangerous
- They are not what they appear to be

Jude 1:12-13, 16-19

They are like...

Hidden reefs – the danger is unseen

Shameless shepherds – self-serving, not selfless

Rainless clouds – promising, but empty

Fruitless trees – dead and of no real value

Wild waves – impressive, but ultimately destructive

Wandering stars – unstable and unreliable

- But their message is attractive
- They sound reasonable and rational
- They tend to attract a following

You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. – 2 Timothy 4:3 MSG

- **Chasing mirages**

- They redefine sin
- They re-imagine God
- They reinvent the gospel
- They reduce the role of Jesus
- They remove the threat of hell
- They relegate heaven to this earth
- They reject guilt
- They revise the Bible

- **Our 3 weapons:**

- The Word of God
 - It is the source of all truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- The Spirit of God
 - He helps us understand the truth (John 16:13)
- The Body of Christ
 - Together, we uphold the truth (1 Timothy 3:15)

I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are living according to the truth. – 3 John 1:4 ESV

We must filter out the rhetoric and rationalizations and listen to what the more sinister, hidden agenda behind the message might be. We must probe behind the surface of what is being said and discover the heart of what is being taught. We must ask whether what is being conveyed is in keeping with God's Word. We must question whether their message is from God or from men. It may be appealing, well-worded, highly convincing, logical, and rational, but if it contradicts the Word of God, it is to be rejected. – Ken Miller, *Ears to Hear*, vesselsofclay.org, February 24, 2015