



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

1. **Bible Reading:** 1 John 3:24b; 4:1-6; 2 John 7, 10
2. "...The way we know that [God] remains in us is from the Spirit he has given us." (1 Jn. 3:24b)
3. Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming; even now it is already in the world." (4:1-3)
4. 4 You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world. Therefore, what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception." (1 John 4:4-6 CSB)
5. "Many deceivers have gone out into the world; they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist... If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home, and do not greet him." (2 John 7, 10 CSB)
6. **SUMMARY:** John emphasizes believers' love for each other. This love also motivates his stinging rebukes of 'antichrists and deceivers' who pose a threat to his children in Christ. John warns against false prophets, cautioning that not all spirit-inspired preaching comes from God. Preachers are energized either by God's Spirit or Antichrist's spirit. In this context, naivety is dangerous. John offers believers two 'tests' to discern true from false prophets, whether a preacher is motivated by God's Spirit of Truth or Antichrist's 'spirit of deception.' Today, pseudo-prophets and deceiving spirits still infiltrate churches, seminaries, and Christian media. Heresy and deception flourish on the Internet, worsened by declining biblical literacy and superficial preaching. At CIT, we must strengthen our theological foundations, cultivate a deep hunger for Christ-centered preaching, and sharpen our discernment to distinguish God's Spirit from the spirit of the Antichrist, true from false prophets.

Discussion:

1. John has been called “the Apostle of Love,” who writes the most about God's love & love between believers. Yet the same John denounces brothers as “deceivers, antichrists,’ & ‘false prophets.” Where is John's love here? Isn't this a kind of ‘hate’ and not love. Isn't there a contradiction here? Discuss.
2. The poet, Robert Browning (1812-89), said, “*John loved well, because he hated.*” What did he mean? Discuss.
3. John charges Christians to “test the spirits” in the context of “many false prophets.” (4:1)
 - a. What's the link between “spirits” and “prophets”? Discuss.
 - b. Discuss this: “Behind every prophet is a spirit & behind each spirit is either God or the devil” – John Stott
 - c. Consider this: “Behind every preacher is either God's Spirit or Anichrist's spirit.” – Discuss
 - d. Do you think there are “many false prophets” today? How would you recognize (detect) them? Discuss.
4. John says there are 2 kinds of prophet –‘false’ & ‘true,’ plus 2 Spirits: ‘God's Spirit’ & ‘Antichrist's Spirit’
 - a. What test does John propose (4:2-3a) to distinguish between these?
 - b. How would you apply this test to (say) a preacher/teacher visiting CIT to preach a message series?
5. Is John being ‘proud or arrogant’ when he asserts: ‘*We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us.*’ (4:6)? Discuss
6. In 4:5-6 John proposes a second ‘test’:
 - a. What is the nature of this (second) test?
 - b. How would you apply this test to a visiting Bible teacher/preacher?