**CROSS-EXAMINING THE SPIRITS**

**1 John 4:1-6**

**THE BIG IDEA: True Christians will be able to identify and avoid false teachers while following teachers who are filled with God’s Spirit and preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

**ARE YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FALSE PROPHETS?**

* *“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.”* (1 John 4:1)
* **Exposing false teachers is necessary for the protection of God’s Church from heresy and heretics.**
* Jesus – *“Be on guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves.”* (Matthew 7:15)
* *“Some have rejected these and shipwrecked their faith. 20Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.”* (1 Timothy 1:19b-20)
* *“You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.”* (2 Timothy 1:15)
* *“Because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world…”* (2 Timothy 4:10)
* **Like in John’s day, we cannot fear what others may think of us by calling out false teachers and false doctrines, because we are mandated in the Bible to do just that.**
* *“Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, 18because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites.”* (Romans 16:17-18)
* *“Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them.”* (Ephesians 5:11)
* **Discernment is needed in evaluating “spiritual activity” so that the door to demonic activity is no opened wide among the Church.**

**ARE YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ THE TRUE JESUS?**

* *“2This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3but 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.”* (1 John 4:2-3)
* *“Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?”* (1 John 2:22a)
* **“[Jesus] is the unique, eternal Son of God who offers salvation from sin only by grace through faith in Him. He is the God Man. His mother gave birth to Him because He was a man., but He created her because He is God. He went to sleep because He was a man, but He commanded the wind and waves to sleep because He’s God. The truth about the uniqueness of Jesus must be your spiritual foundation.” – Dr. Tony Evans**
* **Are you following the Jesus of the Bible that transforms you continually into His image; or are you following a Jesus that you have created in your image that never challenges your lifestyle and behavior?**

**ARE YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ IN THE GREATER SPIRIT?**

* *“4You 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.”* (1 John 4:4)
* **No matter how strong the opposition you face from this world and from antichrists, the Lord who is stronger than all lives IN you!**
* **What may look like defeat now in your life ultimately results in VICTORY because greater is He who is IN YOU that the one who is in the world.**

**ARE YOU \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ TO THE RIGHT TEACHERS?**

* *“They are from the world. Therefore what they say is from the world and the world listens to them. 6We 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 4:5-6)
* **People who are not of Christ will follow people who teach a false Gospel that feeds their own desires, rather than following someone who preaches the truth about Christ and the Gospel.**
* *“For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.”* (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
* *“There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them.”* (2 Peter 2:1-2)
* **False teachers masquerading as spokespeople for God is not a new thing in the church, but yet countless people are still swept up in these heresies because they are not students of the Bible and surrendered to the Lordship of Christ.**
* **Some questions to consistently ask yourself:**
  + **Who is teaching me God’s word?**
  + **How do I evaluate their teaching?**
  + **How do I evaluate my own beliefs about God’s word?**
  + **Am I ever challenged by those I learn from to allow God to change my sinful thoughts, actions, speech, and earthly desires?**
* *“Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.[a] 2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”* (Romans 12:1-2)
* **Everyone can have a platform today to “preach and teach” something, but the size of the platform does not validate the truthfulness of the message.**

\*\***Connect Group Discussion on Back\*\***

**CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Ice Breaker:** What is the weirdest thing someone has told you in life?

**Start Thinking:**

* + What do you learn about God/Jesus from 1 John 4:1-6?
  + What was one of the main heresies (false teachings) that John was confronting in this passage of Scripture?
  + What does John mean by “test the spirits” in verse 1?
  + What does John mean when he says “*because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”* in verse 4?

**Digging Deeper:**

* + What feelings do you have knowing that the Bible instructs Christians to expose false teachers and false teachings?
  + Why do you think so many professing Christians have a problem with naming false teachers/teachings?
  + Why is it imperative that Pastors and Church members expose these false teachers/teachings?
  + How can you ensure you are following the “true Jesus”?
  + How does it make you feel knowing that the Spirit of God who lives in you as a Christian is more powerful than any spirit you will face in this world?
  + How can you ensure you are listening to the right teachers and believing the right doctrines?
  + Who might you need to have a conversation with that is unknowingly following a false teacher/false teaching?