



SUNDAY MORNING

AT BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH

Title: Authentic Discernment

Passage: 1 John 4:1-6

Speaker: Associate Pastor David Wood

Introduction:

"...He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)

In a world overflowing with religious ideas, spiritual sounding phrases, and groups that appear "Christian" on the surface, it can be hard to know what's truly grounded in God's Word. Many beliefs may sound right, even familiar—like the idea that being good enough earns you a place in heaven—but when we compare them to the truth of Scripture, they fall short. That's why *authentic discernment* is so crucial. In 1 John 4, we're given a clear call to test the spirits, to measure every teaching by the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not every message that claims to represent Christ actually does—and recognizing the difference is essential for a genuine, saving faith.

I. The Command to Test (Verse 1)

A. Be Spiritually Discerning

Don't accept every teaching or emotional experience at face value. Just because something feels spiritual doesn't mean it's from God. Test everything.

B. Anchor Yourself in Scripture



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Use the Word of God as the measuring stick for truth. The Bible is our ultimate authority in identifying what is truly from the Lord.

C. Recognize the Prevalence of Deception

False prophets aren't rare—they're everywhere. Spiritual deception is not a fringe issue; it's a global and growing danger.

*"And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."
(Genesis 3:13)*

Eve still faced judgement, and the reality remains the same today: deceived people will still be judged. Excuses will not be enough. We have to be sure and certain that what we believe is true!

II. The Criteria for Truth (Verses 2-3)

True confession involves believing Jesus is God in the flesh, the only Savior, whose work is sufficient.

False confession adds to or takes away from Christ's identity and work.

Whatever you are believing and trusting in, you need to put it to the test of Scripture.

Right words don't matter if the Jesus they preach isn't the one in Scripture.

III. The Confidence of Victory (Verse 4-6)

The good news is that God hasn't left us to be deceived. The Holy Spirit in the believer gives us power to overcome error.

What separates the true believer from the deceived is whom they listen to—those who belong to God submit to the Word of God, not to church tradition, new revelations, or emotion.



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If someone listens to the Bible selectively or reinterprets it to fit their religion—they are not walking in truth.

Conclusion: The devil isn't trying to lead everyone to deny Jesus—he's trying to get them to believe in a version that's close, but not true. That's why authentic discernment matters. We don't fight deception by chasing every false teaching—we fight it by staying rooted in the real thing. Let's be a church that knows the Word, knows Jesus, and knows how to test the voices we hear. Not afraid of the battle, not swayed by the crowd. Just anchored in truth. Because when you know the truth, the counterfeit never stands a chance.



Bethany Baptist Church • 4402 40th Street • Lubbock, TX 79414
806.799.2464 • churchstillworks.org • Dan Preston, Pastor