1 John 4:1–6

[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.



[4] Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. [5] They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.



1 John 2:15–17
[15] Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. [17] And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.



1 John 4:1
[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.



1 John 3:24
[24] 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 4:1
[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.



We often evaluate spiritual teaching by the wrong criteria.

- Did it *inspire* me?
- Did it make me *feel* something?
- Does this person *seem* sincere?
- Does the speaker have a large following?
- Does it confirm what I already believe?



Is it faithful to the truth God has revealed about Jesus the Christ?



1 John 4:2–3
[2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.



The True Spirit Tells the Truth About Jesus



1 John 2:19
[19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.



1 John 4:2–3
[2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.



If Jesus isn't fully human…
Then he cannot truly stand in our place as our representative.

He cannot genuinely experience human suffering, temptation, weakness, and death.



Hebrews 2:14
[14] Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil…



Hebrews 4:15
[15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.



If Jesus isn't fully God…
Then he isn't the eternal Son who has come from the Father.

He isn't the divine Savior John proclaimed in chapter 1.

If we reduce Jesus to anything less than the Divine Son, we can escape his ultimate authority on our lives.



A Jesus who is only a teacher can be **consulted**.
The real Jesus must be **worshiped** and **obeyed**.



1 John 4:2-3
[2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.



1 John 2:18–22

[18] Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. [20] But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. [21] I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22] Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.



The spirit of antichrist is at work wherever the truth about Jesus Christ is denied, distorted, or replaced.



You Belong to God, and the Spirit in You Is Greater

1 John 4:4
[4] Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

The World and the Truth Have Different Voices

1 John 4:5–6
[5] They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

What does the spirit of error sound like today?

"If I feel it deeply, it must be true."

- Culture often treats feelings as the final authority on reality.
- But while feelings are real experiences, they are not always reliable guides to truth.
- Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 14:12.



What does the spirit of error sound like today?

"I know what Scripture says, but my situation is different."

- We convince ourselves that our circumstances are exceptional.
- The biblical command is *clear[ish]*, but surely God understands why it doesn't apply to us this time.
- We turn our circumstances into an authority higher than God's Word.
- James 1:22; Luke 6:46.



What does the spirit of error sound like today?

"I've grown enough spiritually that I don't really need the church."

- We begin to see Christian community, corporate worship, and accountability as optional extras for less mature believers.
- But spiritual maturity doesn't lead us away from the body of Christ. It deepens our commitment to it.
- Hebrews 10:24–25; 1 Corinthians 12:21.



What does the spirit of error sound like today?

"The Bible was written a long time ago. We've moved beyond some of those ideas."

- Instead of allowing Scripture to evaluate our culture, we allow our culture to evaluate Scripture.
- The authority quietly shifts from God's Word to contemporary opinion.
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Mark 7:8–9.



What does the spirit of error sound like today?

"I sense God is telling me this is okay."

- We claim spiritual confirmation for something Scripture clearly identifies as sin.
- But the Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word he inspired.
- 1 John 3:4–10; Galatians 5:16–25.



What does the spirit of error sound like today?

"A loving God would never judge anyone."

- This sounds compassionate, but it separates God's love from his holiness and justice.
- The real Jesus speaks about both the mercy of God and the judgment of God.
- John 3:16–21; Matthew 25:31–46.



What does the spirit of error sound like today?

“Jesus wants me to be happy, so he wouldn’t ask me to give this up.”

- We turn Jesus into someone whose primary purpose is to affirm our desires.
- But Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.
- Mark 8:34–36.



1 John 4:5–6

[5] They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.



A few practical ways to develop discernment:

- **Know the Scriptures.** Read them, study them, meditate on them, and submit your thinking to them.
- **Know the gospel.** Understand who Jesus is, what he accomplished, and what it means to follow him.
- **Know the church.** Stay rooted in community where God's Word is taught, discussed, and applied.
- **Depend on the Holy Spirit.** Ask him to open your eyes to truth and protect you from deception.



So What?!



God has given us his **Son**.
God has given us his **Word**.
God has given us his **Spirit**.
And God has given us **one another.**

