



Just Love + Discern with the Spirit | 1 John 4:1-6

June 1, 2025

By Pastor Tim Ghali

Group Leader Notes

Welcome to week 6 in our current series, *Just Love*, as we look for wisdom from 1 John. John emphasizes the importance of demonstrating our love for others through actions instead of words. He also warns us to guard our hearts from false teachings. Today I want to talk about some practical steps that we can take to recognize and avoid false prophets and their teachings.

Question: How do we test the spirits?

Bottom Line: When we test the spirits, we not only overcome the false teachings infiltrating our lives, but we hear the true voice of God clearer and follow Jesus deeper.

Take Home Message:

It is up to each of us to discern what is being said, *to test the spirits*. Test the spirits, but begin with your favorite voices. Consider making fasting a part of your life, especially from social media. Keep asking yourself, through all the noise, *What is God saying to me?*

Main Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:1-6

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

⁴You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit^[a] of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Other Scripture References

Ephesians 6:12

Teaching Points:

Practices to test the spirits:

- Reading and application of Scripture
- Listening in the context of Christian Community
- Praying with the Holy Spirit

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. Pastor Tim began the message expressing his admiration for N.T. Wright, a New Testament scholar, theologian, and Anglican bishop. His writings have had a huge impact on Tim's spiritual journey, to the point that Tim admits that he was over-relying on the theologian's work.
 - Is there someone that you admire so much that you believe everything that they say is true?
 - Have you ever stopped and asked, *Is this true?*
 - Pastor Tim admitted that he was recently fooled by an interview with a sports star that turned out to be an AI deep-fake. Have you ever spotted a fake generated by AI?
 - Ask your group for volunteers to describe the fake and how they recognized it.
 - For those of you who have never spotted a fake, how confident do you feel that you would be able to uncover one?
2. Read verse 1.
 - What does John mean by "*the spirits*"?
 - Consider all of the information that you consume from your phone or other devices each day. Do you ever stop and question the voices of authority figures you respect, or the influencers that you seek?
3. False teachers want to create their own audiences, their own followership for financial gain, recognition, power, and authority. Discuss one or two false teachers.
 - Who were they?
 - What were their false teachings?
 - What happened to their followers?
4. Pastor Tim listed 3 practices to test the spirits. Ask yourself these questions and then share answers with your group.
 - How would you describe your time of reading Scripture?
 - How would you describe your prayer life?
 - If you want to begin some of these practices, or spend more time doing them, ask your group for some tips on how they do it.
5. Pastor Tim challenged us this week to fast from media. Give everyone a chance to answer the following questions so that you can hold one another accountable.
 - What is your favorite app or social media that you spend the most time on each week? If you're not sure, check your phone under Settings → Screen Time.
 - Which days will you fast and for how long?
 - What will you do with this time to test the spirits?

Let's Pray

Heavenly Father, we admit that much of our days are inundated by a steady flow of information, often of our own choosing. We realize all of this noise drowns out your still, small voice. Bless us with strength and self-control to fast from these distractions and to turn our eyes and ears towards you. Help us to follow the way of Jesus by loving you, and one another, through self-sacrifice, generosity, and community. In Jesus name, Amen