

Fellowship with God: Testing Doctrine
1 John 4:1-6

Testing
Knowing
Overcoming
Listening

Testing

1 John 4:1 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.

Believe (pisteuō): to be firmly persuaded

The word “spirit” here must mean either “utterance inspired by a spirit” or “person inspired by a spirit

Marshall, I. H. (1978). [*The Epistles of John*](#) (p. 204). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Ephesians 6:10–12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Test (dokimazō): to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use—‘to test, to examine, to try to determine the genuineness of, testing.’

1 John 4:1 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 2:18 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.

Acts 20:28–29 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

Knowing

Certain knowledge

1 John 4:2–3 By this you know the Spirit of God:

You know (ginōskō): come to know

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

We can know the things of God because God's Spirit is within us.

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Divine identification

1 John 4:2–3 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.

Demonic differentiation

1 John 4:3 ... This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Satan not only develops lies that directly deny biblical truth, but is also subtle, often sabotaging the truth by mixing it with error. Truth mixed with error is usually far more effective and far more destructive than a straightforward contradiction of the truth. Those who trust everything they read from the Christian bookstore or hear on Christian radio and television are prime targets for doctrinal deception.

MacArthur, J. (2007). [1, 2, 3 John](#) (p. 155). Moody Publishers.

Overcoming

1 John 4:4–5 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. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.

Listening

1 John 4:6 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.

John 10:27–28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 8:47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

John 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

1 Corinthians 2:12–14 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.