

Abiding in Light, Love, and Life

Notes & Application

Testing Spirits

1 JOHN 4:1-6

Overview

John warns his readers not to believe everyone who claims to be a spiritual teacher. Instead, they should “test the spirits” to determine whether a teacher and his message are from God. John insists that every message or teacher that does not confess Jesus as God incarnate is not from God but is instead empowered by the spirit of the antichrist. In contrast, John encourages his readers that they are from God and have already overcome these worldly, antichrist spirits because of God’s infinitely greater Spirit living within them.

Outline

1. Don’t believe everything you hear, because the world is full of false prophets (4:1-3a).
2. Don’t be intimidated by opposition to Jesus, because the Spirit in you is greater than the spirit in the world (4:3b-4).
3. Don’t be discouraged when people reject the gospel, because Jesus’ sheep hear his voice (4:5-6).

Three Takeaways:

1. *Be confident in the person of Jesus in the Bible.*
2. *Be confident in the presence of Jesus in the believer.*
3. *Be confident in the power of Jesus in the world.*

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to “test the spirits”? Have you ever been intrigued by a spiritual teaching that turned out to be false?
2. Why do you think false prophets are still a problem today? What makes their messages so appealing?
3. Why is the question “Who is Jesus?” at the heart of Christianity? What makes this question so divisive?
4. Can we know “the real Jesus”? How? How can we identify false ideas of Jesus?
5. If you are a Christian, do you believe that the Spirit in you is greater than the spirit that is in the world? In what ways do we sometimes struggle to really believe or live out this truth?