

## Abide pt8

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Ryan Abernathy / General

Abide / 1 John 4:1–6

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I don't know anyone who likes a thief. Someone who breaks into your home, takes something that isn't theirs makes you feel unsafe and violated. That's why we have laws against theft and burglary. That's why we sell alarm systems and put locks on our doors. Because there are always people out there who will want to take what is rightfully yours and use it for their own ends.

That may seem like an odd way to start a sermon, but the passage we are covering today is talking about a different kind of theft. It is a theft not of physical things, but spiritual things. See, we have an Enemy and Jesus told us that he wants to "steal, kill, and destroy" and that has not stopped just because Jesus was resurrected.

The passage we are going to look at today is helping us to set our spiritual alarm systems. To guard against having our joy, our confidence, our love stolen from us by an Enemy who sometimes sneaks into our own midst.

Turn with me to [1 John 4:1-6](#).

In the end of chapter 3, John is talking about the Holy Spirit, and how He gives us the confidence of the constant, unfettered presence of God. We have a relationship with God because of the Holy Spirit. And He gives us the ability to discern between lies and truth, if we will listen to Him.

Discernment is a word that gets abused in our day. There are some folks who use the term “discernment” to attack their enemies and advocate for their own opinions. That is not what I am talking about today. I am talking about the Voice of the Spirit that directs us to truth by helping us to discern between lies and falsehoods thru the Word of God.

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

Stott notes, “Neither Christian believing nor Christian loving is to be indiscriminate. In particular, Christian faith is not to be mistaken for credulity. **True faith examines its object before reposing confidence in it**

The first three verses from this passage are all about this practice.

First- John says we are to **test before we believe**. We are not to simply take everyone or every thought or every emotion as if it comes from God.

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

*The verb “test” (dokimazete) means “to prove, to examine,” like coins that are being tested for genuineness and proper weight—something that should be done on a continual basis.*

Why not? v1b- **many** false prophets have gone out into the world.

Did you catch the word “many.” That’s a big deal. There are a lot of people in John’s time who are false prophets. Do you think we have more or less today?

So how are we to discern?

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

Spiritual activity is not necessarily Godly activity. We must be discerning. **We must listen and evaluate carefully the message and messenger against the infallible authority of Scripture**

Well, remember, John is addressing a SPECIFIC heresy- people questioning whether or not Jesus has come in the flesh. So he gives a specific example. But from that specific example we can draw some general principles.

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

Every spirit (pan pneuma) will either be approved or rejected based on the Christological test. Not only is the test comprehensive, but it is also confessional. The legitimacy of a prophet should be determined by the content of his message, his confession about Jesus. The verb “acknowledges” (homologeoi) indicates an unwavering confession and “denotes not mere verbal acknowledgment but an open and forthright declaration of the message as one’s own position.” It is the outward expression of inner faith. The content of the expression is crucial, and it must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (en sarki)

1. Does the “spirit” question the Gospel as revealed in the Bible?
2. Does the “spirit” call us to follow Jesus more closely?
3. Does the “spirit” call us to uphold or violate explicit commands of God?
4. Does the “spirit” adhere to the greatest and second greatest commandments?
5. Does the “spirit” call us to serve ourselves or to serve God?

These 5 questions are not the end all be all of discernment, but they are a good starting point for the practice.

Notice a few things about them- **they all go back to scripture, they all take Jesus into account, they all call us to obedience rather than rebellion**

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

The spirit of the arch enemy of Christ is “now” in the world “already.” His presence was active in John’s day. It remains active in our day. It will continue until this age ends with the revelation of God’s Christ, the true Christ

**The Spirit of God will never lead you to do something that is contrary to the revealed Word of God. Period.**

So what is the guarantee that we won’t be deceived? Well it’s because we have already been victorious thru Jesus. Look at verse 4-

You are from God and have overcome them...God is a part of who you are and He has sent you...and...

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*They are not necessarily more intelligent or more skilled than the false prophets, but they are possessed and indwelt by one who is, the Holy Spirit.* They have resisted those who have seduced or tempted them to accept false doctrine, and their victory is secured by the one who is in them

He is greater than those who are in the world who are trying to deceive you! He is already triumphant and we are co-heirs in His triumph!

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

As believers yield themselves to the one who lives within them, they experience continual victory in their daily battles with the forces of evil. This is a great promise that provides great comfort, assurance, and hope.

And in verse 5-6, John makes another distinction- they speak “from the world” and the world “listens to them.”

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They speak continually (lalousin, present tense) from the world, and their message reveals their source. As Hiebert explains, “They draw the substance of their teaching from the godless world.”<sup>87</sup> **Further, their message is attractive to those who think like the world. Their words entice and capture those for whom the world is their home.** “The world listens to those who speak its own language.” The words of these false teachers spring from the world, and “no stream rises above its source

This is a really important point. The truth of God is not always going to be fashionable. It is not always going to be culturally acceptable or popular. We don’t have to make it offensive, it naturally offends some people- and some of those people are even in churches trying to undermine God’s truth...

“Did God really say...”

And we see those people’s real desires exposed when they are confronted with the truths of God and choose their own preferences over God’s best.

So how then do we engage?

1- we remain confident in the God who has already won

2- we hold fast to truth even in the face of opposition

3- we overcome not by force or wit, but by the Spirit who calls people to Himself

### **1, 2, 3 John 2. Test the Spirits (4:1–6)**

John summarizes his intentions and claims that this is how we know the Spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood (ta pneuma tēs planēs). The spirits may be tested by first examining their confession, which comes through human instruments, and then by examining the character of their audience, who would give them credence. We can know the true from the false, the Spirit of God from the spirit of the antichrist. It is imperative that we be vigilant in this assignment