

HOW DO YOU SPOT A PHONY?

1 John 4:1-6

How do you tell the difference between the real thing & a counterfeit?

Secret Service Counterfeit Division—begins training by study of what real thing looks like.

Professor Agassiz' training

–3 days of studying 1 dead fish

–to learn by observation all that we can learn about it.

That's the basis of recognizing false doctrine.

To recognize false doctrine when we see it, we have to know what sound doctrine looks like!

GOD'S HOLINESS 1:5-3:10

God is holy. 1:5

To enjoy fellowship with a holy God, we must be holy! 1:6-3:10

GOD'S LOVE 3:11-5:10

God is love

To enjoy fellowship with a God Who IS love, we must love one another!

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WORLD & GOD'S CHILDREN 3:12-4:6

Hatred by the world 3:12-13

It shouldn't surprise us that the world doesn't love God's children.

They hated Jesus; they'll hate us!

Love among brethren 3:14-24

One of the clearest evidences that we walk with God is love for God's children. 14

Christ loved us & demonstrated it by his death. 16

=>We ought to love one another & show it by our actions. 16-18

3 results from demonstration of love 19-24

Certainty of salvation 19-21

Effective prayer 22-23

Fellowship with God 24

Response to the truth 4:1-6

Parenthetical observation points out another aspect of contrast between the world & the church; seen in our response to truth.

God's children listen to God's voice

John 10:4 *"The sheep hear his voice, & he calls his own sheep by name & leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, & the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."*

John concludes previous thought: when we abide in Christ & enjoy fellowship with Him, the Holy Spirit affirms our relationship with Him.

His Spirit resonates with ours, giving us confidence we're God's children.

Rom. 8:15-16 *"You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."*

"Speaking of which, don't go along with just any old 'spirit.'"

Check it out!

Be sure you're listening to the right spirit!

Mormons tell you to follow

"the burning in your bosom."

Do you *feel good* about what you believe?

But a “burning in your bosom” could just be indigestion!

Feeling good about what we believe, doesn't mean we're following the Spirit.

Check it out!

Be sure you're listening to *GOD's* Spirit!

How can we be sure?

The message of truth 1-3 *“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. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³& every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming & now is in the world already.”*

Evidence of spirits can deceive people Supernatural power may deceive people. *Check it out!*

Negative command:

Stop trusting every spirit who comes along.

Post modern thought insists that everyone's view is equally valid.

“There's no such thing as absolute truth!”

Interview: “People interpret the Bible however they want to!”

“Everyone has a right to their own opinion.”

John (God's Word) insists that **God** has spoken

When God speaks, He tells the truth.

We'd better find out what God says!

You can know if God agrees with a speaker's opinion.

Don't accept everything you hear!
 Even *supernatural* displays of power aren't the key indicator of truth!

Positive command: Test the spirits to see if they're from God.

Not what it appears.

Anyone can affirm: "Jesus Christ was born as a man."

If the spirit acknowledges Jesus as God's anointed One, Who has come in the flesh, it is from God.

To acknowledge Jesus for Jewish people was to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah => God)

Ps. 24:7-10 *"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.*

⁸*Who is this King of glory?*

*The Lord, strong & mighty,
 the Lord, mighty in battle!*

⁹*Lift up your heads, O gates!*

*& lift them up, O ancient doors,
 that the King of glory may come in.*

¹⁰*Who is this King of glory?*

The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah

John acknowledges in His gospel (**John 1:14**) that the Word, Who is God, "*became flesh & dwelt among us!*"

Christ has come in the flesh!

Paul affirms the same: "*In Him the totality of all that God is dwelt in bodily form.*" **Col. 2:9**

He became flesh & dwelt among us!

If the spirit doesn't acknowledge His divine origin,
it isn't from God, no matter how convincing it may appear!

It isn't enough just to say He was a good man.

C. S. Lewis pointed out Jesus is either LIAR, or LUNATIC or
LORD. There is no other option!

Who does the Spirit say He is?

If he doesn't acknowledge Him as Lord, it's not God's Spirit

Paul points out that the Holy Spirit brings us to the conclusion
that Jesus is Lord

1 Cor. 12:3 *"No one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" & no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit."*

Reason for the commands:

Many false prophets have gone out into the world.

There ARE true & *false* prophets.

You CAN tell the difference!

How can you tell the difference?

The best test to determine if *God's Spirit* is guiding a teacher:

What does he say about *Jesus*?

If they don't acknowledge Him—if they don't affirm the truth about Jesus, they're not from God. Period!

It doesn't matter how convincing the supernatural display may appear!

Don't pursue the power!

Although God's message is superior to the world's message, those who belong to the world will never receive it (5-6).

Our superiority 4 *"You are from God & have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

We won't be overcome by the evil one & his children.

The One Who is in us is greater than the one in them.

Predetermined responses 5-6 *"They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, & the world listens to them.*

⁶We 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 & the spirit of error."

Only God's children accept God's truth.

1 Cor. 2:10-15 *"These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.*

¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now 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. ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one."

12:3 *“No one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.”*

The world’s children want to hear the world’s ideas.

The world doesn’t want to know the truth.

They are not interested in hearing the truth.

God’s children listen to God’s voice. John 10:4
“The sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

They recognize it when they hear it & receive it gladly.

God’s people listen to God’s spokesmen.

The world’s children don’t want to listen to God’s spokesmen.

We can tell whether we are God’s children & in fellowship with Him by our response to His Word.

His children want to hear their Father’s voice.

Those who are in fellowship with Him recognize His voice when they hear it.

Other side of that equation is also true,...

One way to identify the Spirit of truth & the spirit of falsehood:

Who’s listening to the voice?

You can tell the children of God by the voice they listen to.

You can also tell where a spirit comes from by taking note of the listeners.

If *the world* likes what the speaker says, he isn't from God.

If God's children are paying attention, the speaker is God's representative.

Just because a Christian friend, or some group of Christians, likes what he hears, doesn't mean it's right.

Watch the body of Christ.

If the body of Christ acknowledges truth, that ought to serve as an indicator that God is speaking.

HOW SHOULD WE APPLY THIS PRINCIPLE IN OUR LIVES?

What difference should this make in our lives this week?

What should WE do about it?

So how does this work out in world where deception's common?

Test #1

Does the voice affirm the truth as revealed in God's Word?

It doesn't matter how many go along with it, if it contradicts God's Word, it isn't from Him!

Test #2

Who is listening to the voice?

Watch the body of Christ!

When godly, discerning leaders *agree* that God is speaking, pay attention to what they're saying.

HOW SHOULD WE APPLY THESE TESTS IN OUR LIVES?

Don't blindly accept the word of any dynamic preacher you hear [even *ME!*]

Check it out!

Listen with discernment!

Does the message agree with God's Word?

Is it a message that appeals to the world?

Does it make man the center?

"You can make it on your own?"

Does it affirm many ways to God?

Or does it affirm that Jesus is THE way, the truth & the life?

–that no one comes to the Father, except by trusting Him?

What does the speaker say about Jesus?

Does he acknowledge the divine origin of Christ?

Does his message depend on our efforts or on what Christ has already done for us?