
Test the Spirits

" 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 4:1, ESV)

1. Beloved - John's term he uses for little dear ones or little loved ones - do not believe every spirit. We are not able to see a spirit but we can hear and understand the teachings of that spirit therefore when we talk about spirit it is equivalent to "teaching."

2. As a Christian you must be discerning "so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." (Ephesians 4:14, ESV) The imperative form of the word 'believe' with the negative particle 'not' could literally be translated "stop believing."

3. The Old and New Testaments are full of warnings about false teachers with their false doctrines.

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst." (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, ESV)

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:15-20, ESV)

4. It is no secret that Satan is a deceiver and so is his disciples. But believers can be lulled into a false sense of security and must always be on guard.

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15, ESV)

5. Satan wants to cause doubt, denial and distortion about God and His Word and has been since the Garden of Eden.

" Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Corinthians 4:1-7, ESV)

6. The term translated "test" [Gk - dokimazo] was used to refer to a metallurgists testing metals for their purity and value. So when John says "but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" he is saying put them to the test. Contrary to the view of some this command has nothing to do with confronting demons or performing exorcisms instead Christians are to continue to evaluate what they see, hear and read against what the Word of God says.

"but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, ESV)

7. The only reliable way to test any teaching is to measure it against what God has revealed in His infallible, inerrant, written Word.

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:12-17, ESV)

8. The reason we have to test "for many false prophets have gone out into the world" is because Satan is a counterfeit. He wants to perform the most damage against Christ and His Church as he can.

" 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. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep." (2 Peter 2:1-3, ESV)

9. Satan with his lies and schemes has empowered his disciples to infiltrate denominations, churches, and other Christian schools, institutions and organizations with a form of 'truth mixed with error.'

" Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 3-4, ESV)



GracePointe Baptist Church
2209 N Post Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73141
Phone: (405) 769-5050
<http://www.gracepointelive.com>