

## 1 John 4

V1. What is a spirit in this context? What are you testing for? Why do you need to test it? How do you go about testing it? Here's a test - a passage in the Bible that's not confirmed elsewhere in the Bible, preferably Old Testament. Example: Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:14 Men with long hair. Is he sharing a personal dislike, or is he creating a new rule in the church whereby any long haired guy visiting church should be encouraged to go to the barbers before next Sunday?

What is a false prophet in this context? See verse 3. The litmus test. Note, the spirit of the anti-Christ. Not so much the anti-Christ himself, he may not even be born yet, but the spirit of the anti-Christ. This is what it's going to be like in the end days. Government laws and regulations, that Jesus is not God's Son and don't you dare say that He is!

Here's some examples of spirits that need testing -

Mormons:- They don't believe in the Holy Trinity, Jesus is lower ranked and inferior to God. The Bible is not God's final word, Revelation 22:18. The Book of Mormon is God inspired.

Jehovah's Witnesses :- similar, disbelief in the Trinity. Again, Jesus is below God in the Heavenly pecking order. They believe that in 1914 the end times started. The Holy Spirit is a tool of God, but not God.

Christian Scientologists :- again problems with the Trinity. In fact, they don't believe in the Holy Spirit. They believe in a divine science rather than a part of God Himself.

All the above have other weird rules and regulations, don't drink coffee or have blood transfusions, but it's the core beliefs that's the problem.

How close do these go to crossing that line, and becoming 'false prophets'?

V 4-5. Is this a bit patronising? (Paul on children) who is, 'he who is in you'? Who is in the world? What does, he who is in the world, stand for? Possibly current morals. What used to be OK but now is not? Examples - 500 years ago, animal cruelty was a popular sport. 250 years ago, negro slavery was fine, rape, whipping and murder of slaves. 150 years ago, treating the poor as vermin was right. 80 years ago anti-semitism was normal which led to WW2. 65 years ago, gays were a deviant sub species that should be locked up. 50 years ago racism was OK, you could rent rooms out for, 'no Irish, no blacks, no pets'. Skinheads that went gay bashing or Paki-bashing; they were restrained by police but never arrested in the 1970s. If you're of a certain age, maybe you remember the BNP or more recently the English Protection League? What was mainstream and acceptable, now stinks. Future generations may rightly look down on this generation for trashing the earth and squandering its gifts and resources. Man's morals change and evolve over time. God's morals, laws and teachings are the same 5000 years ago, today and forever.

V 6. That's what the World is, but not you. You are of God. Anyone who is not of God will be shaking their heads or will have switched off or walked out! That's the difference between God and error.

V 7-8. Verse 8, first. For God is love. What does that mean to you? Turn it around, love is God! When you love, you're experiencing a little bit of God. Doesn't matter whether you believe or not, that's what God is, and you've just experienced a little taste of God. So

when chapter 3 talks about truly, deeply, loving your brother, you are being like God. The Bible talks about you being changed to be Christ-like; that's what it means. Romans 8:14 The flip side is that if you can't love, that's an indicator that you don't know God.

V 9. God's yardstick. Love that will give your everything for another in trouble.

V 10-11. God's love for you and your love for your brother / sister, is inextricably linked. Not theoretical, but practical: how can you feel and show, that God's love for your brothers / sisters?

V 12-13. Why does John remind you of this truism? It seems out of context. He's saying, it doesn't matter; if you truly love your brothers and sisters, God abides / lives in you and He / His love is perfected in you. So, which would you prefer: seeing God, or have Him living within you, inside of you?

If you have the Holy Spirit within you, you know that God's inside of you. But honestly, how do you know that the Holy Spirit is inside of you? Look back and compare yourself then and now. If there's no perceptible difference, maybe you need to ask yourself some difficult questions, and then seek God. 1 Corinthians 11:28.

V 14, If you can see and feel that Holy Spirit within you, testify or shout about it!

V 15. If you don't feel that God's inside you, how do you fix it? Confess, Jesus is the Son of God, and it will happen. There also, prayer and praise, searching the Bible and chatting to and sharing with brothers and sisters.

V 16. John's antidote to doubt: faith. In summary, if you find love difficult, you'll have difficulty finding God. Love is the key.

V 17. If you love your brother / sister, you can strut confidently up to the judgment seat because love covers a multitude of sins, you've become just like Jesus.

V 18. The antonym of love isn't hate, it's fear. Why's that? If you love, you have God living within you, so why would you be afraid? Romans 8:18 That's the theory, but in practice do you worry if you're facing mortgage arrears, redundancy, marriage on the rocks, creditor pressure, serious illness. John says if you fear, you're not made perfect in love. Well, that's true but one day, you will be. So, if you're in a difficult situation and you're worried, how do you cope? Do you bury your head in the sand in faith and say: 'I'm going to wait upon the Lord, He'll sort it,' or do you phone your mortgage provider, look for another job, take your spouse away for the weekend etc. For example, Christians Against Poverty don't just pray for you or give you words of encouragement, they'll start writing to your creditors.

V 19. Why are we here, sat around, chatting about the goodness of God? Because we each of us have that individual and shared experience of God reaching out to us, drawing us into Him. Can any of us say, hand on heart, God wasn't interested in me, so I had to go chasing after Him? Sadly there people that endlessly ask all the right questions but never take that final step and make that commitment, what Jesus called fallen seeds in Matthew 13:4.

V 20. Another litmus test, but it's true. How can you? But if you're like me, you don't, at least not by Jesus's strict definition in John 13:34. Be honest, do you give any of your brothers / sisters within this church, anything more than a passing thought or an

occasional prayer, between Monday and Saturday? I think we all retreat back into our own little worlds. And yet, if you're to become more Christ like, this is the area that Jesus wants you to concentrate on; it's a recurring theme throughout the Gospels and the epistles.

You need to ask yourself, how can I cultivate such a deep love for my brothers and sisters in my immediate circle and how can I make that happen or manifest itself in my life? The other side of this coin is that you need to open up and share more openly, starting with me, and then you! If when we chat blandly to each other and we're all projecting a sanitised image of ourselves, hiding our shortcomings, problems and issues; what's the effect of that on the depth of our relationships with each other? Nobody will get to know the real you; you're putting up walls, out of a false concern about what people might think about you.

So, if I go round on a Sunday morning, after the service, repeating, ' Oh God is great,' you'll probably smile politely and think to yourself, well I already knew that. But, if I were to open up and share with you some of the situations and turmoil that's going on in my life: how would that affect my relationship with you? Instead, I tend to default to, it's none of their business, I'll sort it out, this is between me and God. Oh, what a God given resource I'm neglecting.

V 21. Reminder of John 13: 34.