

Introduction

- Counterfeit items in China - Brought Staci home several purses that were Coach or Louis Vitton. Different levels of counterfeits. The more you paid the more genuine it seemed. She got lots of compliments on her bags... Hard to know that they weren't genuine unless you were very familiar with the real thing. Stitching was off on counterfeits.
- "Test the spirits..." John wants us to know that not every person who claims to speak the truth is actually speaking the truth. There are lots of counterfeits.
- Satan himself counterfeits. Paul says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light ([2 Corinthians 11:14](#)). You can imagine that Satan would use spiritual leaders to lead people away from God's Word.
- Just because someone says something spiritual and profound doesn't mean it's from God. Not every spiritual voice comes from God. Some voices are intended to distract, deceive, and destroy.
- How do you know who you can trust? Can you trust me? How can you tell what's real and what's counterfeit? What do you do if you discover you've been deceived? What kind of faith do you have? A superficial faith that has been fed by false teachings, or a faith built on the rock of Christ that has been nurtured people who have poured truth into you?
- In these verses, John gives us three ways we can discern the truth and live it out.

Do not believe everything you hear.

- 3:24 - The way we know that God abides with us is because His Spirit is within. 4:1 - However, beware of competing spirits. We're fully aware that we are engaged in a spiritual battle for the souls of men ([Ephesians 6:11-12](#)).
- When you are listening to someone teach about Jesus, are they led by the Spirit of God or a spirit of error? A spirit of error is demonic and leads you away from the truth instead of to the truth.
- Do not believe every spirit - test - because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
- [1 John 2:19](#) - False teachers in the church that denied the humanity of Jesus - How could God become human?
- John: "I witnessed Jesus in the flesh..."
- In every generation there have been false teachers who in some way deny the truth about the Gospel of Jesus yet claim to be Christian.
- Some false teachings that have surfaced in our lifetimes:
- [Health/Wealth](#) - Jesus came to make you whole/rich. Neglects that Christ has called us to suffer with Him.
- [Universalism](#) - Doesn't matter what you believe, ultimately everyone will be saved.
- [Moralistic Therapeutic Deism](#) - God exists to help you be good and happy. Reduces God to a cosmic therapist instead of the truth that Jesus calls us to repent of our sins and trust in Him. Little Gospel.
- [Hyper Grace](#) - Doesn't matter how you live, just believe - minimizes ongoing confession and repentance.
- [Legalism](#) - Salvation comes through rule-keeping.

- Progressive Christianity - Core biblical doctrines are denied and every lifestyle is affirmed.
- The list could go on, but in every generation, false prophets have gone out in the world who deny some aspect of the Gospel message.
- Don't believe everything you hear. Instead, put all teaching to two tests:
- **Evaluate spiritual teaching by The Lip Test.** Does what they say reflect what Scripture actually teaches? Is there a love for God's Word and a desire to help you understand? Requires that you actually know the Scripture yourself.
- **Evaluate spiritual teaching by The Life Test.** Does the spiritual leader actually live out what Scripture says? Think [1 Timothy 3](#), [Titus 1](#), [1 Peter 5](#) - Is there humility? An example you can follow? Compassion? Love? Fruit of the Spirit?

Do believe the voice of truth.

- How do you know if a teaching is of the Spirit of God? It points to the truth of Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit lives in you to help you discern truth, and the Holy Spirit is not going to point you away from the truth of the person of Jesus or the work of Jesus ([John 15:26](#), [John 16:13-14](#)). The role of the Spirit in your life is to guide you in all truth.
- The Spirit of God guides us in truth by helping us see who Jesus is in the Word of God. We believe the Scripture is divinely inspired by God and reveals who Jesus is to us.
- A true spiritual teacher will NOT deny or twist what the Scripture says about Jesus and the Gospel, but instead a true spiritual teacher will affirm what Scripture says.

- In John's case, teachers that affirmed the truth about Jesus were from God, but teachers that denied the humanity of Jesus were not of God. They had the spirit of the antichrist.
- Antichrist = someone opposed to God. John has already warned us that many antichrists have already come ([1 John 2:18](#)). While we await the return of Christ, many antichrists will come culminating in one who ultimately opposes God. John is thinking of end times in terms of now/ not yet.
- Anyone who teaches opposed to what Scripture reveals about Jesus is an antichrist. Therefore:
- **Be certain about the person of Christ.** Jesus is fully man ([John 1](#)). Necessary for our salvation. We needed someone to live the life we could not live in our place and die in our place taking our judgment (substitutionary atonement). We needed Jesus to also be fully God - only One who was fully man and at the same time fully God could live a sinless life, die for all of humanity, and then rise from the dead. The Gospels are clear that Jesus was both fully man and fully God. (Think all the I Am statements in the Gospel of John - Jesus claiming His deity.)
- **Be certain about the work of Christ.** If you were to be asked, "What is the Gospel?" How would you respond? That God loves you? That God has a plan for your life? Often, our response to that question is NOT as clear as it could be. Gospel = Good News. [1 Corinthians 15:3-5](#) - THIS is the Gospel - that Jesus died according to Scripture in our place for our sins, was buried, rose again. When sharing the Gospel, this is what we share - NOT merely that Jesus loves you, but that Jesus DID something for you. Are you clear on the Gospel?
- **Be certain of your need for Christ.** [Rom. 3:23](#) - ALL have sinned. Apart from faith in Christ, ALL are under the judgment of God. You need the saving work of Jesus, and every person on planet earth needs the saving work of Jesus.

Do expect opposing voices to be appealing and loud.

- vs. 4 - The ONE who lives in you is greater than the spirit of antichrist which operates within false teachers. You can be encouraged. As you walk by the Spirit in His truth you will be able to discern false teaching and not be led away from the truth.
- vs. 5 - John referring to the false teachers in Ephesus - their teaching demonstrates they are from the world, and John knows their voice is influential.
- The voice of false teachers is influential. There are false teachers who are able to build huge followings. Why? [2 Timothy 4:3](#) - They say what the world wants to hear... E.g., - God wants you to be wealthy. Or, they minimize sin and repentance. Or, they don't preach the hard truths. Or, the promise quick fixes: "Pray this prayer..." Or, they preach self-help. "Believe in yourself..."
- vs. 6 - BUT we belong to God. He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world We can identify the truth, and we can know if someone belongs to God if they affirm the same truths that we do.
- John is giving us helpful instruction so we might know how to discern the truth. When you put yourself under teaching that claims to be of God:
- **Know what to listen for.** Is the teacher expounding the Word of God in its context helping you to see how a passage points to the truth of Jesus Christ? Does he open the Bible, explain the Bible, and apply the Bible in a way that is consistent with what the church has historically taught?
- **Know where we can agree to disagree.** 1st tier issues - Core doctrinal issues that we must affirm to be followers of Jesus. Issues we can disagree on: eschatology, calvinism, mode of baptism, etc. Just because someone disagrees on the way we do baptism does not make them a

false teacher. What makes a false teacher is a denial of some aspect of the Gospel.

- **Know how to judge without being judgmental.** Difference between making a judgment call and judging someone. We need to warn of false teachers, but we also need to pray and teach. Some who may be teaching a false teaching might simply need to be taught the truth. We need to pray for repentance. Some false teachers are intentionally deceptive, some are mistaken because they've never been taught the truth.
- **Know how to spend time with the Lord.** Ultimately, what is going to grow you in your faith is not listening to a preacher but listening to the Spirit of God as you spend time in His Word. The more you take responsibility for your spiritual growth, the more you actually grow. If you don't have regular time of prayer and Bible study it will become easy for you to be swayed.
- I'm not talking having a Ph.D. in theology, but you should desire to learn as much about God as you can. Clarity of Scripture - we believe Scripture is clear on the essential doctrines of the faith. In personal study, the Lord affirms His truth to you ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)).
- Turn to resources to help you grow, but do not place Christian resources on the same level as Scripture. Good Christian resources help you to understand the core teachings of Scripture.
- vs. 2 - Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come from the flesh is from God... What is your confession? Have you confessed Jesus as Lord? [Romans 10:9](#) - Some of us in this room have never confessed Jesus as Lord of our lives. This morning, turn from the teachings of this world to the truth of the Gospel. Believe that Jesus died and rose again for you. Place your faith in Him.
- Believers - Ask the Spirit to grow you in your knowledge of the Gospel, and ask the Spirit to give you a heart of discernment.

