

STUDIES IN 1 JOHN

STUDY NUMBER NINE: Fellowship is Preserved by Discernment

1 John 4:1-6

Key Verse 4:1: "Beloved, stop believing every spirit, but keep on putting the spirits to the test to see if they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

TEXT:

v. 1 Beloved, stop believing every spirit, but keep on putting the spirits to the test to see if they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

v. 2 In this you are knowing the Spirit of God: every spirit that is confessing Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

v. 3 And every spirit which is not confessing Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

v. 4 You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

v. 5 They themselves are out of the world. On this account, out of the world they are speaking, and the world is hearing them.

v. 6 We ourselves are from God; the one who is knowing God is hearing us; he who is not from God is not hearing us. From this we are knowing the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

INTRODUCTION:

(The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank by Erma Bombeck)

A lot of my neighbors suffered from the Car Pool Crouch. It was one of those dreaded diseases you say can never happen to you.

Then one afternoon when you are attending a tea, someone will point out that your knees are apart and your right foot is extended out in an accelerator position. Your elbows are bent slightly and you are holding your purse in front of you like a steering wheel. When a woman leans forward next to you, your arm automatically goes out to catch her when she hits the windshield that isn't there.

You've got it. The Car Pool Crouch.

I have seen perfectly healthy, young, upright women climb into a car in September. By spring, they walked like Groucho Marx.

Out of this malady came the invention of the drive-in. A lot of people think the drive-in was born out of convenience. That's not true. It was born out of desperation of a community of women who could no longer get in and out of their cars.

I once went for an entire week behind the wheel of the car and never missed a beat running my house.

I drove the children to school, idling my motor as they tumbled out of the back seat.

Then it was on to the bank where I pulled in to within inches of the window, slid my check under a bean bag in the drawer, and massaged my legs as I waited.

With money by my side, I next pulled into the cleaners where I left off a bundle and was rewarded with hangers full of clean ones.

At the film service drive-in, I barely had to slow down the car. Just make a hook shot and promise to be back by tomorrow.

At the service station, I sat numbly while he checked my oil, my water, and cleaned off my glasses.

Then it was lunchtime and into a drive-in eatery for a quick bite.

Positioning my wheels on the pulley, I sat in my car while I went through the car wash, feeling just a little uncomfortable with the numbness that was causing shooting back pains.

But there was the post office that had to be driven through and then it was time to pick up the children.

Naturally, we drove to a drive-in for a slushee treat and as dusk was approaching, we hit for a drive-in movie.

On the seventh day, my husband said, "Look, you've been in that car all week. You're pale. You need fresh air. You are also very short. Let's go to that new church everyone is talking about over on Rural Road."

I dressed carefully. And painfully. It had been a long time.

Hesitating, I climbed into the car. It was a drive-in church.

As I sat listening to the voice of the minister on the speaker, I heard him say, "This is the time to pray for any special favors you might wish from God."

I opened my door and with great effort, pushed my legs out. Steadying myself, I grabbed onto the car with my hands and pulled myself up to my feet. I was standing.

From the other cars, I heard the applause, the voices raised in awe. Some blew their horns. "It's a miracle . . . a miracle!"
pp. 87-90

("The Art of Aging Gracefully" by Thomas K. Tewell. Sermon printed in An Invitation to Graceful Living. Newsletter of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church, Houston, TX. Oct. 18, 1992.)

She told of the time that her young grandson, five or six years old, said, "Grandma! Do you know that God created the world with his left hand in six days?" She said, "The Bible does say God created the world in six days. But what do you mean with the left hand?" He said, "God had to create the world with his left hand. Jesus Christ was sitting on his right hand!"

p. 4

HE TAKES OUR PLACE

A valuable painting had been purchased by F. W. Boreham called "The Chess Player." It portrayed Satan playing the game with a young opponent, and the man's soul was at stake.

The game had progressed to the point where it was the novice's turn, and there seemed to be no move he could make that would not mean defeat for him. Awful despair was on his face as he realized his soul was lost, and Satan was grinning as he anticipated victory. A champion player who had come to view the canvas studied the picture for a time and then called for a chessboard. Placing the pieces in exactly the same position as in the painting, he said, "I'll take the young man's place." He then made a move that showed how the devil's captive could have won and been set free.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

In this series of studies we have been talking about the matter of FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

By the term "fellowship," we are referring to COMMUNION or COMMUNICATION. We are walking in fellowship with our heavenly Father by keeping company with Him, because we are of KINDRED SPIRITS, and because there is no sin which is breaking our fellowship or any disobedience which is serving as a cause of offense.

In Study #5, we talked about "FELLOWSHIP IS BEING EDUCATED BY HIS SPIRIT." When we became Christians, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in us and to guide us into truth.

This was the POSITIVE side of John's teaching, and now we come to the NEGATIVE side of it, that is, the Spirit of God has also been given to enable us to PRESERVE OUR FELLOWSHIP BY DISCERNMENT.

Ephesians 4:14

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

One of the outgrowths of fellowship with the Father will be the function of the Spirit of God preserving our fellowship by enabling us to DISCERN TRUTH from ERROR.

Westcott says:

This section is closely connected both with what precedes and with what follows; and corresponds with

the first section of this great division of the Epistle:

ii. 18-29. It contains three main thoughts:

1. There are many spiritual influences at work (v. 1).
2. The test of spirits lies in the witness to the incarnation (vv. 2, 3).
3. The test of men lies in the recognition of the Truth (vv. 4, 5).

The progress of thought is parallel to that in ii. 18-29, but the argument of St John has passed to a new stage. There his teaching was centred in the Messiahship, the Sonship of Jesus: here in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. p. 139

Stott points out:

They needed to be shown that 'to identify the Supernatural and the Divine is a perilous mistake.' John's concern was that they should test not so much the character of inspired utterance, whether it was genuine or spurious, as its origin, whether it was diabolical or divine.

J. Vernon McGee says:

This is a very important passage, but there is a danger of going off the deep end here and becoming rather fanatical. I believe that there is an abnormal preoccupation with the occult on the part of many Christians today which is a most dangerous thing, but we do need to know what the bible teaches about it.

In the first six verses of this chapter, John gives a warning against false teachers, false prophets. He gives us this warning, having just established the fact that we have been given the Spirit of God and that we have been given an anointing to understand the things of God.
p. 799

Paul Van Gorder titles this section:

"How to Spot the Devil's Kids"

Federal law is now calling for "truth in advertising." The labels of products must contain an accurate listing of the ingredients. The consumer is encouraged to "read carefully before using." A similar caution is given to believers in 1 John 4:1-6. Before a believer swallows all that is packaged "Christian," he is advised to do some testing. Not everyone who comes in the name of Christ is a representative of the truth.

v. 1 Beloved, stop believing every spirit, but keep on putting the spirits to the test to see if they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

John addresses these young Christians as "BELOVED."

This is the 2nd NEGATIVE WARNING in the book.

The 1st one was chapter 2:15 where we are told to:

"Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

And now the 2ND NEGATIVE WARNING in the book is:

"BELOVED, STOP BELIEVING EVERY SPIRIT."

This verse takes us back to:

chapter 3:23:

"And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and loving one another, as He gave us commandment."

Our belief is to be in Jesus Christ, and our love is to be for each other, which is a manifestation of our belief in Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:27

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him is abiding in you, and you are not having need that anyone keep on teaching you; but even as His anointing is teaching you concerning all things, and is true and is not a lie, and even as He taught you, keep on abiding in Him.

This is our KEY VERSE for this 9th study:

"FELLOWSHIP IS PRESERVED BY DISCERNMENT."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

To begin with, the Spirit of God must be distinguished from false spirits.

Dr. Mitchell says:

God asks us to test people. We are to use spiritual discernment because many false prophets are gone out into the world. How can we do this? One man says the Bible teaches this, and another man says the Bible teaches that. Someone else says the Bible is not to be trusted at all. How can we know that which is of God and that which is not of God?

We are to test a person on the basis of what he confesses about the Person of Jesus Christ.

Van Gorder says:

Religious deceivers most certainly abound today! They have invaded our pulpits, our colleges, our theological seminaries, and even our homes. The false prophets of our day, sometimes masked in religious respectability, launch continual assaults upon God's Word and His Christ.

Why is it necessary for us to be careful not to be believing every spirit? And why is it necessary for John to give us this warning?

"STOP BELIEVING EVERY SPIRIT, BUT KEEP ON PUTTING THE SPIRITS TO THE TEST TO SEE IF THEY ARE FROM GOD."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

2 Peter 2:1-3

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

2 Peter 2:17, 18

These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

2 Timothy 3:5

holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

Jude 11

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

It is our responsibility as maturing Christians in the Lord Jesus, through our fellowship with the Father, to be careful not to believe every spirit that speaks, but to:

"KEEP ON PUTTING THE SPIRITS TO THE TEST TO SEE IF THEY ARE FROM GOD."

NEGATIVELY:

We are not to be "BELIEVING EVERY SPIRIT,"

POSITIVELY:

We are to "KEEP ON PUTTING THE SPIRITS TO THE TEST TO SEE IF THEY ARE FROM GOD."

There are spirits that are not from God and are meant to lead us astray, therefore it is necessary for us to:

"KEEP ON PUTTING [THEM] TO THE TEST."

These spirits are characterized by the 3 F's:

1. THEY ARE FALSE
2. THEY PRECIPITATE FEAR
3. THEY ARE A FAKE

The word "TO TEST" is a technical word used of "testing or assaying of metal" to see if it rings true or is up to standard.

The reason John has given this command is seen in the last phrase of our verse:

"BECAUSE MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD."

Westcott says:

The use of the term false prophets in the N.T. is suggestive. It is applied to the rivals of the true prophets under the old dispensation; and to the rivals of the apostles under the new dispensation; and especially, in the Apocalypse, to the embodied power of spiritual falsehood. The false-prophet is not only a false-teacher, but a false-teacher who supports his claims by manifestations of spiritual power.

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J. Vernon McGee says:

Quite a few things which have happened in our day are really spooky. We had, for instance, the appearance of the book, Jonathan Livingston Seagull. The author, Richard Bach, said that a voice dictated the book to him and that it was not his own style of writing. I understand that many churches recommended the reading of this book and that several good men were taken in by it. It is the story about a theological concept of a young sea gull which has human attributes. He soared off toward unlimited perfection and found that each of us is just an idea of the Great Gull. This book teaches that birth and sin and sickness and death are not realities but only illusions, that what the biblical writers call sins really are virtues, and that freedom is freedom to do what one pleases. All of that is not new but is actually out of the very pit of hell itself--it is satanic.
p. 800

Matthew 7:15

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.

Matthew 24:24

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

What we are saying in this particular study, is that one of the greatest safeguards against error is our fellowship with the Father. As we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth, we can also be dependent upon the same Spirit to enable us to discern when someone is not speaking from God, and thus with this discernment, preserve our fellowship with the Father.

I have heard so many say, "Well, I'm going to take a little truth from every religion. This way I know I'll be safe as far as my eternal destiny is concerned." This does not agree with John's position here when he says truth resides in Jesus Christ.

John 8:32

and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

THE THRIVING CULT OF GREED AND POWER

Scientology poses as a religion but is really a ruthless global scam--and aiming for the mainstream.

Begun by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard to "clear" people of their discontentment, the church of Scientology is making a lot of people unhappy these days. Hundreds of Scientology followers in recent years have left the cult and later brought accusations of mental and physical abuse. Some have brought lawsuits and won. Others have settled out of court, sometimes getting as much as half a million dollars. A number of cult leaders, including the founder's wife, were sent to prison in the early 1980s for criminal activities they engaged in to keep government agencies from investigating them.

Yet Scientology continues to flourish as its 700 centers in 65 countries use new strategies to lure unsuspecting people into their financial web. A variety of front groups ranging from publishing to health care have proven quite successful. In fact, one cult-monitoring group that has information on over 200 mind control groups says that Scientology extracts more money from its members than any other cult.

Even though most cults die with their founder, Scientology has continued to grow since Hubbard died in 1986. For example, just one of its many arms, the Church of Spiritual Technology, brought in \$503 million in 1987 alone. The current head of the church, 31-year-old high school dropout David Miscavige, has been working hard to improve Scientology's image. They have retained a powerful public relations firm, bought huge quantities of their own books from retail stores in order to keep Scientology titles on the best-seller lists, and recruited rich professionals through groups that keep their connection to the church a secret.

Scientology claims to have eight million members, but the actual figure is probably closer to 50,000 active members. These people pay hundreds of dollars for communications courses, counseling sessions, and training seminars in order to progress through the various levels of the church. In addition, they purchase many expensive books and tapes. Though the church is trying hard to present itself as a respectable philosophy, the bottom line is that making money is what Scientology is all about. In one of his speeches to church officials, Hubbard reportedly said, "Make sure that lots of bodies move through the shop. Make money. Make more money. Make others produce so as to make money. However you get them in or why, just do it."

"The thriving cult of greed and power" by Richard Behar. Time, May 6, 1991. Pages 50-57.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

WHEN GOD WAS A WOMAN

Whether they are reviving a vanished faith or inventing a new one, it is the gender of the deity that counts.

Many Earth Day celebrations this year had religious (but not Christian) overtones. Across the U.S. a number of goddess-worshippers naturally got involved in the ecological celebrations since the deity they worship is often depicted as Gaia or Mother Earth. The goddess movement has been growing rapidly in this country, with some insiders claiming there are over 100,000 women involved. For these women, the Judeo-Christian God is too patriarchal, and they insist that the goddess is not just a female God. Rather than being transcendent like the God of the Bible, she is thought of as being present in every person and in everything in nature.

Her followers are involved in an eclectic variety of witchcraft, paganism, New Age concepts, and radical feminism. Proponents of goddess worship say that the movement is anything but new. They claim to be reviving an ancient religion that was wiped out by patriarchal religions around 4,000 B.C. Two recently published scholarly books use archaeological evidence to support this theory. Critics argue that the facts the feminist writers present are contradictory. One thing is clear, however, they consider the gender of the deity they worship more important than the historical roots of the current movement.

"When God was a woman" by Richard Ostling. Time, May 6, 1991. Page 73.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

THE MAHARISHI'S NEW THINKING

As you put on the light with your hand, there'll be no more wars and there'll be no conflict among people. We are going to create that world of positivity.

--Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

In the basement of an old mansion just a few miles from the White House several hundred executives, attorneys, and physicians sit stiff and motionless on the floor in the lotus position for 20 minutes to an hour. Since early March groups have been coming twice a day to the Greater Washington D.C. Association of Professionals Practicing the Transcendental Meditation Program. But all this meditating is not just about self-enlightenment, it has a higher purpose. The goal of these followers of guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is to "transform Washington from the murder capital of the world to the center of peace and prosperity in the world." More specifically they hope to reduce violent crime in Washington by 15% over the next eight months. The TM group plans to open several other similar centers in the metropolitan area. They claim that a pilot project in which volunteers meditated between 1981 and 1987 reduced crime in the nation's capital by nearly 12%. The Maharishi has begun crime prevention programs in London and New Delhi as well. Also, prison administrators around the U.S. are being encouraged to use TM to rehabilitate prisoners and reduce recidivism. (The cost \$1500 per inmate.) What the Maharishi is really interested in, however, is to bring peace on a grander scale. He says if he can get 7,000 people in one location engaged in using his Sidhi advanced meditation technique on a regular basis, the result will be world peace. He is also working toward the 1993 opening of a billion-dollar amusement park in Florida to be called Veda Land.

"The Maharishi's new thinking" by Tom Dunkel. Insight, May 20, 1991. Pages 3-4.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

DEAD MAN WORSHIPED

Heung Jin Moon, Sun Myung Moon's son, who was killed in a 1984 automobile accident, is being worshiped by some members of the Unification church as one who fulfilled a role similar to Jesus. Some within the church claim that the young Moon died "so that his father could live to complete his own earthly mission while his son rules in heaven."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

("Thinking about Tomorrow," an interview with John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene by Caroline Bird. Modern Maturity, June-July 1993, Vol. 36, #3.)

You both also took the Erhard Seminars Training (est). What did it do for you?

Aburdene: It drove home the simple idea that you're responsible for your own actions.

Naisbitt: You really internalize it; it becomes a strong, powerful belief. You believe you can go out and do anything. It's the opposite of the victim, who says society is to blame.

Aburdene: Or that your parents are to blame.

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If Satan is not successful in breaking our fellowship with the Father by deceiving us through doctrinal deviation, he will then divide us as brothers and sisters in the body with distrust.

(The Grace Awakening by Charles R. Swindoll)

The words of C. S. Lewis come to my mind. Following his conversion in 1929, he wrote to a friend: "When all is said (and truly said) about divisions of Christendom, there remains, by God's mercy, an enormous common ground." In light of this, my encouragement for you today is that each one of us pursue what unites us with others rather than the few things that separate us. The "common ground" is vast. It's high time we focus on that. It will take grace, I remind you.

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The richer and deeper my fellowship with the Father becomes and my knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more able I am to discern by the direction of His Spirit when truth is being spoken.

When truth prevails:

there is peace,

there is unity.

there is transparency,

openness,

and honesty.

These are the questions we are asking ourselves in this 9th study:

Is our fellowship being preserved by our discernment?

Are we allowing the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth and to protect us from so many of these paths of error that are around us today?

v. 2 In this you are knowing the Spirit of God: every spirit that is confessing Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The touchstone by which these spirits (false prophets) are to be tested is their attitude toward the incarnate person of Jesus Christ.

"IN THIS YOU ARE KNOWING THE SPIRIT OF GOD."

John is now going to present the test that he wants to be used in testing the spirits. The way you can tell the Spirit of God is by the following test:

"EVERY SPIRIT THAT IS CONFESSING JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH IS FROM GOD."

It is God come in human flesh to take away sins and to destroy the works of the devil.

It is those who believe:

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1 John 1:2

and the life was made visible, and we have seen [it] and we are bearing witness and we are proclaiming to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made visible to us--

The person who is confessing that JESUS CHRIST IS GOD COME IN HUMAN FLESH is of God.

It is the person believing in His deity, in His virgin birth, and in His mission to pay the penalty for man's sin and provide eternal salvation.

Dr. Mitchell says:

Both John and Peter declared that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Later, on the Isle of Patmos, John saw Jesus in His glory. "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:17, 18).

Peter writes, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16).

You can recognize the false teachers by their failure to acknowledge or confess that:

"JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH."

2 John 7

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

DON'T FORGET THE BALL!

One day a group of boys decided to have a game of baseball. After rounding up enough players to form two teams, they were ready to begin. With every fielder in place, the basemen all positioned, and the batter at the plate, the pitcher called out, "Where's the ball?" Much to everyone's disappointment, it was discovered that nobody had thought to bring one. They were just about to break up and go their separate ways when the catcher yelled, "Wait a minute, guys; let's not go home yet! Why don't we just go ahead without it?" Can you imagine such a game? Of course not! It would be impossible to play! This is really a parable depicting many people in religious circles today who are trying to "play ball" with those who deny essential doctrines. Unless they are united on the fundamentals of the faith, the most important ingredient is missing. They are like the youngster in our story who thought he could play without a ball.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Pack Up Your Gloomees in a Great Big Box, then Sit on the Lid and Laugh! by Barbara Johnson)

Turning your problems over to the Lord is a very good idea that has been confirmed for me by one of my favorite theologians, eight-year-old Danny Dutton, who wrote the following "Essay on God."

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes these to put in place of the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grownups. Just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way He doesn't have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that up to mothers and fathers. I think it works out pretty good.

God's second-most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, because some people are like preachers, and pray other times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this. Because God hears everything, not only prayers, there must be a terrible lot of noise going on in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere. Which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your parents' heads and asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in our town. At least there aren't any who come to church.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and doing miracles and trying to teach people about God who didn't want to learn. They finally got tired of His preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind like His Father, and He told His Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them, and God said O.K.

His Father appreciated everything He had done and all His hard work on earth, so He told Him He didn't have to go out on the road any more. He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His Father out by listening to prayers and seeing which things are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important, of course. You can pray anytime you want and They are sure to hear you because They've got it worked out so One of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to Sunday school because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip Sunday school to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. That is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an Atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It's good to know He is around when you're scared of the dark or when you can't swim very good and you get thrown in real deep water by big kids.

But you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and He can take me back anytime he pleases.

And that's why I believe in God.

pp. 210-12

(Living by the Book by Howard G. Hendricks
& William D. Hendricks)

Many Christians tolerate a form of mysticism in reading their Bibles that they would allow in no other realm. They violate every tenet of reason and common sense. Their Bible study is totally subjective. They wander around the Scriptures, waiting for a liver-quiver to tell them when they've struck pay dirt.

Now there's nothing wrong with having an emotional reaction to the Word of God. But as I mentioned in the last chapter, the meaning of the text is in the text, not in our subjective response to the text.

In Lewis Carroll's classic, Through the Looking-Glass (the second part of Alice in Wonderland), the White Queen engages Alice in an instructive dialogue:

"How old are you?"

"I'm seven and a half exactly."

"You needn't say 'exactly,'" the Queen remarked: "I can believe it without that. Now I'll give you something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day."

"I can't believe that," said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said, in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

I'm afraid that's the condition of many people today. They think our faith means taking a deep breath, shutting our eyes, and believing what we know deep down is absolutely incredible. Christianity has even been caricatured as the nonthinking man's religion
pp. 204-5

v. 3 And every spirit which is not confessing Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

The NEGATIVE side of the test is seen in this 1ST PHRASE:

"AND EVERY SPIRIT WHICH IS NOT CONFESSING JESUS IS NOT FROM GOD."

It is amazing the number of different religious beliefs that are disqualified because of this:

For instance, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE says:

"Jesus Christ is not God as he is said to have declared. Christ is a divine ideal."

SPIRITUALISM says:

"Jesus Christ was not divine, he is now an advanced spirit."

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES say:

"Jesus Christ was a man, neither more nor less."

MORMONISM says:

"Jesus, the Son of Adam, God, and Mary--the father has begotten him in his own likeness. Jesus was married at Cana to the Marys and Martha, whereby he could see his seed before he was crucified."

UNITY says:

"Jesus was not the Christ."

GARNER TED ARMSTRONG says:

"Jesus Christ is not God."

Much of MODERN THEOLOGY says:

"Jesus was divine and in the same sense all of us are divine, the same spark of divinity

only needs to be fanned into the flame."

Dr. Mitchell says:

I say very bluntly that a great many ecclesiastical leaders in our country are not Christian because they deny the Incarnate Word of God. Let me say that if Jesus Christ is not God Incarnate, if He is not the sinless Son of God, then we do not have a Saviour. Then He had to die for His own sin and could not have died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This is precisely what these people are saying. They teach that when He died on the cross, He died as a martyr. They take the very words of Scripture and twist them to deceive the people of God.

Stott observes:

No system can be tolerated, however loud its claims or learned its adherents, if it denies that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, that is, if it denies either His eternal deity or His historical humanity. Its teachers are false prophets and its origin is the spirit of antichrist. Those who deny the Son have neither the Father nor the Spirit.

"AND EVERY SPIRIT WHICH IS NOT CONFESSING JESUS IS NOT FROM GOD; AND THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST, WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT IS COMING, AND NOW IT IS ALREADY IN THE WORLD."

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar if not the one who is denying that Jesus is the Christ? This one is the antichrist, the one who is denying the Father and the Son.

The humanity and deity of Christ are the two things that John stands in defense of here in this passage.

John says that to deny His deity and His humanity is to be of antichrist; or later in the passage, he will call it "the spirit of error."

SEDUCED BY SATAN

Satanism is attracting American teenagers. Four forces that lure them: 1) Thirst for power and knowledge.

2) Peer pressure. 3) Curiosity. 4) Hopelessness. Three levels of involvement: 1) Dabbling--reading horoscopes, playing with tarot cards, enjoying occult-influenced music. 2) Obsession--wearing satanic jewelry, buying occult books, practicing occult rituals. 3) Demon possession--becoming suicidal and violent, experiencing frightening demonic activities. Warning signs: 1) Heavy metal music. 2) Occult jewelry featuring a goat's head or pentagram. 3) Occult books such as Anton LaVey's Satanic Bible. 4) Occult games such as Ouija boards and tarot cards--also Dungeons and Dragons. 5) Drug and alcohol abuse. 6) Personality changes. 7) Physical mutilation.

"Seduced by Satan" by Rick Chromey. Group, Sep 1989. Pp 16-20

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

INTEGRITY CRISIS IN MINISTRY

"We are facing an integrity crisis. Not only is the conduct of the church in question, but so is the very character of the church." --Warren Wiersbe.

The undeniable crisis of immorality in the ministry has reached the epidemic stage. The secular media is having a heyday, and respect for ministers has just about bottomed out. What has caused this crisis of integrity? Sinful human nature is the obvious root cause, but Satan has used some particular strategies to bring down pastors.

(1) Materialism: The secular values of society have had a greater impact on the church than the church has had on society, and today many men in the ministry are after gold rather than God. For them the role model of the corporate CEO has replaced the scriptural example of the servant-shepherd.

(2) Pride: Egotism is rampant as religious terminology is used to justify the drive for personal power and prestige.

(3) Deceitfulness: Exaggeration gives way to outright lying in many cases.

(4) False teaching: Many are anemic in their understanding of biblical truth and thus have very shallow theology. This results in a tendency to fall either into legalism or, at the other extreme, emotionalism. Such an unstable doctrinal foundation cannot stand under pressure.

It might seem that these factors have no direct connection with immorality, but they do. If a man lacks self-control in one area (desire for affluence), it often spills over into other areas of his life (lust). Deceitfulness in regard to his own accomplishments may be reflected in a tendency to hide the truth in other ways (being unfaithful to his wife). Moral failures can usually be traced to three lacks: no daily personal walk with the Lord, failure to meditate on Scripture, and the absence of intimacy in the marriage.

"Integrity crisis in ministry" by Danny Akin. Southern Baptist Communicator, Jan/Feb 1992. Page 3.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

Blaiklock says:

Perhaps it is worthwhile at this point to quote a well-known remark of C. S. Lewis in one of his famous radio talks:

I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really silly thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That's the one thing we mustn't say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He'd either be a lunatic on a level with the man who says he's a poached egg or else he'd be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon: or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But don't let us come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He hasn't left that open to us. He didn't intend to.

Mitchell says:

The issue is always Christ. Is He God who took His place in the human family? "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word was made flesh." Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. In Him all the fulness of God is revealed. By Him all things consist. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. He is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person. The great question is the position that is given to Christ. Is He the center of all? Is this Jesus of Nazareth confessed to be God manifest in the flesh, both Lord and Christ? This is the issue.

Romans 16:17, 18

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

John concludes the 3rd verse with the phrase:

"WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT IS COMING, AND NOW IT IS ALREADY IN THE WORLD."

1 John 2:18

Young children, it is the last hour; even as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from which fact we are knowing that it is the last hour.

v. 4 You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

Westcott says:

The false spirits, whose characteristic has now been defined, must have their organs through whom to speak; and Christians must wage war against them. In this conflict the virtue of their Master's Victory (John xvi. 33) is granted to them. They have to claim the fruits of a triumph which has been already gained.

p. 144

Guy King says:

Here the apostle passes over from the spirits of antichrist to the persons in whom they are manifested; or, if you like, from the teaching to the teacher.

Stott says:

John now turns from a consideration of the teachers and their message to an examination of the audience which listens to them.

In these remaining 3 verses it is easy to identify to whom John is speaking:

verse 4 - YOU

verse 5 - THEY

verse 6 - WE

"YOU ARE FROM GOD, LITTLE CHILDREN, AND YOU HAVE CONQUERED THEM" [that is, the antichrist or the false teachers].

1 John 2:13, 14

I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one. I write to you, young children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have come to know the one who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God is abiding in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

"YOU ARE FROM GOD, LITTLE CHILDREN."

Here John gives them a message of assurance because they have been born into God's family by the new birth and their life is manifesting the fruit of that relationship. He is able to say with confidence that they are "FROM GOD."

What a blessed truth this is with all the error around them, that they were "FROM GOD."

"YOU ARE FROM GOD, LITTLE CHILDREN, AND YOU HAVE CONQUERED THEM."

The young men were commended for having "conquered the evil one" back in chapter 2:13,

and now the Christians are commended here for having "CONQUERED" the teachers that are inspired by the evil one.

It always seems like such nice guys teach error.

ELIJAH confronts the prophets of BAAL on Mount Carmel, and after the victory is won for the Lord he commands that the prophets of Baal all be slain.

This victory has taken place because these believers have been unwilling to go along with the error which has been promoted by these false teachers.

The reason for their victory is given in the next statement:

"BECAUSE GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD."

John 10:28, 29

and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

John 12:31

Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.

Acts 17:31

because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

The One who is abiding in us is Jesus Christ, and He has never experienced a defeat:

2 Corinthians 2:14

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

1 Corinthians 15:57

but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is Satan who is inspiring these antichrists or false prophets in the world, and Satan is a defeated foe as a result of what Christ has done upon the cross.

Romans 8:37

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

They successfully resisted by means of the One who is in them. No doubt this is another reference to the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:2). Reliance on God is the secret of all victory, whether over heresy or any other snare--the indwelling One, the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer.

"GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD" [namely Satan].

1 John 5:19

We are knowing that we are out of God, and the whole world is lying in the power of the evil one.

2 Corinthians 4:4

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 2:2

in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

OVERCOMING ANY ADDICTION

The article opens with a story of nose-spray addiction and the conclusion: "As soon as one tries to control any truly addictive behavior by making autonomous intentional resolutions, one begins to defeat oneself." The usual steps in a purely will-power approach to addiction is 1) I can do it. 2) Pride. 3) The fall. Theologically an addiction is an attempt to fulfill our longing for God through objects of attachment. For the power of addiction to be overcome, personal power must be aligned with the power of grace. If only the behavior is reformed, one addiction is often exchanged for another less destructive one. What God offers us is a deeper transformation of desire. "Every struggle with addiction, no matter how small, and no matter what our spiritual interest may be, will include some homeward call, some invitation to transformation. If we answer yes, even with the tiniest and most timid voice, our struggle becomes consecrated. Consecration means dedication to God. It occurs when we claim our deepest desire for God, beneath, above, and beyond all other things." Characteristics of a consecrated intent to break an addiction: 1) Honesty in accepting the addiction. 2) Dignity--acting as if we are created in God's image. 3) Community--seeking the companionship of and accountability to other people. 4) Responsibility--respecting ourselves and those around us. 5) Simplicity--stopping an addiction boils down to this: don't do it, refuse to do it, and keep refusing to do it.

"Overcoming any addiction" by Gerald G. May. International Christian Digest. Sep 1989. Pages 40-42.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

RIVERS AND CHRISTIANS

One interesting thing to watch from the window of an airplane is the winding path of a river below. No two waterways are alike, but they all have one thing in common: they are all crooked. And the reason is simple--rivers follow the path of least resistance. They flow around anything that blocks their eroding work. Yes, rivers are crooked because they take the "easy way."

When you stop and think of it, that's why some Christians get that way too. Because they fail to overcome temptation, resist the devil, or tackle the enemy head-on, they deviate from the straight path God would have them follow.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

A POWERFUL ADVERSARY

If you go to Wartburg, they will show you a dark spot on the old walls which they say was caused by the breaking of an ink bottle that Martin Luther supposedly threw at the devil. Skeptics say it was just the rats inside of the wall that Luther heard. Whether the evil one caused the actual physical disturbance, we do not know. What is important is that Luther recognized that Satan sets himself in opposition to those who champion the Word, and that he never hesitated in fighting him.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

THEY AREN'T HUNGRY!

Everything was all set for the first bass fishing expedition of the year. We had some exotic new lures that we just knew would be irresistible to those big 6-pounders lurking beneath the surface of our favorite fishing lake. We would tempt them with Sassy Shads, with brightly colored new Hula Poppers, with buzz baits, with a "killer" red flatfish with a black stripe, and with a white double spinner with long bright streamers. And, if all else failed, we had some fresh Canadian crawlers. We were out at dawn, hitting all the best spots with our assortment of delectable temptations. But nothing happened. We worked the shore, we cast along the weeds. We tried every lure in the tackle box--even the crawlers. Finally we gave up. As we motored back to the cabin, we concluded, "The fish just aren't hungry."

Come to think of it, I see some parallel in our ongoing battle against temptation. Satan has a whole "tacklebox" of alluring devices he uses to tempt us. Some of them are gaudy and exotic, easy to spot--yet oh, so tempting! Others are designed to whet our appetites in quiet and subtle ways, appearing innocent until the hook is set. Whatever the temptation, we can best resist if we do not let our thoughts dwell on evil but on things that are true, noble, just, pure, and lovely (Phil. 4:8). With mental discipline and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can keep our hearts full of goodness. Then, in frustration, Satan will have to say, "They just aren't hungry!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Looking Back, Moving On: Applying Biblical Principles of Freedom to Your Life by Boyd Luter)

In a nutshell, recovery is the comeback process from an unhealthy event, relationship, or behavioral pattern that continues to impact a person's life in negative ways.
p. 19

Luke 22:31, 32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

2 Timothy 2:25, 26

with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

(If I Really Believe, Why Do I Have These Doubts?)
by Lynn Anderson)

Though my emotions may flap like a flag in a gale, I am learning to trust that God doesn't move. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you." He is often doing the biggest work in us when we feel the lowest. The mountain peaks are fun, but the thin soil on the summit is not nearly so nourishing of spiritual fruit as that rich, dark humus in the valleys.

If I learn to distinguish my mood swings from my doubts, I can concentrate on learning the lessons God has to teach me. It's not easy to make this distinction, but remembering that I don't always have to be "up" to have faith can be a big help.
p. 34

v. 5 They themselves are out of the world. On this account, out of the world they are speaking, and the world is hearing them.

According to The Bible Knowledge Commentary, in the 3 verses, you have 3 GROUPS:

1. in verse 4 you have THE READERS
2. in verse 5 you have THE ANTICHRISTS
3. in verse 6 you have THE APOSTLES

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The antichrists get a good hearing from the world. It is always true that satanically inspired thought has a special appeal to worldly minds.

In this 5th verse you have 3 THINGS:

1. THEIR ORIGIN
2. THEIR MESSAGE
3. THEIR AUDIENCE

John now shows the origins of these false teachers. Whereas the Christians are born of God, these false teachers are out of the world--the world as opposed to the Father--as we saw back in:

chapter 2:15

. . . If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

"ON THIS ACCOUNT, OUT OF THE WORLD THEY ARE SPEAKING."

Their message is from "THE WORLD" and not from the Father.

Philippians 3:18, 19

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

As J. B. Phillips says:

"This world is the limit of their vision."

The message which they give is strictly on a human plane and their audience is the world, and "THE WORLD IS HEARING THEM."

They have a message that the world likes to hear.

PAUL says of these men in writing to young TIMOTHY:

"they have a form of godliness but they deny the power of it, from such turn away. . . .
They are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Then he goes on say:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their desire shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables."

Whereas their audience is the world, we are commanded by the apostle in:

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Barclay says:

When we come to think of it, that is an obvious truth. How can a man whose watchword is competition even begin to understand an ethic whose key-note is service? How can a man whose aim is the exaltation of the self, who believes in the survival of the fittest, and who holds that the weakest must go to the wall, even begin to understand a teaching whose principle for living is love? How can a man who believes that this is the only world, and that, therefore, material things are the only things which matter, even begin to understand a life which is lived in the light of eternity, and where it is the unseen things which are the greatest values in life?

Mitchell says:

Therefore, we have a criterion by which we may test any witness that we hear. The message of the world will make man the center. The message from the Spirit of God will always make Christ the center.
p. 117

EVIL IN THE LAND

Some law enforcement experts feel that Satanism is behind some bewildering crimes. Not only is the media making Americans more aware of Satanism, but the marketing industry is using Satanism to sell music, videos and literature. Of all levels of involvement, dabblers may be the most dangerous because they will try anything. Heavy-metal music is often involved, and drugs are almost always part of the problem. The Satanist churches profess to not be involved in sacrifice or criminal activity. These groups are protected by law as long as this is true. More self-styled forms practice in the realms of illegal drugs, pornography, and child abuse. Law enforcement officials are hampered by the difficulty of infiltration. One expert points out that Satanism is always a destructive force. The intent is to kill and destroy. Christian experts warn that Satan is also an angel of light and we must not be deceived as we combat his more visible work. Demon or occult influences may be perceived by secularly trained psychologists as defense mechanisms (multiple personalities, etc.) invented for survival. Demonization appears in 17 instances in the Gospels. Jesus dealt specifically with 9. Mark 8:16 and Mark 1:32-34 indicate that he treated many more. Christians must recognize the reality of spiritual warfare, claim protection from God for those who are enslaved, and find practical ways to relieve those in bondage. Experienced counselor Kathy Snowden offers advice: spiritual and psychological healing takes a long-time commitment; be available for physical safety and basic necessities; emphasize the love and forgiveness of Christ more than submission; provide a calming, loving, caring, non-judgmental example for them; accept and support their positive characteristics and treat them normally (many of them carry shame for the activities they witnessed and were forced to take part in); control your own fear, you may be threatened and harassed, exercise your faith; encourage professional counseling; try to provide physical protection.

"Evil in the land" by Jeff Lilley. Moody Mar 1989. Pages 14-23.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v. 6 We ourselves are from God; the one who is knowing God is hearing us; he who is not from God is not hearing us. From this we are knowing the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

"WE OURSELVES ARE FROM GOD."

Once again the assurance comes. This is similar to verse 4:

"You are from God, little children."

This indicates that they have been born again by the Spirit into God's family.

"THE ONE WHO IS KNOWING GOD IS HEARING US."

Matthew 13:13

Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Revelation 3:22

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

"THE ONE WHO IS KNOWING GOD," or has a personal relationship with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, also has the ability to hear God's message:

Isaiah 30:21

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

1 Corinthians 2:14

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

When a Christian is out of fellowship with the Father because of some disobedience, he will fail to hear what the Lord is saying:

Hebrews 5:11, 12

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

One of the joys of the new Suburban is that it has an AM/FM radio and cassette tape player. It is so easy to drive down the road and be listening to an AM station and then just by simply pushing a little button to fill the car with stereo music from an FM receiver.

You could greatly enjoy riding along with me and singing along with some of the great music of the past. You could also wish like crazy that you could enjoy this experience in your vehicle. It will be impossible as long as you just have an AM receiver. Getting an FM receiver will open up a whole new world of potential for you.

This, in essence, is what John is saying here:

"THE ONE WHO IS KNOWING GOD IS HEARING US."

John 10:27

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

1 Samuel 3:9, 10

So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times. "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

"WE OURSELVES ARE FROM GOD; THE ONE WHO IS KNOWING GOD IS HEARING US; HE WHO IS NOT FROM GOD IS NOT HEARING US."

Here is the contrast between the children of God and the children of the world. Those who do not have a relationship with God are unable to hear with perception and understanding the message which is given from God.

2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;

The believer who is walking in fellowship with the Father becomes increasingly more sensitive to the Spirit. The person who has no relationship with the Father is sensitive only to the self and to his own needs.

"WE OURSELVES ARE FROM GOD; THE ONE WHO IS KNOWING GOD IS HEARING US; HE WHO IS NOT FROM GOD IS NOT HEARING US. FROM THIS WE ARE KNOWING THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR."

By our ability to hear, we are able to determine those "OF TRUTH" and those "OF ERROR."

Jeremiah 51:18

They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish.

2 Timothy 2:18

men who have gone astray from the truth. . . .

2 Peter 2:18

For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

Psalms 119:110

The wicked have set a snare for me,
but I have not strayed from your precepts.

On the SPIRIT OF TRUTH we read in:

John 14:17

that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 15:26

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

Jeremiah 23:17, 18

They keep saying to those who despise me, "The Lord says: You will have peace." And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, "No harm will come to you." But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word?

Matthew 27:64

Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, "He has risen from the dead," and the last deception will be worse than the first.

Here the apostle John speaks of the "THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH" and "THE SPIRIT OF ERROR."

The word that is translated "ERROR" here is the word for:

"wandering,"

"roaming,"

"wandering from the path of truth,"

"error,"

"delusion,"

"deceit,"

"deception to which one is subject."

1 Thessalonians 2:3

For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

2 Thessalonians 2:11

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,

2 Peter 3:17

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness,

2 Peter 3:3-5

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

How does Satan do this?

James 1:13-15

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.

Ephesians 4:14

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

The answer to this is:

Colossians 2:6-8

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

"THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH" is the Holy Spirit who has now come to dwell in us and to guide us into all truth. It is He that has anointed us by His indwelling so that we are capable of:

spiritual understanding,

discernment,

and separation of those things which are truth, and those which are error.

(Welcome to the Family by Stephen W. Brown)

For instance, one of the important things one must understand in reading the Bible is that the Bible must dictate the questions it will answer. If you want to find out about Einstein's theory of relativity, don't go to the Bible. If you want to know how to build a school or make a million dollars or bake a cake, don't go to the Bible because that isn't the truth about which the Bible speaks. However, if you want to know who you are, what you are doing here, and where you are going, read your Bible. If you want to know the best way to live and die, read your Bible. If you want to know about God, what He is like, what He thinks about you, what His plans are for you, go to the Bible. All you will find there will be true, but it won't contain all truth.

p. 22

(If I Really Believe, Why Do I Have These Doubts?)
by Lynn Anderson)

On the other hand, no! Faith is not a blind leap. We are not suggesting that kind of faith Frederick Buechner describes as "the capacity to accept a lot of holy whoppers that an intelligent eighth grader would dismiss out of hand." It's not the kind of faith indicted in Archie Bunker's loose interpretation of Mark Twain's faith definition: "Faith is believing what any fool knows ain't so."

Instead, faith is a leap based not on proof, but on trust.

On August 23, 1864, Abraham Lincoln wrote out a memorandum on a piece of paper, folded it, and asked the entire cabinet of the United States to sign it without reading it. Amazingly, they did! By so doing, they committed themselves to the consequence of Lincoln's proposals without having read them.

That's strong faith--but not blind faith! Lincoln's cabinet had plenty of reason to believe in their President's proposal, even though they had not actually read the document. They had no proof. They knew Lincoln well enough to trust him.
p. 52

Guy King says:

If you, my reader, are a preacher, or teacher, would this not be a proper yearning of your heart--

"O that it might be said of me,
Surely thy speech betrayeth thee,
Thou hast been with JESUS of Galilee,
With JESUS of Galilee."

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The two warning lights in the epistle of 1 John are:

1. stop loving the world
2. stop believing every spirit

LESSON #2: We are commanded by John to keep on putting the spirits to the test to see if they are from God.

LESSON #3: Fellowship is preserved by discernment, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

LESSON #4: The key test question is: Does the teacher believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son come in human flesh?

LESSON #5: The one who does not hold to the deity and the humanity of Christ is manifesting the spirit of antichrist.

LESSON #6: We become part of God's family, we are His children when we are born again by the Spirit.

LESSON #7: The victory has already been secured on Calvary's cross and is assured to us, because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

LESSON #8: The false teachers have a real audience with the world because they are speaking from their perspective.

LESSON #9: John says, "We ourselves are from God, and the one who is knowing God is hearing us."

LESSON #10: In being guided by the Spirit, it is our responsibility to ascertain the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

As a child of God, it is my responsibility to heed the admonition of John here in verse 1:

"Beloved, stop believing every spirit, but keep on putting the spirits to the test to see if they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

The basis for being able to perform this function is FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

As I am in fellowship with Him, the Holy Spirit can carry on His function of guiding me into the truth of the word of God and also protecting me from the error of those who are not of God.

It is our responsibility to be discerning between truth and error, not between love and hate. We are not responsible for the attitude of the false teachers, but we are for our own.

Van Gorder writes:

The beloved Louis Talbot wrote in his book Heresies Exposed, "The days in which you and I are living are days in which Christians need to know their Bibles, for the only way by which we may know whether or not a system of teaching is of God is by viewing the system through the lens of Holy Writ--reading the system in the light of the Bible and not reading the Bible in the light of the system."

This is how you may spot the devil's kids!

TACTICS AGAINST TEMPTATION

Christians are involved in a battle with Satan. If they are to win they must know the enemy. He is a personal, supernatural spirit-being, the ultimate source of evil. He has many demons to do his work. He also uses the world (world as described in 1 John 2:15 and Romans 12:2) to tempt us into sin. "Most of the world's temptations are not to things illegal or immoral, but to things subtly devastating to our spiritual welfare." Another tool of Satan is the flesh (as described in Gal. 5:17). It's an inside enemy. Many of our temptations are directed at our pride and ego. So there are three types of attack of temptation; and a strategy for fighting each one. Type A: Satan attacks the spirit. Note James 4:1. Use your Bible, but you must know it well. Psalm 119:11, Matt. 4:4, 7, 10. Type B: the world attacks the ego. Read 1 John 2:15. If you find yourself loving the world (usually a form of materialism) rekindle your love for God. The two are incompatible. If your relationship with God is right, the world is less attractive or important. Type C: The flesh attacks the appetites of the body (often sexual temptation). The strategy here is found in 2 Tim. 2:22 and 1 Cor. 6:18. Don't fight; flee!

"Tactics against temptation" by Curtis C. Mitchell. Moody, Jun 1989. Pages 30-35.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

GOING FORWARD IN A BACKWARD WORLD

Much of the world we live in rotates on Satan's standards, which are backwards from the Christian standpoint. See John 14:30, Isa. 55:8. It's a challenge to think and live biblically in this world. Biblical success involves servanthood (Matt. 20, Phil. 2). Biblical power comes from being yielded to God's power given us here (Luke 12:13-34 and I Tim. 6:6-19, Phil. 4:12). Biblical pleasure comes from doing right, and brings peace and joy (Psalm 1, John 15).

"Going forward in a backward world" by Joseph M. Stowall. Moody, Apr 1989. Page 4.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

VICTORY IN JESUS

We all have seen floating markers in navigable lakes and waterways. These buoys are firmly anchored in strategic locations, and even though the waves of the sea splash around them, they float serenely in their appointed places. The tides rise and fall, but they are never carried away. When the great swells of the ocean come, they mount up and ride upon them as they cascade along. Often the mighty billows descend, submerging them for a moment, but immediately they rise to the top and bob back into their proper positions. This is a picture of the believer's conquering life. In God's strength he ascends with the buoyancy of faith over all spiritual opposition. The comforting power of the indwelling Holy Spirit gives that well-anchored soul victory even though at times he is almost overwhelmed by the fretful sea of outward circumstances around him.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

A GOOD WORD ABOUT ANYBODY

Two worldly men saw an elderly churchgoer coming down the street. One man pointed toward her.

"I'll bet you can't mention anybody that old Miss Thompson can't find something good to say about."

The other fellow called the bet.

"Good morning, Miss Thompson," he said politely. "What do you think about the devil?"

Miss Thompson cocked her perky little head over to one side, "Well," she answered, "there is one good thing about him. He is always on the job."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

An elderly preacher is reported to have prayed the following prayer each day: "O Lord, give me a backbone as big as a saw log and ribs like the large timbers under the church floor. Put iron shoes on my feet and galvanized breeches on my body. Give me a rhinoceros hide for skin, and hang up a wagonload of determination in the gable-end of the soul. Help me to sign the contract to fight the devil as long as I've got a tooth--and then gum him until I die."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

When Edward Sweeny of New York City awakened with his bed on fire, he ran to a door and in his sleepy state, opened, went through it, and slammed it behind him only to discover that he was in a clothes closet and could not get out. Meanwhile, other tenants smelled smoke and sounded the alarm. The firemen extinguished the blaze and released Mr. Swinney from the closet when they heard him pounding on the door.

He is like so many human beings caught in the sleep of death. They race to any door and rush through only to be trapped in their false hope. Is it any wonder the Lord cries through the prophet Zachariah in:

Zachariah 9:12

Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; . . .

Christ is the only door. Any person who attempts to find safety by any other door will find himself trapped forever.

It is my prayer that the Lord will cause you to recognize the fact that there is only salvation through Jesus Christ and Him alone.

It is, then, my responsibility, once I have become His child and been born again of the Spirit into His family, to exercise discernment of the spirit in knowing the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Realizing that fellowship is preserved by the discernment, it ought to motivate me to ascertain what the attitude of those who are teaching really is about the Person of Jesus Christ. Do they believe in the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ?

As we continue to walk with the Lord, it ought to be our prayer that we would be increasingly sensitized by His Spirit to discern the difference between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

STUDY #9 - 1 John 4:1-6

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