

January 7, 2018 -

I John 4: 1-6 -

"Discerning the Wolves"

Introduction:

Joe Navarro is a 25 year veteran of the FBI and is the author of *What Every Body is Saying*, as well as *Dangerous Personalities*. He has studied at length the life, teachings, and behaviors of Cult leaders like Jim Jones (Jonestown Guyana), David Koresh (Branch Davidians) and Marshall Heff Applewhit (Heaven's Gate) among many others. Joe stated and I quote, "From my studies of cults and cult leaders during my time in the FBI, I learned early on that there are some things to look for in these organizations and that is the character and integrity of the leaders. What stands out about these individuals is that they were or are all pathologically narcissistic.

They all have or had an over-abundant belief that they were special, that they and they alone had the answers to problems, and that they had to be revered. They demanded perfect loyalty from followers, they overvalued themselves and devalued those around them, they were intolerant of criticism, and above all they did not like being questioned or challenged. And yet, in spite of these less than charming traits, they had no trouble attracting others those who were willing to overlook these terrible traits. The Bible warns us to Test the Spirits...

We discover there are two kinds of spirits in the world: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (4:6b), revealing that beyond the world we can perceive with our physical senses is a real, unseen spirit world.

It is to this issue that the Scripture speaks today. John tells us: Beloved, **believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. How do we try the spirits to determine if they are of God?**

I. Test #1: Check out the Content (4:2)

1. A true teacher of God will teach that Jesus Christ is God come to earth in flesh and blood. When Paul was preaching to the Bereans (Acts 17:11), they tested his teaching by searching the Scriptures. They did their homework to see if what was being taught correspond with God's Word. We try the spirits with the Word of God, the Bible. We filter all through the Biblical grid. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 tell us to... **Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.** Therefore we are to prove all preaching and teachings to see if it is of God. ... This is the only time the Greek word for "try" (dok-e-ma zo) occurs in John's writings meaning to test or examine.

II Test #2: Check out their Leaders and Motivation (4:3).

1. Another way to try the spirits is to examine the preacher or teacher to see why they proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. Many false teachers use the name of Jesus for fund-raising, not for winning the lost. They even tell lies to raise money. Peter warned of them in **2 Peter 2:1-3** and we would do well to heed it ourselves.--- **1 Peter 5:2** Money, power and influence are strong deterrent to the truth.

3. The antichrist is not just a man; it is a system opposed to Christ and the truth about Him. There is an Antichrist who is also called the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3). Second John 1:7 tells us, **“Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.** John tells us anyone who distorts the truth about Jesus Christ is influenced by the spirit of antichrist.

At a national meeting, one major denomination elected a committee to study whether or not Jesus is the only way to heaven. It doesn't matter what they decide, just electing the committee says it all. That is the spirit of antichrist at work. To detect a false teacher, check the content, check out their Motivation, and ...

III Test #3: Check out their Converts (4:4-6).

1. True believers have spiritual protection against false teaching. That's' why John writes- **Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.**

God has given us the Holy Spirit, who is our Resident Protector against false teaching. The Holy Spirit who indwells us is greater than the spirit of antichrist in the world. False preachers can fill conference centers that seat tens of thousands and can win many converts all over the country. Jesus said: **They are of the world. Therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.**

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. John 16:13a

2. What is the characteristic of wolves? They are a menace to the sheep farmer. The wolf has the ability to lurk near a sheepfold and gain the trust of the sheep. He moves ever so subtlety and then he will strike. The natural tendency of a wolf is to feed on sheep. As "ravening wolves" these false prophets also have a very vicious nature about them and feed on the sheep of God's church.

3. The world wants to hear about success, how to be healthy and wealthy, and prosperity in the Christian life without sacrifice. In Matthew chapter seven, Jesus tells us we will know them by their fruits because good trees bear good fruit and bad trees evil fruit. If we are mature and constantly partake of solid food, which is deep biblical truths, we can easily identify false prophet. Because Hebrew 5:14 say, **But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

4. False teachers call evil good by spiritualizing selfishness and greed. Therefore, they are very popular today and draw crowds by the thousands who don't want to hear about sacrifice and unselfishness. Prosperity preachers don't want to teach about a Jesus who says you can't be His disciple unless you take up your cross and follow Him (Lk 9:23).

These religious hucksters take advantage of the problems people have, and promise them quick and easy solutions. They sneak in and soon control people's lives. They have been duped and before long, these leaders have grabbed their followers' loyalty, money, and service. And their "converts" are worse off than they were before.

5. God's people always want to hear the truth of God's Word, even when it points out sin in their own lives. So, another way to detect a false teacher is to see the type of people who hear his or her message. John says, **Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 Jn 4:6b).**

You can tell whether a preacher is preaching by the spirit of truth or the spirit of error by the kinds of people who receive his or her message. There are all kinds of false prophets in the world today - true believers need not be deceived.

Conclusion:

To detect a false teachings, check the content, check the leaders and their motivation and check the converts.