

## Going Deeper

February 21, 2010

### 1 John 4:1-6

At the end of chapter 3 John said that we know Jesus lives in us because of the Spirit He gave us. In chapter 4 he starts out by explaining that we can't believe everyone's spirit. We need to test them. This is a very important statement because as John continues to warn us, "...many false prophets have gone out into the world." In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we read the words of Christ that were given to John when he was exiled to the island of Patmos. And in those particular chapters He addresses the churches in the region and the good things that are going on as well as the bad. The specific writing to the churches at Pergamum and Thyatira give us an idea of why John brings this topic up in his letter. To Pergamum he wrote, "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans." To Thyatira the message was similar in that they were "tolerating that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess." She was misleading those in the church and was unwilling to repent. A testing of the teacher's spirits would have kept them from leading some astray.

John clarifies in the first few verses of chapter four that the spirit that is false is the antichrist. He also gives us a way to identify a false prophet and that is by listening to see if they acknowledge Jesus as being from God and coming in the flesh. We see that in the first century church there were those that entered the church and had not fully surrendered to God through Christ and were leading others astray. How could a person enter the church body and actually persuade the body to accept false teachings? Eckhart Tolle is the "spiritual guru" that Oprah goes to for her inspiration. He wrote this, "You cannot fight against the ego and win, just as you cannot fight against darkness. The light of consciousness is all that is necessary. You are that light." How can it be that the church of the first century could let those people in? Just look at what America allows in to our living rooms.

Romans 1:25 says, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator..." Our passage for this week finishes up by saying that children of God are from God, but those that are not are from the world. Paul, in writing to the Romans said that some decided to worship the things of the world that God created as opposed to seeing them for what they were; that is God's creations. Our world today likes to put material or created things on a pedestal, such as good looks, nice cars, money, success, power, and houses to name a few.

Everybody seems to be searching for why I am who I am or how I can become the best me I can. What about giving of ourselves to the God that created us and allowing Him to work in and through us for the benefit of His kingdom?

### Group Discussion

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21. Paul says to test everything. How does John say we should test spirits?
2. Read 2 Peter 2:1-3. According to Peter, what will false prophets do that we will recognize them as false?
3. What are general messages that false prophets bring that tempt us to listen?
4. Who are some messengers out there that bring a message contrary to the gospel?
5. What does verse 4 tell us about the power of satan and the power of Christ?
6. Read John 14:15-18. How does that passage parallel this passage written by John?
7. How do you tend to recognize someone as a Christian or an unbeliever?
8. Why are we drawn to worship creation as opposed to the Creator?

### Life Application

1. Apply the "test" to some well-known preachers/speakers by searching to find out what their core beliefs are. Did you discover anything you didn't already know?
2. What created things are tempting to "worship" and cloud your eyes from the Creator?
3. What do you think keeps people from giving in to false teaching? I think it is a lack of time in the Word. Take time this week to study, not just read God's Word. If you need help as to where to start, start in 1 John.
4. Discuss with your family at dinner what things God has created, why you think He created them, and how amazing it is that He created them.
5. Spend time on your knees thanking God for being an all knowing, amazing God.