



## DEVELOPING DISCERNMENT

### 1 JOHN 4:1-6

#### Background

Date: 80's Author/Reader: Apostle John/Circular Letter

Occasion: Firm faith against seductive false teaching

Theme: Live in the Light. Christ is the Light.

Tone: A father's heart to clarify, assure, gird, and guide

<sup>1</sup>Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup>By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. <sup>4</sup>Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup>They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup>We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

(1John 4:1-6 ESV)

#### Discernment is Demanded (4:1, 6c)

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"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. 13:1-3)

#### Discernment Requires Distinguishing Christological Confession (4:2-3)

Our current vocabulary includes such terms as identity, role models, self-image, self-actualization, liberation, upward mobility, and fulfillment, worries that never crossed Amy Carmichael's mind. How shall we, accustomed to popular seminars on rights and how to feel comfortable, receive and transmit a faith that prized what the world despises (the Cross) and despised what the world prizes (all that dims the Cross)? ~ Elizabeth Elliot

#### Discernment Clarifies by Division (4:4-6b)

#### Going Deeper

(For individual or small groups to go deeper with the passage)

1. Read 1 John 4:1-6. What are the two commands?
2. Read 1 John 1:1-5. How does John's use of "we" here impact his writing "we" in 1 John 4:6? What are some ways these verses relate to Galatians 1:6-12?
3. What are some reasons John tells us to distinguish the content of a message/teaching as opposed to the messenger, impact, etc.?
4. What comforts you in this passage? How does it challenge you?
5. Where do you see the need for this exhortation in your life today? What does the world want to hear today? What do we need to hear?

Spiritual Exercise: In prayer ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how to personally respond to John's teaching. If the Holy Spirit reveals a need to reject false teaching you have been embracing about Jesus, act in faith and repent, turn to Christ, and get rid of the false teaching. If you are led to seek a better understanding of the true gospel, act in faith and study the Scriptures and ask a mature Christian for help. If you are led to rejoice, rejoice in the victory God has given you and His ongoing protection.