

# Authentic?

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Preacher: Jonathan Gemmell

[ 0 : 00 ] Please do take a seat and let's pray together as we come to God's word, asking his help that we might understand it clearly, live for it fully and hear his voice in it.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you that you've spoken to your people at various times in many ways. And thank you that you have spoken fully and finally in your son Jesus.

And so Lord, I pray we would learn of him this morning. We would see him clearly. Father, we would love him with all of our being.

We would serve him with every iota of our personhood. That he would be enthroned in our lives. He would be the truth that is sweet on our lips.

Lord, he would be our king. And we would be his servants. Father, help us and speak to us through this passage we pray. In Jesus' name.

[ 1 : 03 ] Amen. So we're free from the end of our series in 1 John. It has been a great time as we've explored this letter that has got so much truth in it.

We've been seeing throughout our series in 1 John that John is writing to a church congregation. And he's writing to a church congregation who are in a lot of turmoil.

They're very disturbed. And the reason that they're disturbed is that the church has split. And a faction of the church have left. And the reason that they've split and that they've left is that there's one group within the church who say we are superior.

We are better in every way. We have a better anointing of the spirit. We have more profound knowledge of God. We're actually living sinless lives. You're holding us back.

So we need to get out of here so we can fulfill our potential. And so John writes this letter. And he writes it to reassure them.

[ 2 : 04 ] And he says to them, you are the real deal. To the people that remained who have been so unsettled, he's written to them and said, you're the real deal. You really do know God.

You can have confidence that you really know that you really know God. And so he gives them three tests. And the three tests he gives them are that you really know God if you're within the apostolic gospel.

If you believe the right things about God. He says you really know God if you're obeying Jesus' commands. And he says you really know that you know God if you're loving the brothers.

You really know you know God if you're within the apostolic gospel, you're obeying Jesus' command. And particularly his command to love the brothers. But John is very clear that he doesn't want us to see that this is three tests.

He wants us to see that it's one test. So if you look in your Bibles to 1 John 3 verse 23, you'll see that he lumps them all together. He says, and this is his command.

[ 3 : 13 ] Do you see how he puts them all together? You believe the apostolic gospel.

You love one another. And you obey his commands. It's one test with three modules. And we need to pass them all. You can't say, well I'm a real Christian because I believe the right things and obey Jesus.

But I hate my brothers and sisters. He's saying it's one command. And then if you read below 3.23 we get 3.24 surprisingly. And he says there's another way you can know you know God.

A re-emphasis. A further swelling to your confidence. That you know you know God. Because the Holy Spirit lives in you.

And he testifies that God really is your father. That he testifies that you really know God. And he helps you obey his commands and do all that God says.

[ 4 : 19 ] And this is what links to our passage this morning. Is this word spirit. But John is almost pre-empting that they're going to have questions about the Holy Spirit.

That if the Holy Spirit is the one who says that we really know God. Then how do we know that it's the real Holy Spirit? How do we know that what this person is saying is really from the Spirit. Or are they just making it up out of their head?

And so please turn to 1 John 4. And we'll read the first six verses. John is telling them. Giving them a reason. Giving them a test.

To discern whether this is the authentic bona fide Holy Spirit. The third member of the Trinity. Or this is bogus. Counterfeit. And wrong.

John writes this. 1 John 4 verse 1. Dear friends. Do not believe every spirit. But test the spirits. To see whether they are from God. Because many false prophets have gone into the world.

[ 5 : 18 ] This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

This is the spirit of the Antichrist. Which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God. And have overcome them.

Because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world. And therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world. And the world listens to them.

We are from God. And whoever knows God listens to us. But whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the spirit of truth.

And the spirit of falsehood. Falsehood. John is telling them how they tell the difference between the real deal. When it comes to the spirit and the fake.

[ 6 : 16 ] And so knowing the difference between what is authentic and what is fake is absolutely crucial in life. Knowing the difference between real and false.

So discerning whether the email that will arrive in your inbox tomorrow morning saying that you've won a lottery that you didn't even enter. Discerning whether that is true or not is vitally important. Particularly for your identity and your bank balance. Discerning whether the Rolex watch that the person is selling you at your holiday resort saying special price.

Real Rolex. Discerning whether that's the real watch is vitally important. Deciding whether the manifesto of party leaders is achievable is real promises.

Or just to get popular opinion is very important. And so last Sunday night at 2.47am in the morning. Mrs. G and myself are awakened by the smoke alarm.

[ 7 : 17 ] I was fast asleep but I got that nudge which in our house is secret code for I really think you should go and investigate. And so bleary eyed I got out of bed.

Smoke alarms going off and I did what any good discerning man does in that moment. Is I got the step ladder climbed up and pulled the battery out and went back to bed. I then didn't sleep for two hours petrified that there was a real fire and that this wasn't a false alarm and we were all going to die in our sleep.

There is a real importance knowing the difference between right and wrong, true and false, counterfeit or real. In the art world this is particularly true.

Millions of dollars are spent every year on fakes. Astounding amounts of money on doodles that aren't real. This is Jackson Pollock.

The one on the right is worth \$58.3 million bought at auction. But last year the one on the left was bought for \$17 million and is an absolute fake.

[ 8 : 19 ] That it was actually painted nearly 30 years after Jackson Pollock died. What a waste of money. Or these two. Clifford Stills.

That one bought for \$61 million. The one on the left, \$24.3 million and is an absolute fake. It was actually painted by a 17-year-old art student from California.

Or these two by Mark Rothko. \$86.8 million. This one an absolute fake, \$28.3 million.

But of course you're all discerning art figures so you know that that's actually the other way around. You wouldn't have known that, would you? Al was ready to get his checkbook out. Or these two by Piet Mondrian.

Works in the neoplasticism style. The one on the left, \$50.6 million. The one on the right, absolutely worthless. I painted it in three minutes on my computer.

[ 9 : 22 ] There's a real importance between knowing the difference between real and fake. And nothing could be truer about the importance of real and fake.

When it comes to discerning what is the truth about God. And what is falsehood about God. Nothing could be more important than discerning whether what people are saying about God is true or false. Whether it's reality that we can build our life around or they're just making it up out of their head. And so how do we tell? Not everything that sounds spiritual is true.

Not everything that uses spiritual terminology is genuine. Not everyone claiming spiritual insight is authentic.

And so what John is laying out for us in these six verses is our duty to exercise discernment. Each of our duty. To listen and to think.

[ 10 : 25 ] To use our Bibles and our brains to see whether this is true or not. Now some of you have already switched off this morning. Some of you are already thinking about lunch or what lies next week.

And you have already put yourself and others in danger. Because according to 1 John 4, everybody has a responsibility to exercise discernment.

Whether what somebody is saying is true. It's that stark. So the first thing we see is the command John gives in verse 1.

Keep your Bibles open. And check that this truth about checking the truth is true. The command John gives. The command is very straightforward.

Do not believe every spirit. Don't be gullible. Don't assume that just because somebody is speaking in church. That they've been given a microphone and have some semblance of training.

[ 11 : 31 ] That what's coming out of their mouth is true. Just because they've got a gift in speaking and have been given a platform. Doesn't necessarily mean that you should swallow everything they say.

You need to use discernment. You have a responsibility according to John. Writing to this church but also to us. To test the spirits.

To check whether what is being said is true or bogus. Don't be like Churchill the nodding dog. Just sitting there nodding. Yes, yes, yes.

Because according to 1 John you're letting everybody down. To walk the line between superstition believing everything and suspicion believing nothing is your job.

And it's very difficult. But it's your and our collective responsibility. John says test the spirits.

[ 12 : 35 ] Evaluate the truth that's being said with the truth that's been revealed. Absorb what is genuine. Reject and refute what isn't.

And John is explicit at the end of verse 1. Because there are many false prophets that have gone into the world. There are many people peddling falsehood about God.

For self material gain. Just think the people that have left this church to whom John is writing.

They're using great spiritual language. They use anointing and sinlessness. They use and seem to be saying that they have a profound knowledge of God.

And yet John is very clear. They're just making it up. Out of their heads. You go to the new gathering that they've started just down the road. They use lots of Greek language.

[ 13 : 35 ] They sound and look very impressive. And yet John says don't be taken in. Be discerning. Why? Because there are many false prophets in the world.

And the problem with false prophets is they're not obvious. They don't come with name badges with a warning signal. So we have to be discerning.

Spurgeon writing on this passage says discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong. Rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right.

Things that sound feasible but it's not so much what is explicitly said but what's implied and what's left out.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ferocious wolves. If you're having a lamb for dinner.

[ 14 : 40 ] You bought it from the supermarket. You were very impressed by this cuddly little lamb you were about to devour. But you cut in and it doesn't have the anatomy of a little sheep. It has the anatomy of a ferocious wolf.

That's what John is saying. You can't really tell the difference. They look like warm cuddly fuzzy guys. Who wouldn't hurt a fly but inwardly they want to eat you.

That's what John is saying. You need to be really discerning. Jesus again Matthew 24 talking about now. At that time many will turn away from the faith.

And will betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear. And deceive many people. Paul writing to the Ephesian elders. I know that after I leave savage wolves will come in among you.

And will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise. And distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

[ 15 : 44 ] False prophets are a reality. The scary thing about what Paul says to the Ephesian elders. Is even those regarded people in your own church can turn feral.

And distort the truth. And twist it and gather a following from themselves. Which is incredibly dangerous. And deadly.

And John here is not exhibiting some deep filled paranoia. He's not seeing heretical bogey men at every street corner. He's giving us warning of a clear and present danger to churches.

He is warning his readers and us. That there really is falsehood propagated by false prophets. And therefore everybody needs to be on their guard.

Sometimes we need to realise. That granny's big teeth, bushy tail and furry face. Point to the truth that granny's not there anymore. But it's a wolf. What is the greatest threat to our church?

[ 16 : 54 ] It's not the secularism pouring in from outside. It's not the new atheism and the air time that that's getting. It's not even the redefinition of traditional values and norms in society.

The biggest threat to our church family. Is that we start to tolerate and believe and swallow and give a platform to falsehood about God.

And that all of us together are led astray. Because what is true starts to get distorted and twisted. And we're all responsible.

Very unpopular idea in the 21st century. Where the only thing that's wrong is to say that somebody's wrong. And John is very clear. There's many false prophets. Don't be taken astray. Don't believe every spirit. But test the spirits. To see whether they are from God. Because many false prophets have gone into the world. Test the spirits.

[ 17 : 58 ] So if John commands us to test the spirits. How do we test the spirits? If we've all got a responsibility to do the test. Wouldn't it be great to know what the criteria are? And so he's going to go on and tell us.

The contrast that John draws. The contrast that John draws. Verses 2 and 3 and 5 and 6. It's two tests.

But they're really the same test from two different angles. And let me show you what it is. It's like the acid test that we use for gold. And applied to false prophecy.

The first thing he says. How do you know if this is true and believable? And from the authentic Holy Spirit. Well then you need to discern. Is somebody telling the truth about Jesus?

The litmus test. Is are they telling the truth about Jesus? His identity and his mission. Is what they're saying in line with what this book says.

[ 19 : 06 ] About who Jesus is and why he came. And so he uses seven words to give us the litmus test. Look at them. End of verse 2.

Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Is from God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

Is from God. It is a brilliant test. It is almost a foolproof watertight test.

Because it summarizes the very core of orthodox Christianity. That in those seven words is condensed the truth. That God has been revealing to us about his glorious eternal rescue mission. To save people for his very own possession. It talks about that God himself. In the second person of the Trinity. Entered into history.

[ 20 : 08 ] In the incarnation. That as Jesus. He was born miraculously. He lived perfectly. And died sacrificially. He is God's only promised anointed and eternal king.

Jesus is the Christ. He became fully man in the flesh. To save sinful rebellious humanity. By living the life we failed to live.

And dying the death our sin deserved. That we might be forgiven. Freed from sin. And granted eternal life. Instead of eternal punishment. By grace. Through faith.

Jesus Christ came in the flesh. That's what John says. Is the litmus test. To see whether you open or close your ears. Whether you say I'll come back to the evening service.

Or whether I'll go home. And go somewhere else. How do you know whether someone is saying. What someone is saying should be accepted or rejected. He says.

[ 21 : 09 ] Are they telling the truth about Jesus. The whole truth. About Jesus. And this word acknowledge is an interesting word. Because it's not just about what comes out of their mouth.

It's what's portrayed with their lives as well. Are they living the life of the gospel. Both through what they say. And how they live. Is there an authenticity there.

Or is it just bubble and froth. Superficial. To gain an understanding. The ministry of the spirit. Throughout John's gospel and letters.

Is to teach. Illuminate. And confirm the truth about Jesus. And conform our lives to it. How do you know if they're real? Real people speaking about God properly.

Because they tell the truth about Jesus. See the negative verse 3. But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus. Is not from God. Acknowledge Jesus in the way that he's acknowledged in verse 2.

[ 22 : 10 ] It's not just whether they mention Jesus. But do they mention Jesus as he really is. And if they don't. This is the spirit of the antichrist.

Now don't think. 666 tattooed on your forehead. With your head. Are able to spin around 360 degrees. That's not what he means. This word anti.

Is the instead of Jesus people. The in place of Jesus people. And why are they the instead of Jesus people. Because they're giving a different gospel. That doesn't involve Jesus.

To draw attention to themselves. To draw people away from Jesus. To their own following. People who use spiritual language.

As a top trump. To justify themselves. And to try and pedestal themselves. Above everyone else. Do you see from this. That doctrine is vital.

[ 23 : 09 ] That we need to dig into this word. So we know what the truth is. And can stand on it. And refute that which is wrong. John says test the spirits.

And the first test. The litmus test. Is do they tell the truth of Jesus. But see verses 5 and 6. They are from the world.

This is the false teachers. And they speak from the viewpoint of the world. And the world listens to them. We are from God. That's the apostolic we. We apostles. Are from God.

And whoever knows God. Listens to us. But whoever is not from God. Does not listen to us. The second test. Which is really the same test. From another side.

Is what they say. Telling the truth about Jesus. In a way that it says the same. As what the apostle said. Two sides of the same coin.

[ 24 : 03 ] Do they tell about the truth about Jesus. And the truth about Jesus. Is what the apostles said to us. In God's word. Does it match up with those who saw.

And heard. And touched. And looked upon Jesus. And if it does. We can say no that's true. That is truth about God.

And I need to learn it. Absorb it. Ask that the Holy Spirit. Would seal it on my heart. And transform my life. Through it. Are they telling the truth about Jesus.

In a way that says the same. As the apostles. And do you see. How explicitly. He talks about anything else. It's from the world. It's worldly wisdom.

Dressed up. In spiritual language. That is packaged by the world. Communicated to the world. And loved by the world. It's self-help. Or self-advancement.

[ 25 : 06 ] Disguised. As spiritual language. And the world listens. This splinter group. Down the road. Sharing this.

Kind of. Message. The world gathers to hear it. And they love it. And they applaud it. And they swallow it. But it's not true.

It's from. The world. It's a message. But it's not a true message. About what God is really like. Dear friends. Do not believe every spirit. But test the spirits. Because there are many false prophets. How do we test? One test from two sides.

Do they tell the truth about Jesus. In a way that says the same as the apostles. In a way that communicates the gospel. As it's revealed. Fully. And totally.

[ 26 : 04 ] And finally. In God's word. Be on guard. Exercise discernment. Don't be superstitious. And believe everything. And everyone.

But don't be suspicious. And shut down. And think actually. No one can share anything with me. There is a radical contrast drawn. By John. There is truth and falsehood.

Real and fake. Bogus. And authentic. There are those who speak rightly. And those who speak falsely. The lines of that are stuck. And we must test the spirits.

So just finishing verse 4. Is crucial. You dear children are from God. And have overcome them. Because the one who is in you. Is greater than the one who is in the world. We've all got a calendar with this verse on.

Haven't we? The one who is in you. Is greater than he that is in the world. But in context. John is saying that. The reason that we know the truth.

[ 27 : 05 ] Is not because we're cleverer. Not because we've got theological credentials. Not because we were less sinful. And easier to save.

Or our eyes were brighter. So we could see the truth more clearly. He says. The reason that we know the truth. Is because the Holy Spirit. Who God has graciously sent.

To open those eyes. Is greater. Than the falsehood. Of the world. God has graciously given us his spirit. Who opened our eyes to see the gospel. Not as foolishness.

Or a ridiculous stumbling block. But as the power of God. We know we are from God. Not because we're smarter. Or worked it out.

But because God in his grace. Opened our eyes. Through his Holy Spirit. Who is more powerful than anybody else. That we saw the difference.

[ 27 : 59 ] Between foolishness and wisdom. And we said. That's the truth about God. And I'm going to build my life. Around it. The one who is in us.

Sent from God. Is greater. More powerful than the blinding spirit. Of the world. And that our eyes are opened. As God gloriously. Poured his gospel. Into our lives. So we can have real confidence.

That this is the real truth about God. Because God really revealed it to us. Through his real Holy Spirit. Can be confident. But we must be humble.

Because we didn't get here ourselves. But God opened our eyes. To see him. We've got to be humble. And confident.

So where we get to falsehood. We don't think. Oh aren't we brilliant. We got it. But we can approach people. With humility. And say. Well let's look at this. Because I don't think the same as you.

[ 28 : 58 ] And I think you've got it wrong. But let's look at this. Because this is true. Be prayerful. Be humble and confident. But be prayerful. That those spiritual things.

Are discerned by the spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2. For who knows a person's thoughts. Except their own spirit within them. In the same way. No one knows the thought of God. Except the spirit of God.

That as we read God's word. As we share truth about him. Let's depend on the Holy Spirit. That he might speak. But most of all. Be discerning. Don't be an omnivore.

Just eat everything like a pig. They'll eat anything. Don't be a pig. Don't be a pig. If you're not a Christian.

Then. If this is true. Then as we investigate. And read. And read. And try and understand the truth of God. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit. Might open our eyes to see. Because without his help.

[ 29 : 56 ] We'll remain blind. Be humble. And confident. Pray. And read.

As God. Would help us. In finishing. I want to tell you about this guy. His name is Ali Dyer. In 1996. He was signed by my football team.

Southampton Football Club. By Graham Souness. This is how he was signed. Graham Souness. At the end of November. Got a phone call. And on the end of the phone.

Was somebody pretending to be George Weyer. The Liberian World Footballer of the Year. And what this alleged George Weyer said to Graham Souness. Was my cousin Ali Dyer.

Who plays for Paris Saint-Germain. Has played 13 times for Senegal. Wants a transfer to your club. And so Graham Souness. Quite impressed.

[ 30 : 51 ] Said come along and play. He turned up on Friday. On Saturday. Southampton had an injury crisis. They didn't have enough people for the bench.

So Ali Dyer finds himself. Having never been seen at a football match. For Southampton. Turns up on the bench. Matthew Letizia is injured in the 65th minute.

And Ali Dyer gets the call from the bench. 65th minute he comes on. The 73rd minute. He is substituted back off. Because he is horrendous.

He is the worst footballer that the Premier League has ever seen. That was voted. Matthew Letizia wrote this about him. He ran around like Bambi on ice.

It was very embarrassing to watch. Why was he signed? Why did this happen? Because no one tested him. To see whether he could really play. And really live up to the hype.

[ 31 : 52 ] That was mentioned. And so Ali Dyer. And 1 John 4. Tell us the same lesson. Don't believe.

Everything you hear. But test it. Try it. See whether it's true. Spiritual things. How do we test whether it's true? Are they telling the truth about Jesus?

In a way that says the same. As the apostles. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father God thank you that in the world of ideas.

Your gospel is true. And it's true forever. Father God thank you that you've opened our eyes to that truth. That we discern it as your truth.

Over and against the many lies. And much falsehood about you there is in the world. And so Lord I pray as those that have received your truth. We might constantly cling on to that truth.

[ 32 : 57 ] That we wouldn't be led astray. Lord that you would give us a thankfulness for the work you've done in our life. You would give us a prayerfulness as we continue to grow in that truth.

And that you would give us a humble confidence. As we depend fully on your spirit for our spiritual development. And continued safety and perseverance in the gospel.

So Lord I pray for my friends in this room. That we might all together be discerning. We might watch over one another. And that every spirit.

That acknowledges that Jesus Christ. Has come in the flesh. We would celebrate that truth. And it would change our lives continually. Father bless us and help us the rest of this day we pray.

In Jesus glorious and all conquering name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 34 : 15 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. core F■■is. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.