

## 1 JOHN 4:1-6 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because 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, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. <sup>4</sup> You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

## REVIEW

John writes to address one of the central debates and heresies of the early church. Namely, will God's people continue to believe and trust that Jesus came in the flesh? Or will we allow permit other teachers to reshape our understanding of Jesus into *something false*? John asserts that it is dangerous for Christians to allow such voices into our midst and pervert what is clearly witnessed and conveyed to all those who would believe. In this passage he invites his readers to experience complete confidence in his apostolic message and *their ability* to discern the Truth from what is false.

## STUDY IT

- How can someone "test every spirit"? Why is it important to do so? (v.1)
- What do true spirits from God confess? (v.2)
- What do false teachers and ungodly spirits *deny*? (v.3)
- Who or what is the spirit of the antichrist? (v.3)
- What is the encouragement we receive in verse 4?

- What other truths can be said of those who are "of God"? (v.4-6)
- What are the two spirits we must be able to discern? How do these spirits exist in our world today? (v.6)

## APPLY IT

- How do you define the TRUTH? Why does this word matter so much to the People of God? (Does it matter to you?)
- Why is the *Incarnation* (i.e. God-made-flesh in the person of Jesus) so central to our Christian belief? What would change if it was not true?
- How does verse 4 bring you confidence and hope? (If it doesn't, spend some time reflecting on why.)
- **Go deeper:** Asking questions regarding our faith *can* be healthy. But sometimes, hearing many interpretations can tempt us toward cynicism or doubt. Such voices can even attempt to "water down" what we believe. Do you experience such thoughts? If so, take some time to ask God to strengthen you and remove the confusion. Or share with a trusted believer and ask for him/her to pray for you. Write below some of the doubts you struggle with – and ask the Spirit to guide you to truth.