

Test the Spirits

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[0 : 00] Turn your Bible to 1 John. We've been going through 1 John up through October.

! Got through chapter 3. Today we'll get right back in with chapter 4. And verses 1 through 6 will be the text for this morning's sermon. I'm going to do something differently starting today, which is to give you the application questions with the fill-ins already. So you already have that. You can look at that hopefully later today for your community groups. And the reason why I do that is I just don't want to end the sermon that way. I don't want to distract from the way that God's Word is calling us to adjust our lives. So that's already there for you. But there are other fill-ins. I hope that you will hear God's Word and apply it to your lives. Would you stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together again in 1 John chapter 4, verses 1 through 6.

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. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 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. 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. They are from the world. Therefore, they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us.

[2 : 04] By this we know the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of error. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? In 1881, a prospector unearthed a large nugget of solid silver from the Wichita Mountains, located in southwestern Oklahoma, and he brought it to Fort Sill.

When the soldiers at the fort caught sight of the prospector's large chunk of silver and learned that he had retrieved it from the Wichita Mountains, they fled to the mountains, filing claims in the hopes of securing an instant fortune. It, in fact, it took an order from the United States Secretary of War to get them to return to their military posts. But the word was out, and rumors began to spread that not only was there silver and gold in the Wichita Mountains, but that Spanish explorers from centuries before had hidden caches of treasure up within those mountains that had yet to be discovered. And all of this led to the great western Oklahoma gold rush at the turn of the century when the southwestern Indian Territory reservation opened up to homesteaders in 1901. Soon, the Wichita Mountains were littered with shafts and mines and mills and smelters. From 1901 to 1904, more than 6,000 claims were staked. An estimated 20,000 men worked the mines. Boomtown sprung up overnight. But by 1907, the rush ended with only a few nuggets of precious metal being found, dashing the dreams of those who invested all they had in the hopes of striking pay dirt and instant riches. However, the gold miners in California had greater success.

The expression, Eureka, became the slogan for hundreds of thousands of prospectors who left all that they had behind in the hopes of discovering gold. Eureka is a Greek word that means, I have found it. Like the Oklahoma prospectors, the hope was to acquire instant riches that would result in retirement and a carefree life. But those miners eventually came to realize that not all that glitters is gold. Riverbeds and rock quarries contained an ore called iron pyrite. Iron pyrite looks a lot like gold. But experienced miners could usually detect the differences. And one test that they used to detect the difference was to bite it. Have you ever seen in like old movies, they would have a gold coin and somebody would bite it? Well, because gold is softer than the human tooth. And so they knew that it was gold. And so they knew that it was gold if they could put a little dent into it. But sometimes the iron pyrite looks so much like gold that they needed to have further tests done to be able to tell if it was the real thing or not. So imagine being a miner back during this time, you've

discovered what you believe is gold. Whoa, Eureka! I have found it. I have found something that will change my life instantly, right now, forever.

Imagine the hopes that you would have while you were waiting the tests to authenticate your find. Both your future, your fortune depended on the results of that test. Now imagine the despair you would feel when the test revealed that your treasure was worthless. Your spark rock wasn't gold, but a worthless piece of iron pyrite or fool's gold as it later became known. Spiritually speaking, people can find themselves in a similar position to those prospectors who lacked the ability to discern that the life-transforming treasure they believed they were in possession of was actually fool's gold or is actually fool's gold. When confronted with various interpretations of Scripture, various religious beliefs, various claims about who Jesus is about who Jesus is and what His message was and what He came to do, each teacher and teaching claiming to possess the true truth, life-transforming truth, it can leave people and Christians in a state of confusion, especially when the truth claims contradict one another.

But God is not a God of confusion, nor is He a God who hides the truth from us. He wants us to be confident in the truth He's revealed, and He's given us the ability to distinguish and authenticate the real truth from lies disguised as the truth. Remember that John is writing to believers, to churches who are under attack from false teachers who claim to be in possession of the truth, but their claims contradicted the gospel that they had heard. And so in our text today, 1 John chapter 4 verses 1 through 6, John tells believers how they can discern and distinguish spiritual truth from error. To this point, 1 John has given a lot of tests to his readers that they would examine their own lives, that they would see whether or not they were genuinely saved or not.

[8 : 45] But here, he commands them to be the ones giving the examination. And our main idea for this morning's sermon from this text is this, Christians must test the Spirit to distinguish truth from error.

Christians must test the Spirit to distinguish truth from error. Why is this important? Well, it's important because God's people have always faced external assaults on the truth that God has revealed to them.

The Bible is full of warnings and examples of false teachers. It's full of commands for Christians to be discerning. One of those scriptures is Ephesians 4.14, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Christians are commanded in 1 Thessalonians 5, 21 through 22, to test everything and hold fast to what is good, abstaining from every form of evil.

Satan's basic strategy, whether you're a believer or not, is to attack the truth that God has revealed. We see his method of doing that in Genesis chapter 3.

[10 : 11] And it's a method that he continues to use today. When he's in the garden and he's tempting Eve, he begins by twisting God's word, subtly implying that she or that we may have misunderstood or we have maybe misinterpreted what God really meant by what he said.

Satan said to Eve, did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? In other words, he's saying, did you hear him correctly?

Are you sure that that's what you heard? Satan is gaslighting Eve. He's sowing seeds of confusion and doubt to manipulate her mind and cause her to question God, something that she hadn't done before.

Satan's method of assaulting truth begins that way by twisting God's word to make us question God's trustworthiness. And then he moves on to the next step in his method, which is to outright deny God's word.

After Eve explains God's instruction to Adam and the deadly consequences of disobeying it, Satan says to her, in denying of God's word, he says to her, you will not surely die.

[11 : 40] So having questioned God's word, having denied God's word, Satan then next in his method moves to seek to replace God's word with something else.

He says to her, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. And this is how clever Satan is.

He begins and he ends that statement with truthful assertions. Yes, Adam and Eve's eyes were opened to a reality they did not experience before disobeying God.

Yes, in disobeying God, they would come to know good and evil, but sandwiched in between of those assertions is the bait.

You will be like God. In other words, if you want to be like God, you must disobey God.

[12:41] You can be your own God. What need would you have for God if you're God? You can make your own rules. You can define and have your own truth.

No wonder the Bible says that Satan is the father of lies. All lies, all errors, all distortions of the truth have satanic roots.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, 1 through 2, Now the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits, teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.

This means that every belief system, any ideology, philosophy, opinion, or religion that is not based or founded upon God's truth as revealed in our Bibles accomplishes Satan's agenda, which is why it is so critical for Christians to test every claim against God's revealed truth which he's placed, which he's given us in our Bibles.

Christians must test the spirits to distinguish truth from error. And our text this morning provides us with three questions to test, to discern whether a message and its messenger is trustworthy.

[14:23] Jesus said to those who believe in him, believed in him in John 8, 31 through 32, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

To know Jesus is to know the truth. To know the truth means being set free from lies and error that bind us.

Do you want to know the truth? God wants you to know the truth. He doesn't want you to be duped by lies that rob you of the abundant life that only he can provide.

And so, we must test what we hear against God's word and an effective way to do that is by employing these three questions as we test which come from our text today.

Question number one. Whom are you listening to? Who are you listening to? Look again at verse one. John says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

[15:46] For many false prophets have gone out into the world. In the Greek, the imperative form of the verb believe with the negative participle not can be literally translated this way.

Stop believing. Which suggests that John is forbidding an action already underway in the churches that he's writing to.

We know that false teachers had infiltrated the churches John was writing to that they were saying things about Jesus and the Christian life that weren't true.

And some of these Christians had been listening to these false teachers under the assumption that they were the genuine article. They were gullible.

They were being taken advantage of. They were falsely assuming that these teachers were safe to listen to because they claimed to know and follow Jesus.

[16:49] There was just enough truth sprinkled in with what they said. They used just the right sort of Christian jargon to make it sound like they were trustworthy sources.

sources. But these Christians had forgotten Jesus' warning about the importance of being discerning.

In Matthew 7, 15 through 16, Jesus said, Beware of false teachers who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Jesus is warning us here of a reality that we must continually be on guard against.

False teachers excel in deception. They will look and they will sound like the real deal but ultimately the fruit they produce will reveal whether or not they are the genuine article.

[18:01] So we have to test everyone. Their messages, their ministries, their lives and we must test them against scripture.

Does their teaching, does their ministry, does their life align with the truth revealed by God to us in the Bible? Does their teaching, does their ministry, does their life exalt Jesus supremely or does it exalt other people or themselves?

What kind of followers is their message in their ministry producing? Christ-centered people or self-centered people? Don't underestimate how deceptive false teachers can be.

You know, I miss the Lifeway bookstores that we used to have, like the physical actual store that you could go into because I'd rather buy something in person than over the internet.

That's the way I'm wired. I don't know about you. Some of you don't, but I like instant transactions. If I'm handing you my money, you better have something to hand me back.

[19 : 17] It's like the fast food restaurants as well. I hate that, right? I don't like the two-window approach. If I'm giving you the money, give it to me now because otherwise you might mess something up.

But Lifeway, their shelves contained some of the worst books a Christian could read. And those books were often placed front and center in those stores or on the aisle caps where they couldn't be missed.

And it would grieve me to go in there and see some of those books that were promoting a different gospel, the health and wealth gospel, the social justice gospel, the moralistic therapeutic gospel. But apparently these were the books that people were buying or wanted, but they were books that tragically pointed them to their sinful selves instead of their sinless savior for the solution to sin. Books that promise a crown without a cross, books that twist and distort God's word with Satan's lies that you can be like God, that you can name it and claim it, you can blab it and grab it.

[20 : 41] You know, here's a helpful tip, a helpful tip. Unless it's a biography, if the author of the Christian book you're reading or thinking about buying, if that author's face is on the front cover of that book, it's probably garbage and you probably shouldn't read it.

That's not always the case, but it quite often is. But again, who are you listening to? In the car, on the radio, at home, on your TV, what sermons or podcasts do you have downloaded on your phone or your tablet?

John says, God's word says, that you are to test them, and that includes me. People have commented to me about how much scripture I use when I preach, and there's two main reasons why that is.

First, obviously God's word is better than anything I have to say or better than anything that anybody else would have to say. But secondly, I want you to know that whatever I'm saying, I'm saying it from the Bible.

It's coming from scripture, not coming from me. And this pulpit communicates something important to me as well. It's not a piece of furniture.

[22 : 06] It's an altar, upon which God's word rests open in front of me and open in front of you. And I stand behind it, not in front of it.

My sermon notes are lined up underneath it. My message is an offering to God. Without this book and without the truth that it contains, the person and the sermon are of no consequence.

I want you to see God's word. I want you to hear God's word. I'm thankful that you trust me to preach God's word to you, but I am a man.

I am a sinner. I am fallible. You must continually test me and everyone else who would teach God's word to you. You must test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

God's word to test. The term translated test was used to describe how metals were tested to determine their purity and value, kind of like the test with iron pyrite.

[23 : 15] John's use of the present tense indicates that believers are to always be testing, always be evaluating what they hear to determine whether or not it's from God.

And again, the key, the source material we are to test things by is the Bible. In Acts chapter 17, Paul and Silas traveled to Berea.

There they entered a Jewish synagogue and they preached the gospel to them. Verse 11 records their response. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica.

They received the word with all eagerness. This is what I want you to see, examining the scriptures daily, to see if these things were so. This is what we've heard.

This is the scripture that we have. Does it align? Does it match? Is what they're saying making sense here in what we're reading. In order to test who you are listening to, you must know what to test them by.

[24 : 23] You must test them by the Bible. And the better you know the Bible, the better you will be able to discern truth from error.

Who are you listening to? You must test them. You must examine them. And as you do that, the next question you should ask to discern whether they are a trustworthy source of spiritual truth is this.

What do they say about Jesus? Jesus? Who are you listening to? And what do they say about Jesus? Verse 2 through the beginning of verse 3.

Again, John says, By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. The verb translated confess is a present tense form of the Greek verb homologeo, which means to say the same thing. To say the same thing.

[25 : 31] Every human teacher who agrees with what the Holy Spirit has revealed about Jesus in the Bible is a reliable source, someone whom you can trust.

Here, John focuses on the physical incarnation of Jesus, the Word of God, which seems to be a truth that the false teachers in this case were focused on, were assaulting in these churches.

But remember how John opened up this letter in chapter 1, verses 1 through 3. He opens it up by talking about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. This is his testimony.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest to us and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that you may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

[26 : 42] The Bible says that Jesus proceeded from God the Father as the living word of God, John chapter 1, verses 1-2, that he became flesh in his incarnation, Luke 1-31, John 1-14, that he is one with the Father, John 10-30 and 38 and 14, 7-10, that he is the manifestation of God, he is Emmanuel, God with us, the second person of the Trinity, God's only begotten Son, Isaiah 9-6, John 3-16, he came in the flesh according to the divine plan of God so that he might live sinlessly and die sacrificially as a substitute for the sins of others and in this way, the only way he is able to redeem and save all who believe in him.

Galatians 4-4-5, Hebrews 2-17, 1 Timothy 2-5, 1 John 2, 1-2. As the angel declared to the shepherds on that first Christmas day, Jesus is the Christ, he is Savior, and he is Lord.

A person's understanding and who they proclaim Jesus to be will not only determine the trustworthiness of their message, but the genuineness of their salvation. It is increasingly popular for churches and teachers to bow down to political correctness of our culture to affirm that all roads, all paths somehow lead to heaven.

That it doesn't matter what you believe just as long as you sincerely believe it. That we're all basically worshiping the same God in the end.

That's not what Jesus said. For example, Luke 10, 16, the one, Jesus says, who hears you hears me, the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects him who sent me.

[28 : 50] But even more clear is what he said in John 14, 6, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. John says that every spirit, every person that does not confess Jesus in this way is not from God.

And the rest of verse 3 he adds, this is the spirit, those who do not confess these truths about who Christ really is, this is the spirit of the Antichrist which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Antichrist here means a spirit, an attitude, a teaching that is anti- Christ. It's against Christ.

The same demonic deception behind any teaching that denies twists or changes whom the Holy Spirit has revealed Jesus to be in God's word is the same deception that will produce the final ruler of this world.

[30 : 10] And in a way, all of these false teachers, all of these false prophets are like false versions of John the Baptist. The lies they promote as the truth are preparing the world for the arrival of the man of lawlessness.

And I don't want to be a part of that. And I hope that you don't want to be a part of that either. When you're testing those whom you are listening to, ask yourself, what do they say about Jesus?

Do they say anything about Jesus? What do they say about Jesus? Is Jesus at the center? Is he the focal point of that message?

Does what they say about him align with what you read in the Bible or does it contradict it? Is Jesus the central part of their message or is he somewhere down in the footnotes?

Is he presented as the master whom we are blessed to serve? Is he presented as the great I am? Or are you, are you told to use Jesus to create some kind of heaven on earth for you? [31 : 28] Or are you being told by them to be used by Jesus bearing the cross, entering the narrow way, walking the narrow path, knowing believing, trusting that it is by dying to self that you actually experience life?

It is by trusting in Christ through bearing a cross on earth that you receive a crown of glory in heaven. Are those whom you're listening to, what are they saying about Jesus? Do they use worldly means, worldly external means, to try to make sense of the Bible? Or do they use the Bible to make sense of all of the confusion that we see going on in our world? What do they say about Jesus? And then thirdly, does their ministry align with the Bible? Who are you listening to?

What do they say about Jesus? Does their ministry align with the Bible? Verse 4, John says, 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.

[32 : 46] This is a great promise. This is one that if you haven't already, you should underline and highlight. Those who are truly saved, those in whom the Spirit of God truly dwells, will not ultimately fall into deception.

I like what John MacArthur said about this. He said, in the incarnation, God became a partaker of human nature, and through regeneration, that's salvation, human beings become partakers of the divine nature.

We read in 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 23 through 25 about believers, it says, since you have been born again, you've been saved, you've been redeemed, you've been regenerated, not a perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God.

For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of God remains forever.

And this word is the good news that was preached to you. Those who are truly saved possess the incorruptible seed of eternal life.

[34 : 06] The Holy Spirit. Meaning that no satanic deception can ultimately take them out of God's hand. 1 Corinthians 2, 12 through 16 says, Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ.

Satan and the world system under his influence which he rules will daily assault believers. False teachers that seek to seduce us, faulty worldviews that attempt to confuse us, and our own sinfulness that yearns to enslave us.

[35 : 31] Ultimately, all of these things, for the believer, will fail, because God plays for keeps. He does not let go of what he saved.

But there will be many, there will be many like Judas who outwardly appear to belong to Jesus, and like the rest of the disciples, people like Judas will fool many, but they won't fool Jesus.

They may fool you for a time, but eventually, because they do not have the indwelling of the Spirit, they will not be able to overcome Satan's deceptions, and they will cave to the world, because as John continues to say in verse five, they are from the world, therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.

About the time in my life that I finally surrendered to God's call to ministry, I began helping with the youth group at the church I grew up in.

I went to a conference with our youth pastor, and it was for youth pastors, and it was for volunteers with youth in the church, and there at the conference, they had gifts for us underneath our seats, and each gift was different, and the gift that I got under my seat was a NUMA DVD.

[37 : 06] Now, this was back in the time when getting a DVD was a big deal. This is cutting-edge technology, not so much anymore. I got this DVD, and I'd never heard of NUMA, I'd never heard of Rob Bell before, and my youth pastor said, oh, those are made by Rob Bell, I think you'll like it, and

I took it home, and I watched it, and the title of that video was called Dust, it was about 10, maybe 15 minutes long, and it was captivating.

It was captivating. Rob Bell was talking about how during Jesus' life on earth, a rabbi's disciples would travel with him everywhere, and it was as they traveled with their rabbi that they would converse with their students, and they would learn, and they would grow from the instruction of their rabbi, and so it was an expression during this time for people to tell students of rabbis as they traveled with them, they would say to them, may you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.

The expression conveyed the idea that the blessing that you, may you walk so close with your rabbi and absorb so much of his instruction, soaking up his way of life, that you would be covered in his dust.

And then Rob Bell in that video compared that to our Christian lives, spending time with Jesus, absorbing his word, being covered in his dust.

And I was inspired. I was ready to get dusty for Jesus. I was excited when I learned that that wasn't the only video that Rob Bell had come out with, that there were more.

[39 : 07] And when I became a youth pastor, I got those videos and I played those videos for my students. And you know, some of them said to me that they thought I even looked like Rob Bell, which made me feel good at the time.

But gradually those NUMA videos became less inspirational and increasingly strange. the last NUMA video I watched coincided with a finals week that I had at seminary.

And so I decided to spend that week studying for my finals instead of preparing a message for my students. And I decided that, you know what, I'll just play one of the new NUMA videos that I got from Guess Where I Got It From.

Lifeway. I didn't preview the video before playing it, a lesson that I learned the hard way. I remember Danny was sitting across the room from me, and as the video's playing and as some things are being said that just sounded strange, our eyes just instantly met across the room with these puzzled expressions on her face like, what is wrong with Rob Bell?

None of what he's saying has really anything to do with the Bible. In fact, some of the things he's saying are contradicting the Bible.

[40 : 33] Jesus was hardly mentioned in that video. And it was like for both of us, I think, just the Holy Spirit alarm bells were going off in our minds. What is going on here?

What is wrong? What has happened? Not long after that, Rob Bell wrote a book called Love Wins. I hope you haven't read it.

In that book, he denied God's wrath. He denied hell as a place of eternal punishment as a result of rejecting Jesus.

And he began dipping his toes into universalistic belief that all roads lead to heaven. And it wasn't long after that since he's fully emerged himself in that belief.

life. And as a result of it, what happened in 1 John chapter 4 verse 5 happened. He became really well known and really popular in the world.

[41 : 36] Oprah Winfrey endorsed him. I think she even gave him a show on her network. And I remember watching all of this with devastation.

Rob Bell? His video inspired me. He graduated from Wheaton College.

That university has produced men like Billy Graham, William Lane Craig, John Piper. How could this happen? But John explains it.

He witnessed it with Judas. things. They're from the world. And eventually, those who are from the world will start speaking things from the world, for the world.

And the world will listen to them. And they'll get popular. And they'll get rich. And they'll get famous. Again, Rob Bell's popularity grew immensely. At that point, an endorsement from Oprah was equivalent to a prospector finding pay dirt in the late 1800s.

[42 : 49] Instant riches. And you know, at first, I was really angry with Rob Bell. But now my heart breaks for him.

And people like him. How can you know the Bible, at least what it says? How can you know even the original languages and do what you've done?

How can someone who inspired me at a time where I needed that inspiration turn out to be a false teacher? But no matter how helpful someone might have been for me in the past, or in the present, if their ministry and their message no longer align with the Bible, I have to stop listening to them.

I have to. You have to. You know, as a pastor, as teachers of God's Word, we have a responsibility to not only preach this Word, but call attention to those who are distorting it.

It's not meant to do that. Titus 1, 9-11 says, of an overseer, of a pastor, he must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

[44 : 29] for there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

And in verse 6, 1 John chapter 4, John says, 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. If those whom you are listening to do not pass the test, if their message in their ministry don't align with the Bible, then this is the option that you have.

This is the only one you have. This is what you must do. And this is how we must adjust to this text. Reject the teaching of those who don't pass the test. Reject teaching of those who don't pass the test.

[45 : 50] Don't be lazy in this. If you have a book, if you're listening to someone preach on your phone, on your tablet, on your TV, on the radio, do some research.

Find out what you can about the author. Where did they go to school? Who do they associate with? Read books recommended by those whom you trust.

Ask these questions continually. Listen critically. And if they don't pass the test, then purge your libraries, your life, of these teachings and these teachers.

But I'll add this, do it with grace. Be gracious when you do this. Because sometimes guys will make mistakes.

I know I've made mistakes. And a lot of us were still works in progress and maybe they were misunderstood, maybe not. But you do the research yourself.

[46 : 54] Be gracious, give them the benefit of the doubt until you cannot no longer do that. And look, not every false teacher is so easy to spot like the health and wealth gospel guys.

Some of them, they really know the Bible well, but what they're doing is they're leading you down a path to be a judgmental pharisaical person who thinks that salvation is by grace, not by grace, but by works.

And you must be on your guard against people like that as well. This is the gospel. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this world.

In His incarnation, He added a human nature to His divine nature, fully and truly God, fully and truly man. He lived sinlessly in His life and He died sacrificially on the cross because all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

All of us have sinned and fallen short. And the only way that we could have peace with God, the only way that we can have salvation is by Jesus and who He is and what He accomplished for us.

[48 : 04] On the third day He rose again as proof, as validation that He is who He said that He was. He is the way. He is the truth, He is the life, and there is no other way.

And there is nothing better than to know Jesus and to have His truth and to live your life in service to Him. And so I encourage you, I implore you, be careful in whom you listen to.

Ask these questions and maybe you're here this morning and you realize, you know what? some of the things that I've heard, I'm not so certain anymore. Or maybe you realize I've been listening to something, I thought the gospel was this and according to what I'm hearing in the Bible, it's not.

Come to Jesus. Come to Him. Come to Him and you will be saved. Walk with Him and you will be sanctified. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

And if you have questions, I'll be down here. You can come during the invitation or you can come find me afterward or later this week. You're never going to bother me if you ask me, hey, what have you heard about this person or that person?

[49 : 16] Is that somebody I can trust or not? And I'd love to have that conversation with you. Right now, let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the truth that you have not hidden from us.

You've revealed it to us, Lord. The cosmos, the world, creation, shouts and declares that you are God, you exist.

Lord, and you revealed yourself to us in your Son who came and who died and who rose again that by faith in him we have eternal life.

Our sins are forgiven. We have the truth that has set us free. God, we know that the word that you've given us reminds us over and over again about the reality of false teachers.

And Lord, they're good at what they do. They've deceived many. God, I pray for every person in this room and for your people that we would not be so easily deceived.

[50 : 24] That, Lord, we would know your word so well that we would be able to become experts in discerning truth from error. And that, Lord, when we see error, when that error we've discerned it as being not the truth, Lord, may we be bold but may we be gracious as we confront those who are teaching lies and as we speak with those who have bought into those lies.

That, Lord, you would use us to point them to the truth. of who Jesus really is, what Jesus has truly done, in the hopes that they will know him, the way, the truth, and the life.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.