



Testing and Overcoming Deceivers

1 John 4:1-6

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1—KJV).

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 (1 John 4:1—NASB).

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 (1 John 4:1—NRSV).

John teaches the followers of Jesus Christ how to test and unmask deceivers. Then, John reassures believers that they have already overcome these deceivers. Finally, John tells believers how they overcame and how they can always overcome deceivers. First, believers can test deceivers from the world. Worldly deceivers will say what is from the world and the worldly trust them. John also tells how to test for lying spirits that influence or indwell false prophets and how to recognize the spirit of the antichrist. John writes that antichrists have once been in the church, but because they have never really been part of the church, they left the church. Along with lying spirits and false prophets, antichrists try to deceive the followers of Jesus. To test the spirits, believers must remember that antichrists and false prophets are not from God. They will not confess that the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world with a real human body, mind, and soul. Second, John reassures believers that they are from God; therefore, God indwells them, and they dwell within God. The followers of Jesus Christ have conquered those who would deceive them because believers are the temple of God and God is greater than anything in the world. Third, to keep overcoming deceivers, believers must keep listening to Jesus Christ and the apostles. John tells his readers that they can distinguish the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of error by studying the Truth and obeying the Truth. Today, believers keep listening to God when they read and study the Bible.

Thinking Further

1. Why did John say he wanted the followers of Jesus to test the spirits?
2. How can you tell the difference between a false spirit and the Spirit of God?
3. Who is the one who is in the believer and how can this encourage a believer in Jesus?
4. Who do those of the world listen to and why do they do so?
5. How do we know the difference between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error?