

Study Guide: 1 John Lesson 72-Discernment

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

This study guide examines the biblical mandate for discernment as outlined in 1 John 4:1-6. It explores the criteria for distinguishing the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of error, the necessity of testing spiritual claims against the Word of God, and the central importance of a correct understanding of Jesus Christ.

Quiz: Understanding Discernment

1. What is the primary standard or "accuracy test" that a believer must use to determine if a spirit or teaching is from God?
 2. Explain the meaning of the Greek word *dokima'zō*^[^1] when it was used as a metaphor for leadership.
 3. Why does the source suggest that Satan's strategy in some societies is to be confused with the Christian church rather than openly opposing it?
 4. How does Jesus Christ describe the appearance and true nature of false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount?
 5. According to the document, what are the three specific tests John provides to help believers identify the Spirit of God?
 6. Why is the "doctrine of Christ" (Christology) considered the most important first test for any teacher?
 7. In the context of the incarnation, what is the critical difference between saying Jesus Christ came "in the flesh" versus "into the flesh"?
 8. What do the names "Jesus" and "Christ" specifically mean according to the Hebrew and Greek origins mentioned in the text?
 9. Based on 1 John 2:23, what is the spiritual consequence for someone who denies the Son of God?
 10. How does the document describe the role of Jesus Christ as the "propitiation" for our sins?
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Answer Key

1. The primary standard for testing all things is the Bible. To hear the Spirit of God speak, a believer must open the Word of God and put every teaching through the "fire" of the Scriptures to see if it is true.
 2. In a metaphoric sense, this word referred to the process of testing people before they were assigned to important tasks or positions of leadership. It implies a thorough examination to ensure a person is fit for a responsible role.
 3. Satan often wants to be "pro-Christ" in a deceptive way so that he can infiltrate the church and spread lies from the inside. By appearing as part of the church rather than an outside enemy, he can use media and false teachings to confuse believers and distort the truth.
 4. Jesus Christ warns that false prophets come in "sheep's clothing," which refers to the wool garments traditionally worn by prophets. However, while they look like messengers of God on the outside, inwardly they are "ravenous wolves" who intend to deceive and destroy.
 5. The three tests are the confession of the divine Lord (right belief in Jesus Christ), the possession of the divine life (showing the fruit of righteousness), and the profession of the divine law (submitting to God's Word and revelation).
 6. Christology is the foundational test because demons will inevitably deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. If a teacher does not believe that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, their entire message is not from the Holy Spirit.
 7. Saying He came "in the flesh" means He was born as the God-Man, indwelling the womb of Mary from the beginning of His human life. The false "Cerinthian heresy" taught He only went "into" an existing man temporarily, which denies the true mystery of the incarnation.
 8. The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of Joshua and means "Jehovah saves." The title "Christ" means the "Anointed One," identifying Him as the promised King and Messiah.
 9. If a person denies the Son, they do not have the Father either. Because the Father and the Son share the same divine essence, it is impossible to truly honor or worship God while rejecting Jesus Christ.
 10. As the propitiation, Jesus Christ provided the satisfactory sacrifice that met the requirements of God's righteous judgment. He acted as the perfect substitute, dying as a man for men to satisfy the debt of sin.
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Essay Questions

1. **The Role of the Bible in Discernment:** Describe why the written Word of God is the only reliable standard for testing spiritual experiences. Why is it dangerous to rely on "chaotic" or "ecstatic" spiritual gifts without the "accuracy test" of Scripture?
2. **The Strategy of False Prophets:** Analyze the "subtle, clever, and deceptive" nature of false teachers as described in the text. Why is it significant that they appear in "sheep's clothing," and what does this suggest about the church's need for constant vigilance?
3. **The Importance of the Incarnation:** Explain why the confession that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" is the essential litmus test for truth. How does this doctrine protect the church from "doctrines of demons" and "aberrant" views of God?
4. **The Connection Between the Father and the Son:** Discuss the Trinitarian nature of discernment. Why is it impossible to have a relationship with God the Father while holding an incorrect view of Jesus Christ, and how does this impact our view of other religions?
5. **The Call to Spiritual Warfare:** The source describes believers who know the truth as "soldiers on the front line." What are the responsibilities of a discerning church in a society filled with "clamoring voices," and why is "the will to discern" often lacking in modern times?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Advocate:** A term for Jesus Christ meaning our sinless High Priest who intercedes for us before the Father.
- **Antichrist:** Anyone who denies the Father and the Son or denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.
- **Cerinthian Heresy:** The false belief that the "Christ spirit" temporarily entered a human man named Jesus rather than being born as the God-Man.
- **Christology:** The branch of theology focused on the person, nature, and role of Jesus Christ.
- **Discernment:** The ability to distinguish between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error by testing all things against Scripture.
- **Elect:** Those chosen by God who, according to Mark 13:22, false prophets will attempt to deceive.
- **Incarnation:** The act of the eternal Son of God taking on human flesh to become the God-Man.

- **Propitiation:** The satisfaction of God's righteous judgment through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- **Regeneration:** The evidence of divine life or "new birth" manifested in a believer's fruit of righteousness.
- **Trinity:** The doctrine that God exists as three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) who share the same divine essence.
- **Word of Life:** A title for Jesus Christ expressing His deity as the eternal One who was with the Father and was manifested to humanity.

Greek Vocabulary and Pronunciation

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
<i>dokima'zō</i> [^1]	doe-kee-MAD-zo	To test, examine, or prove; used for testing the spirits or vetting leaders.
<i>homologeō</i> [^2]	ho-mo-log-EH-oh	To say the same thing; to agree with or confess the truth of God's Word.

[^1]: This word relates to the "accuracy test" believers must use to measure teachings against the Bible. [^2]: This word describes the act of "confessing" that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, essentially saying the same thing about Him that God says in His Word.