

**Remnant Life Church**  
August 20, 2023  
**The Holy Spirit**  
Pt 10  
**The Gift of Discernment - 1**  
I John 4:1-4

Don't believe everything you hear!

- Those are words of advice I am sure all of us have heard at one time or another
- Today it has been necessary to expand that warning to include not only what you hear but what you see, read, or even experience.
  - (My experience of virtual reality at Jeff's house)
- The word for all of those aspects of disbelief is deception
  - And our world is filled with it
  - Some is designed to entertain such as CGI (computer generated imagery)
    - In the first Star Wars movie released in 1977, English actor Peter Cushing played the role of an evil general
    - When one of the many prequel movies of the franchise were later released, Cushing's character was needed again
    - And he was there through the use of CGI
    - This particular movie was released in 2016, 7 years after Cushing's death – but he looked much the same way he had nearly 40 years earlier in the first movie
  - But some deception is designed to control, manipulate, coerce, and sway
- The troubling question is, as deception is able to appear more and more like reality how can you tell the difference?

- Our world is filled with lies and deceptions and, like every other tactic of satan, it has been happening since the beginning

Adam and Eve were tempted by lies and deception

- **Gen 3:4-5** - *“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*
  - Of course, satan was attempting to deceive Eve
  - What he said was a lie
  - God did say they would die
- **Gen 2:15-17** - *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

The lies and those deceiving have continued down through the ages

- In biblical times false teachers and leaders of revolutions were plentiful
  - In **Acts 5** we read about Peter and the disciples preaching and healing the sick
  - The Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body, became jealous of their growing popularity and had them arrested
  - They brought them before the group to decide how to handle them but listen to the history lesson given by one of them

- **Acts 5:34-37** - *But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.*
  - He mentions 2 false teachers, Theudas and Judas the Galilean, who were false teachers but managed to lead many astray

Are false teachers still present today?

- For 23 years, an American preacher by the name of Jim Jones led the People’s Temple cult
  - At its height over 3000 people were following his teachings not based on the Bible, but on the writings of Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Karl Marx
  - The mass suicide he ordered and carried out in 1978 claimed the lives of 909 people with over 250 of those children
- In 1993 over 80 people died in Waco, Texas after the compound they had barricaded themselves in caught fire during an altercation with federal authorities
  - Their leader was a 33-year-old self-proclaimed messiah who had named himself David Koresh
  - He had changed his birth name as he believed himself to be a direct descendent of King David

- Koresh is a biblical name for Cyrus the Great a Persian king whose account is given in 2 Chronicles and Ezra
- Cyrus had freed the Jewish people from the Babylonians and allowed them to return home
- David Koresh likened himself and his calling to that of Cyrus the Great
- Then there was the group of people who were convinced that they were going to catch a ride on a space craft coming to earth behind the Hale-Bopp comet in 1997
  - This was the Heaven's Gate cult
  - Their founder and leader Marshall Applewhite convinced 39 people to commit suicide so that their souls could ascend and join with this ET spaceship and take them to heaven
  - Charles Manson, Sun Yung Moon, L. Ron Hubbard are among others who have convinced people to follow their self-serving, delusional teaching
- And it goes on today
  - There are many well-known very popular men and women who are preaching a gospel that is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ
  - But it sure sounds good, it is attractive, and it is appealing to the eye
  - Just like the fruit presented to Eve in the Garden
  - **Gen 3:6a** – *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye...*
    - IOW – it satisfied and appealed to the flesh not the spirit
    - False teachings and doctrines are always geared to satisfying the flesh

So how can you tell the difference?

- It is through one of the spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit - discernment
  - Defined as the quality of being able to accurately grasp or comprehend something – most often things not obvious
  - There is natural discernment (intuition; sixth-sense; insight; a feeling, etc...)
  - But for the Christian what is much more important is spiritual discernment
    - This is what every spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit is sustained and strengthened by
    - Without it the enemy can feed you any twisted and perverted element of a gift that will cause harm and not good for the Kingdom

**READ – I John 4:1-6**

- John makes a very simple plea to the people in the very first verse
  - *Do not believe every spirit* – (I John 4:1a)
  - John is challenging the first century reader, as well as each of us today, not to be gullible
    - How many ads have you seen on TV or online that just seem too good to be true?
    - The saying goes, if it appears too good to be true, then it is.
    - (My experience) Eagle's super bowl (2018) polo shirt – never arrived – out \$40+
  - This same warning is just as valid today if not more so

- We are being bombarded with more doctrine and philosophical thinking than ever
  - Much of it is anti-biblical and downright harmful
  - (Group at the park yesterday)
- Society and culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have created and adopted their own set of rules.
  - Christians are now openly being challenged by many against a literal interpretation of Scripture.
  - Many argue the Bible doesn't hold the same weight today as when it was written.
  - They claim it was written for others in a different time, but no longer applies to the world today.
  - False prophets appear sincere and often very believable – which is what makes them so dangerously effective - but we must examine every aspect of what they are saying against what the Scripture says.
    - John instructs the reader to do this when he says, *...but test the spirits to see whether that are from God. (I John 4:1b)*
    - We will look at that in more detail next week
- The Bible is the only unshakable foundation on which we can or should stand
  - You may find yourself standing alone but that foundation will never be moved

- Unlike what we are being force fed by the world where what is considered truth one day is replaced with something else completely the next
  
- John goes on to say, “...*because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” (I John 4:1c)
  - John is writing only 40 or so years since Jesus’ ministry on earth
  - Since God first created humanity, satan has been working to defile and deceive us
  - The counterfeit gospels that were being preached back then, as well as today, are his attempt to bring confusion and lead us away from our loving Creator
    - The difference between then and now is the packaging
    - Today it is slick, appeals to the flesh, but is still of no lasting, eternal substance
    - Discernment is what alerts you to the falseness of its intent and nature
  
- What is the first way you can begin to separate the truth from the lies?
  - First, according to John, by what or who the focus of their teaching is (I John 4:2)
  - Do they acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, lived among us, and is the risen Lord?
    - If they preach anything other than that, they are false teachers

- Many times, the false doctrine is contained in the most beautiful thing the flesh responds to – prosperity and wealth
- God does not “want” you to be rich
  - The Scripture shows us time and time again that Jesus warned against the pursuit and love of wealth
  - Not aimed at your bank account but your heart
  - The love of money is the root of evil in man
- God wants you to obey His Word, love Him with all heart, mind, strength and soul and to love one another

How do we utilize discernment in our lives?

- There are three spirit natures that speak into our lives
  - The first is the spirit of humanity
    - This is what we think or believe
      - Our five senses are what give us this information
      - But as we have already said, what is real and what is false is not easy to distinguish
    - The spirit of our humanity can as easily be wrong just as many times as right
    - Consider these very learned people who were very sincere and convinced of their knowledge, experience, and understanding
      - In 1876, the President of Western Union, William Orton, dismissed and loudly

proclaimed the newly invented telephone as a “toy” that would never catch on.

- In 1903, the president of Michigan Savings Bank warned Henry Ford’s lawyer to protect Henry’s money. Because, he said with great conviction, “The horse is here to stay but the automobile is only a novelty—a fad.”
- On January 1, 1962 an obscure British rock group played 5 songs for the executives at Decca Records in attempt to secure a record deal.
  - They were turned down with the following assessment of their music sent to their young manager
  - "Guitar groups are on the way out," they said and, "this band has no future in show business".
  - The name of the group? – The Beatles
- And how about all of the computer geniuses around the world echoing the exact same danger warning that precisely at midnight on January 1, 2000, every computer would fail, unable to handle the date change from the 20th to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, would bring the world’s economy to a grinding halt and, among other things, send planes plummeting to earth.
- And what happened midnight plus one second? Nothing – every one of these “wise” people were completely wrong

- And so, most often, is the human spirit

Next Sunday we will examine the two other natures where discernment is most important – the demonic and the angelic

- In other words – the truth verses the lies
- How do you know when what your heart is hearing is of God or of the enemy?