



Greater Than 1 John 4 Small Group Plan

In his book, **A Sense of Where You Are**, John McPhee tells the following story. It illustrates how being very familiar with what is right makes what is wrong very clear. It is what helps you to know “where you are.”

The floor of the Princeton gym was being resurfaced, so basketball standout (and later U.S. Senator) Bill Bradley put in several practice sessions at the Lawrenceville School. He began by shooting 14-foot jump shots from the right side. Six in a row hit the back rim of the basket and bounced out.

He stopped and seemed to be making an adjustment in his mind. The next four shots went in without a miss. He paused and said, “You want to know something? That basket is about an inch and a half low.”

Later, John McPhee went back to Lawrenceville to measure the height of the basket. It was nine feet, ten and seven-eighths inches above the floor, or one and one-eighth inches too low.

The lesson? Experience with the right height, made the wrong height very clear.

In chapter 4 of his letter, John asks his readers to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” An accurate test requires a baseline, a standard — in this case, God Himself.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- In school, was there ever a “big” test that made you nervous? Describe it.
- Why do we have tests in school?
- Why is it important to pass a driving test or a safety inspection test?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— THE FOCUS —

1 John 4:1-3

¹ Dear friends, 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. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

- Why would someone “believe” (v. 1) before knowing the “test” (v. 1) results?
- Why are there so “many” (v. 1) wrong directions?
- Are you a “testing” kind of person or not? Explain.
- The word “spirit” in verses 2-3 is spelled with a small “s” — what would be a good synonym for this kind of “spirit?” Explain.
- What is a “litmus test” and how is Jesus the litmus test of faith?

— THE FOLLOWERS —

1 John 4:4-5

⁴ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.

- What is the difference between acknowledging Jesus with your lips and acknowledging Jesus with your life?
- What does the word “antichrist” mean to most people today?
- If we could strip away all the religious baggage from the term and look at what it literally means, what would it stand for in today’s world?
- What is the “viewpoint of the world” (v. 5)?
- How is God’s viewpoint “greater” (v. 4)?

— THE ORIGIN —

1 John 4:5-6

⁵ *They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.* ⁶ *We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.*

- Describe the difference between Subjective and Objective.
Which one is most helpful when you have to conduct a religious test?
- What lives inside the Christian that enables us to “recognize” (v. 6) and distinguish the difference between “*the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood*” ?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- When have you been religiously misled?
- Why were you vulnerable? What did you hear in the message that was appealing?
- What one principle can you put in place that will help you “test the spirits?”
- Close by asking God for wisdom and discernment.