

Read: 1 John 4:1-6

Are you my mother?

1 John 4:1-6 (selected verses)

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. 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, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, is not from God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brooklyn and Bailey McKnight are identical twins. They are also YouTubers and social media personalities who go by the names “Mary & Martha.” The twin known as Martha has five young daughters ages 2–8. One time, Mary and Martha dressed the same—from their curly hair to their dangly earrings, belted dress, and black boots—they looked exactly alike! Then, starting with the youngest to the oldest, Martha’s husband separately brought each of the daughters into the room where the twins were and asked, “Which one is your mommy?” and “Which one is Auntie Mary?”

After closely examining the two ladies standing in front of them, each daughter would give her guess. The two and three-year-old daughters both guessed incorrectly—while the three older girls quickly surveyed the twins and then confidently and correctly picked their mom. When asked how they knew it was her, each gave a different answer. One said, “Auntie Mary has a beauty spot on her neck, and Mom doesn’t.” another said, “Mom is a little higher (*taller*) than Aunt Mary.” And the oldest daughter said, “Easy, Auntie Mary’s fingernails are manicured, and Moms are not.”

The older daughters had the benefit of spending more years with and studying their mom more closely. They picked up on the little differences their younger siblings had not yet learned.

In our reading for tonight, John counsels us to do a similar thing. “Test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1). From outward appearances—false prophets in this world can look like the real deal. They smile and have a nice voice that says nice words, but they are “from the world and speak the viewpoint of the world.” We, on the other hand, are children of God. We want to be like those older daughters who were not fooled into believing their aunt was their mom. We want to study the Scriptures because when we do, we know more about Jesus and how to stay close to him.

Keep testing the spirits like someone who tests ice on a frozen lake! And take heart, because the “One who is in you, is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4: 4).

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Do you know any identical twins? What are some ways that you can tell them apart?
- Does your mom or grandma ever let you 'taste-test' what they are baking? Why do they do that?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Arrange the following things from least to most important:
 - Testing the buckle on an amusement ride,
 - Testing the ice on a frozen pond,
 - Testing the spirits to see whether they are from God.
- Why is it the most important to test the spirits?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Verse 5 says, "[False prophets & spirit] are from the world and therefore speak from the view-point of the world and the world listens to them." Name two or three view-points that the world has today that are different from our viewpoint.
- "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world!" (verse 4) Describe a situation and explain why this verse could be of great comfort to a Christian.

Closing Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for making us your children. Thank you for giving us your Word to teach us about you! Please help us to gladly hear and learn the Scriptures to tell the difference between false voices and your loving voice. Amen.