

Small Group Guide

"Truth Matters" | 1 John 4:1-6

Before You Meet

Encourage group members to read 1 John 4:1-6 and reflect on the sermon before gathering. Invite them to bring a Bible and come ready to discuss honestly.

Opening Question

Think about a time when you discovered something you believed was actually false. What helped you recognize the truth? How did that experience shape the way you evaluate what you hear today?

Key Takeaways

These core ideas from the sermon serve as the foundation for your discussion:

- **Truth and love are inseparable.** The sermon emphasized that truth does not stand alone. Jesus taught that everything in the law hangs on loving God and loving others. We cannot pursue truth while neglecting love, and we cannot claim to love while abandoning truth.
- **Knowing about God is not the same as knowing God.** The Pharisees knew the words of Scripture thoroughly but missed the heart behind them. The goal of the Christian life is not simply to accumulate biblical knowledge but to develop a genuine, transforming relationship with the God behind the words.
- **We are responsible for testing what we hear.** John's instruction to test the spirits places an active responsibility on every believer. Sitting under good teaching is not enough. Each person must personally examine what they are taught against Scripture.
- **The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth living in you.** Believers are not left to navigate false teaching alone. The Holy Spirit teaches, convicts, and guides those who learn to surrender to him and listen.
- **Maturity is the goal.** The sermon drew from Ephesians 4 to remind us that God expects his people to grow up. Remaining spiritually immature leaves us vulnerable to false teaching and prevents us from contributing to the health of the church.

Discussion Questions

Work through these questions together, allowing time for honest reflection and conversation. You do not need to cover every question. Let the Spirit lead your discussion.

Understanding the Text

1. Read 1 John 4:1-6 together as a group. What stands out to you most from this passage? What questions does it raise?
2. The sermon explained that the key test John gives is whether a spirit acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Why do you think this particular confession is so central? What is at stake if someone gets this wrong?
3. John says in verse 4 that the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. What does it look like practically to live with confidence in that truth rather than fear of false teaching?

Connecting to the Sermon

4. The sermon compared the Pharisees to people today who go through the motions of faith without understanding the heart behind it. In what ways can church attendance, Bible reading, or Christian habits become hollow actions disconnected from genuine love for God?
5. Lee said, "You have to understand the why behind those actions. You need to know the who behind those reasons." What does it look like to pursue the who rather than just the what in your own spiritual life?
6. The sermon pointed out that the Pharisees added to God's law things that were never meant to be there, making it heavy for people. Can you think of ways churches or Christian communities today might do something similar? How do we guard against that?
7. Lee described the difference between knowing the words of Scripture and truly knowing God. Where do you find yourself on that spectrum right now? What would help you move closer to genuinely knowing God rather than just knowing about him?

Personal Reflection

8. The sermon placed the responsibility of testing teaching squarely on each individual believer. How consistently are you personally examining what you hear against Scripture? What gets in the way of doing this well?
9. Lee mentioned that Satan whispers lies telling us we are not good enough, and that this can cause people to give up. Have you experienced this? How does the truth of the gospel speak directly against that lie?

10. The closing challenge was direct: getting your relationship with God right is something no one else can do for you. What is one honest step you need to take to deepen your relationship with God rather than simply going through spiritual motions?

Practical Applications

Choose one or two of these to commit to individually or as a group before you meet again:

- **Read the Gospels with fresh eyes.** Pick one Gospel this week and read it not just for information but to observe how Jesus lived, loved, and taught. Ask God to help you understand not just what Jesus did but why.
- **Practice testing what you hear.** When you listen to a sermon, podcast, or teaching this week, take a few minutes afterward to look up the scriptures referenced. Ask yourself whether the teaching aligns with what the passage actually says.
- **Pray for understanding, not just knowledge.** Before you open your Bible this week, ask the Holy Spirit specifically to teach you and to help you understand what you read. Keep a simple journal of what you sense God saying to you.
- **Memorize a key verse.** Consider committing John 14:6 or 1 John 4:4 to memory this week. Reflect on what it means for your daily life.
- **Have an honest conversation.** If someone in your group is struggling with doubt, spiritual stagnation, or a false teaching they have encountered, create space this week to walk alongside them. Truth and love together mean we do not leave people to struggle alone.

Closing Reflection

The sermon reminded us that Jesus said the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, as described in John 4:23-24. These two things belong together. As you close your time together, take a moment to ask:

- Am I pursuing truth without love, or love without truth?
- What does worshiping God fully in both spirit and truth look like for me this week?

Close your time in prayer, asking God to help each person in the group move from simply knowing about him to truly knowing him, and to grow in both truth and love as his disciples.