

Teen Devotion

Year B – Easter 4

Resurrection Reality



One truth shared: Jesus wants us to use his Word to test the teachings we hear.

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. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

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. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 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.

1 John 4:1-6

Dear Teen, Test Carefully

How many science tests do you think you have done in all your school years? You probably started out with some simple tests learning about chemical reactions, gravity, or energy. Perhaps your teacher made “elephant toothpaste” erupt out of a beaker. Maybe you dropped wrapped-up eggs off the roof or designed popsicle stick bridges. As you got older you likely learned to test liquids with litmus paper to see if they were acids, neutrals, or bases. Maybe by now you’ve done some more complex tests in biology, chemistry, or physics classes.

Some students love doing these tests, others find them a bore or dread them. No matter what you feel about the scientific method and tests, you are learning important life skills. It is essential to be able to think about things with a critical and analytical mind, carefully using logic and deduction to make wise and appropriate decisions. It’s also pretty cool to be able to know how God’s awesome creation works! The ability to test something is an important life skill.

However, “testing” is an even more critical *spiritual-life* skill. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, blesses his Church by giving pastors and teachers who serve as under-shepherds that preach and teach to Jesus’ flock and sheep. But there are a LOT of pastors and teachers out there in a LOT of different churches! In addition, there are endless videos, blogs, and articles online to sort through. How are you supposed to know which one to listen to? This is where your testing skills come in!

The apostle John warns us with this advice: “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.” John’s encouragement is to become very good at testing. Because there are many false teachers in the world, we should test what they teach. So how do we do that? With God’s Word! The Bible is the litmus paper we must use to test whether someone’s teachings are accurate or true.

This is a big challenge! Don’t get pulled into believing everything you see or hear online, or from the next church down the street that has something fancy or looks cool. Just like in school, do your homework! Listen to what they are saying. Look for statements of faith on websites. Find out what people really believe, and then compare that with the Bible. Be a student of the Word who uses it to carefully test what is right and wrong. So, stay connected to Jesus, study up in the Word, and put all your testing experience and careful thinking to good use!

Prayer: Good Shepherd, thank you for giving so many shepherds to serve as preachers and teachers of your truth. But there are also many false teachers who are wolves in shepherd’s clothing. Help me to grow in faith and knowledge so I can carefully test all teachings and remain faithful to the truth of your Word. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

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Dear Teen, Test Carefully

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

What is it about social media that makes it so easy to believe what you see and hear online?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- Work together as a group to identify and list as many different church denominations as you can think of (Example: Lutheran, Baptist, etc.).
- Discuss how teens might be able to figure out what various churches or people online actually believe and teach.

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- John's encouragement is to test the teachings that we hear. Discuss how you would actually do that and what it might look like.
- Use these verses from John to identify what the most dangerous false teachings are about.
- There are some false teachers and religions that *seem* to be Christian and have thousands or even millions of followers. What is it about false teachings that make them so appealing to people?
- Evaluate the danger in this statement: "I think I want to try out a new church. I need a church with a more engaging speaker and better music."
- Agree/Disagree: It's not a big deal if a church has a few things wrong, as long as it has the main stuff right about the Trinity and Jesus as our Savior.

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

Have a healthy discussion about Catechism classes. Why is Catechism helpful for accomplishing what John describes in these verses? What was good and positive about Catechism classes? What could be an area for improvement?