



## *Confident Christianity is prepared to confront the devil's lies with God's truth.*

### **Main verses:**

**16b** God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. **17** And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

**18** Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. **19** We love each other because he loved us first.

### **Main Point:**

While we may know intellectually that God is good and loving, and His word true and trustworthy, it is still possible to be duped or tricked into believing the false messages of the world, which twist and distort what God's Word teaches. Confident Christianity means being prepared to confront the devil's lies, with God's truth.

### Intro |

Have you ever been tricked or taken for a ride only to discover later you've been completely duped? I have.

It was many years ago, and in an effort to meet a nice, Christian man, began conversing with a man via email and text. He told me he was an engineer, on assignment in Dubai.

His photos looked good. His description sounded genuine.

His texts and emails seemed fair dinkum.

I began to think I had found someone who may be the 'real deal'.

After about three weeks, he apologetically asked me whether I would be prepared to lend him some money, as the bank was holding onto his funds.

He asked so politely, and so apologetically ... But it was enough for me to realise, the person with whom I was communicating, wasn't the person in the photo I was looking at. I'd been taken for a ride by an internet dating scammer.

And boy, did I feel stupid.

When you've been tricked, you often feel so embarrassed, you don't want to tell anyone about it.

But the truth is, we live in a world teeming with fraudsters, scammers, fakes and phonies. And there is no shortage of stories told by those who have been duped.

It is only when we DO share our experiences, that we can alert others to recognise the danger signs.

Although, I suffered only a minor scratch to my heart, other women have had their entire savings cleared out, some even their very lives stolen.

Yes, deceivers and tricksters do their dirty work in every sphere of life, some venture into the realm of faith and religion.

The other week, I listened as a lady shared her experience of getting involved with a group who seemed genuine in their desire to learn more about Jesus.

She explained,

*"I became a Christian around age ten and continued to study the Bible and attend various churches while growing in my knowledge and understanding of God's holiness and grace.*

*When I was about thirty, I joined a Bible study at the home of a trusted friend and fellow believer. I thought the teachings of the female leader were based on God's Word.*

*The leader claimed that Jesus was God's son, and I assumed that her understanding was line with what other Christians believe. Although we were encouraged to ask questions, we were often accused of resisting the authority God had placed over us. So, I stopped asking questions.*

*The group's leader regarded herself as God's only prophetess for today's remnant of true believers. She claimed that any questioning of her teachings was 'persecution' from those who refused to do God's will.*

*She also claimed that her teachings were confirmed by the many mystical 'signs' we were all experiencing. Eventually, the group began dictating which translation of the Bible we should use, which authors and speakers we should listen to, and which people we could trust.*

*She also taught that those outside of her group, and those who had left the group, would suffer God's wrath. My membership to the group placed enormous strain on my family and friends, and even my marriage was threatened. I became thoroughly convinced that I would suffer God's wrath for eternity if I left this group.*

*After several months I began wondering whether the leader may be misrepresenting the Jesus I had known in years passed. I began to read the Bible for myself. Only then did I recognise that I had become ensnared by a cultic group led by a false prophet.*

*Although I had assumed I would be able to recognise the marks of false teachings, I had to face the reality that I had been deceived.*

I'll pause there and share the rest of what she shared at the end of the message.

Our world today is exactly as Jesus foretold: **"many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."** (Matthew 24:11)

And some of these false prophets made their way into the network of house churches John had established in Ancient Ephesus.

John was so concerned by the havoc false teaching causes he wrote to ensure they held onto their joyful confidence as Christ's disciples.

We started by noticing that the **confident Christian knows the truth about who God is and knows His Son Jesus Christ as both Lord and Saviour.**

Then, we looked at '**Confessional Christianity**'. That is, we saw how children of God can have confidence before God because of Jesus' sacrificial death which cleansed all sin and unrighteousness from our hearts.

Even though we remain vulnerable to sin, and do sin from time to time, we have been set free from sin and are called to live holy and righteousness lives through confessing our faith and trust in Christ's sacrifice.

Last week, Bill shared a heart-felt message about his Kairos prison ministry, showing us what '**Compassionate Christianity**' looks like in action. When a child of God experiences God's love and forgiveness, they are empowered to show that same love and compassion towards others.

Today, as we move into chapter 4, we'll see that the confident Christian is willing to confront the lies of the enemy. I've called this '**Confronting Christianity.**'

Our willingness to confront the devil's lies not only demonstrates the presence of God's Spirit of truth in our hearts, it also demonstrates our love for God and the truth that we belong to Him.

**Point 1 | Confident Christianity means knowing that God loves us and experiencing his love, especially when His love and truth are questioned or challenged.**

Because we have experienced God's love, and have God's Spirit within our hearts, God's love compels us to hold fast to the truth about who God is and who His Son Jesus truly is also.

That means that even though the confident Christian will show compassion, their compassion will not be wishy-washy or passive. Nor will they be flippant or laissez-faire when God's truth is twisted or distorted.

And this is especially the case when it concerns the truth about who Jesus Christ is.

We must be under no delusions that liars and deceivers abound in our world, and even in today's church. That's why John tells us to be spiritually sceptical:

***"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."*** (1 John 1:1)

The early Christians were vividly aware they were living in a war zone – not only being attacked by human soldiers and persecutors with physical weapons, but also being attacked by spiritual beings deployed by God's enemy, the devil, who uses spiritual weapons to bring harm, death and nullify God's truth.

These are called 'deceiving spirits'. It is deceiving spirits which manipulate humans to become false prophets and teachers.

Noting Jesus warning about false teachers, we need to be like the believers from Berea, who *"examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."* (Acts 17:11)

Just like the lady who became captive to a cult, it was not until she tested the teachings of the leader against Scripture that she released the error of what was being taught.

But there is another warning sign we should be aware of.

If a person's teaching about Jesus isn't right, nothing else will be right either.

Look at verses 2-3: ***"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."***

The word "*acknowledge*" is the word "confess." It literally means to "say the same thing" that God says about something.

What is it that the Father has said about His Son? He is Saviour and Lord and God.

John 1:14 states it very clearly: ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."***

To deny that Christ came in the flesh is to deny what is true.

Do you remember when the DaVinci Code book came out? There is a line from the book that shows its origin came from deceptive spirits: "*Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false*" (page 235).

Jesus is the central focus of all God has done, is doing and is going to do.

The name "*Jesus Christ*" covers His humanity and His deity. Jesus is His earthly name and Christ refers to His heavenly name. He is fully God and fully man.

When we compare that with other religions, we see it is the defining difference.

To the Mormons, Jesus is the half-brother of Lucifer and a created being. To the Jehovah Witnesses, Jesus was Michael the Archangel who became a man and that after the resurrection, Jesus was just a spirit, not a real, physical person. To the Muslims, Jesus was a prophet but not God. To the Christian Science adherents, Jesus was a man in tune with the divine consciousness.

The Baha'i faith believes that Jesus is only one of nine great world manifestations and is not the unique path of salvation. Unitarians believe that Jesus was a good man who was mistakenly deified by His followers.

Any religion that denigrates Jesus deity or dishonours His humanity is not from God, and originates from a deceiving spirit. That's why John calls this the 'spirit of the antichrist'.

Listen to these words from 2 Peter 2:1-2:

***"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute."***

Let's pick up the rest of the testimony we began with today.

*"I learned that to determine the meaning of a verse or passage in God's Word, we must consider what style is being used...and who is actually speaking...and to whom...and for what purpose.*

*I was reminded that Satan can use signs and wonders to counterfeit the work of God, and I realized that this leader was trying to take the place of Jesus.*

*I learned that I had taken my eyes off Jesus and focused again on my own attempts to be righteous.*

*I was reminded that when God looks at me In Christ, He saw the righteousness of Jesus alone.*

*I learned that as I focused on Jesus and surrendered to the Spirit's work in my life; He was slowly transforming me into a better reflection of Jesus.*

Let's sum up:

The confident Christian will discern the difference between the lies spoken by the spirit of the world from the truth of God's word.

and

The confident Christian will be prepared to confront the devil's lies with God's truth, and they do this because of their confidence is in God's love and faithfulness towards them.