

Confessing Christians in a Confused Culture

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Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance

Spirit of Jesus Christ; Holy Spirit; Antichrist; Assurance; Eternal Security

1 John 4:1–6

Confusion within Christianity

Part of the frustration with Christian churches (generic term) is that you may find their messages to be quite different. When someone is looking for the true, authentic Christian message, these differences can be confusing.

Then there is the confusion that is caused by Christians in life. They say that they follow Jesus Christ, but then they live a life full of lust, covetousness, selfishness, or behavior that is hurtful and in denial of the Christ they profess.

Confusion within Celebrity Christianity

Of course, television, social media, and other online platforms offer a prolific number of celebrity speakers with messages speaking the name of Jesus. It is not uncommon to hear the words that sound right, but at the same time to have a little skepticism arise in our hearts as we hear.

Confusion at the Collegiate Level

At the collegiate level, there are teachers who are telling students to believe something: “This effect is strongest within Social Justice fields, which teach students to be skeptical of science, reason, and evidence....” (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 215).

For someone who is truly looking for the way to really know God, have forgiveness of sin, and be secure for all of eternity, this can be quite confusing. Even for believers living in this mixed bag of existence, it can be quite confusing. How can this confusion be settled? How can I be certain regarding matters of such monumental consequence?

Confusion regarding Confession

There is a difference between **belief** and **confession**. There is a difference between a teacher who **believes** a truth and one who **confesses** truth. There is a difference between a church that **believes** Jesus and one who **confesses** Jesus. There is a difference between a spirit that **believes** Jesus is come in the flesh and one who **confesses** that Jesus is come in the flesh.

Not everyone who says they are a Christian, is a Christian; and not everyone who claims to be preaching Jesus Christ is teaching truth. Discerning between what is truth and who is teaching the truth is required if we will experience true assurance or certainty.

It is also important to understand that there are no grey areas between those who are true followers and teachers of Christ and those who are NOT. The difficulty is distinguishing and discerning between those who say they are and those who are confessing Christians. This passage will force us to distinguish between those who **declare** that Jesus is the Christ come from God and those who actually **confess** that Jesus is the Christ come from God.

We must distinguish between true gospel confessors and false gospel professors.

(1) Take Heed: Be responsible with these commands ([1 John 4:1](#))

1 John 4:1 KJV 1900

¹ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

In recent days, there have been reports of virus vaccines for COVID-19 being sold which were not FDA approved. There are apparently people who are trying to prey upon the naivety of unsuspecting individuals. While we can understand how severe the consequences of this activity might be, we must understand that there is a greater war with even greater consequences, and it is the war between Jesus Christ and all who are of the spirit of the antichrist.

Anxiousness due to distraction: To be too distracted from this command is to choose to live with anxiousness rather than certainty. This is not the problem of texting and driving. It is the problem of texting and living the confident Christian life.

Anxiousness due to noble neglect: To be neglectful due to a noble cause is also a choice to improperly weigh the consequences. This is not the problem of neglect due to sin but rather the problem of neglect due to blessings.

- › We must be responsible with these commands. John gives two tests for determining true confessors versus false professors.

(2) TEST: Use the “*Incarnate Jesus*” Test

Test #1 for true Christian confession [over mere declaration] - *Jesus is incarnate God* ([1 John 4:2-3](#))

1 John 4:2-3 KJV 1900

² Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Demons seem to have a better Christology than some people. They know and verbally declare that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God: [Mark 1:24](#), [Mark 3:11](#).

Positively stated (v. 2):

Confession (*acknowledgement* or *admission*) of Jesus Christ is a deep-seated conviction coupled with verbal declaration and a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Negatively stated (v. 3):

It is NOT only those who proactively confess Jesus, but also those who do NOT proactively confess Jesus Christ that is part of the test. Of note here,

John is consistently using “of God” and “of the world” to clearly distinguish two families.

To be “of God” points us to the amazing grace of God in providing His Spirit to those who believe on Jesus Christ (I John 3:24). The indwelling Spirit of God also shows us God’s desire to be in relationship with His creation.

To be “of the world” means to be the offspring of Satan; to be in darkness; to be alienated from God; to be unforgiven of sin; and to be under the dominion of lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of status and possessions. It is as John says, “**antichrist**” or “against Christ.”

True Christian teachers confess the historical Jesus of the Bible (and all that this entails: virgin birth, sinless life in material world, physical death, bodily resurrection, etc.). True Christian teachers live like and love like the Jesus of the Bible.

(3) Trust: Believe in the Greater One

Affirmation for the confessing brethren who are testing the spirits ([I John 4:4](#))

1 John 4:4 KJV 1900

⁴ Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

The results of the test will expose some concerning results. The results may even cause some to once again wonder about their own identity. Why? **The teachers are reputable. They look successful.** These teachers were once part of the body and possibly loved ones. Thus, the uncertainty may enter into their hearts.

In 1997, Joshua Harris wrote a book that was quite impactful within conservative Christian circles — *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. In July 2019, USA Today reported the following: “The author of an influential evangelical book

that decried modern dating as a ‘training ground for divorce’ has himself divorced his wife and renounced his Christian faith.”¹

There is an inevitable impact that news like this has upon those who are Christians. Consider though when the circumstances are closer to us than just national headlines. When we are rightly applying the tests for discernment, and we realize that we are living with someone who is not a CONFESSOR but a false PROFESSOR, or when we hear a teacher on that we love who is a PROFESSOR but not a CONFESSOR.

› For those who have a tendency to lack assurance, this is especially for you.

Now that the truth is exposing people who may have a following, are we sure we are okay and are on the right side of things?

(a) **John affirms THEIR IDENTITY**, who they are — *Ye are of God, little children*

(b) **John affirms THEIR VICTORY**, that they are already overcomers — *and have overcome them*

(c) **John affirms THEIR CAUSE OF CERTAINTY**, the ultimate reason to trust who they are and why they are overcomers — *because greater is he that is in you (Holy Spirit), than he that is in the world (spirit of antichrist).*

While in the previous passage, John teaches that *God is greater than our hearts*, here he tells them to trust the one who is greater and who is in them ([1 John 3:24](#)). **This is the source of every confessing Christian.** As he believes and lives in allegiance to Jesus, **his confidence is not in his belief or allegiant living to keep him believing and living but ultimately in God’s indwelling, the real Comforter.** You keep confessing because you possess the chief Confessor - the Holy Ghost ([John 14:16-17](#), [15:26](#), [16:15](#)).

One great reason to receive Jesus is because **He does not leave you to live the Christian life on your own.** Confusion comes from self-confidence, but certainty comes from the ever-present Comforter. To the Christian, **believe** that *greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.*

¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/07/29/joshua-harris-i-kissed-dating-goodbye-i-am-not-christian/1857934001/>. Accessed 04.25.21

(4) Test: Use the “Hearing” Test

Test #2 for true Christian confession over mere declaration ([1 John 4:5-6](#))

1 John 4:5-6 KJV 1900

⁵ They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. ⁶ We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

- › Relationship is known by what we say and to whom we listen ([John 8:47](#), [10:3-5](#), [18:37](#)).

Headlines were once again directed to a shooting. This time in Columbus, Ohio. Listen to the words of the neighbor who had a video: “The video doesn’t lie...” The problem is not the video. The problem is that sinners, you and me, are the ones who watch the video, our perceptions are sinful, and we all have presuppositions when we watch the video. Meaning: people often see what people assumed they would see. What is the result? You can have two people looking at the same evidence and walk away with different opinions.

When we hear John speak of those who are of God and not of God based on hearing, he is exposing the reality of those who have truly been changed by the truth. **They are predisposed to and already have a view of Jesus Christ that allows them to hear his voice.**

It may be better to understand this in light of appetite or tolerance. By the word appetite, I mean what one desires or wants. By the word tolerate, I mean what one patiently regards and endures. What dominates your speech and whom do you seek out for truth? Whom or what do you make time for and are willing to endure? Relationship is evident by discerning if someone has an appetite for God and is willing to patiently tolerate truth. Relationship is not present where someone has an appetite for lust and is not willing to patiently tolerate truth.

How is the confusion within Christianity, confusion because of celebrity Christian teachers, and confusion at the collegiate level cured? There are two tests to determine true confessing Christians in the midst of a confused culture.

The ultimate source of confidence in the midst of confusion is the indwelling Comforter — the Holy Ghost.