



TESTIFY

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN

MARCH 5 - APRIL 5

H

HIGHLIGHT: 1 John 4:1-21 NLT

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

1 Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. **2** This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. **3** But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

4 But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. **5** Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. **6** But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. **8** But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. **10** This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. **12** No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. **14** Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. **16** We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. 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.

20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? **21** And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

EXPLAIN

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

E

vv.1-3 John begins this chapter with a matter discussed in 2:18-27—the relationship of Christians to false teachers. vv.1-6 give two criteria for identifying false teachers. The first is in vv.1-3: **test [the teachers] to see if the spirit they have comes from God.** The word that John uses for spirit is pneuma. And the root of that word is "wind." In John 3:8 Jesus uses this word and it is translated as "wind" and "Spirit". John is telling us to make sure that the right "winds" are filling our sails. Is what we're listening to driving us toward "Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God" or away from Him? The Spirit of Truth (v.6) will always drive us to Jesus Christ because He listens to the Father (see John 15:26; 16:13-15; Matthew 16:16-17). **The spirit of the Antichrist will not acknowledge that Jesus came in a real body** (see 1 John 1:3a; John 1:14).

vv.4-6 The second way of testing the teachers who would draw us to themselves is by asking *where do their affections lie?* Those who have **the Spirit of truth...belong to God** and long to **know God** better by listening to the truth taught by those who know Him. False teachers are in love with the world. They **belong to the world and speak from the world's viewpoint.** Paul dealt with people whose actions were not driven by the Cross of Christ, but by their pride (see Galatians 6:12-14; Philippians 1:15, 17; 1 Timothy 4:1-2). They speak from a human point of view, not from God's. John has already told us that "we cannot love the world and have the love of the Father in us" (1 John 2:15; see Matthew 6:24). When we feel ourselves drawn away from Christ it is, most of the time, because we made a poor choice about the winds we would allow to fill our sails and not because we were overpowered. **We belong to God, the victory has been won, and the Spirit who lives in us is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.** Fight the good fight; the victory is ours. "Don't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching" (Ephesians 4:14).

vv.7-10 John returns to the subject of love, encouraging us to love because **God is love**. Our ability to love does not come from an obedience to an impossible mandate. Our ability to **love one another** grows out of the nature of the One who begot us. We are **child[ren] of God, and know God**. He has begotten us and His DNA is in us. *Love Does!* Love is the way of life that is best of all. In the end we will not be measured by our knowledge, our faith, nor anything else we can boast about (see 1 Corinthians 12:31—13:3), but whether love motivates what we do. Am I taking good care of the Family name? God didn't love us because we are perfect, but because His love is perfect. He **sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins**. The old song says it well: "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me—a sinner condemned, unclean. How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me."

vv.11-12 It is only natural, **since God love us that much**, that we should exhibit His nature and **love each other** the way He loved us. **If we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us** might be taken two different ways. One is that loving each other shows that God's love in us is maturing (perfected/maturing NASB). God finishes what He starts (see Philippians 1:6). Another possible interpretation is that since **no one has ever seen God**, they begin to catch a glimpse of Him when we love them as God loved us (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

vv.13-16 John continues to retrace ideas that he has already touched on. He believes in repetition. Remember. Remember. Remember. **God has given us His Spirit** (v.13; see 2:24). This is **proof** that our relationship with Him is intact (see Romans 5:5). The church **testifies that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world** (v.14; see 1:1-4). The testimony of the church is true and faithful and consistent. Our faith is based on historical fact. We must not discount the teachings of the Apostles and others who experienced Jesus Christ in the flesh. We **confess that Jesus is the Son of God** (v.15; see 2:24). To fall away from the confession that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16-17) is to be severed from the life-giving Vine (see John 15:1-5). In our baptism we make our first bold confession that **we know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in His love** because **God is love** (v.16; see John 3:16-17).

vv.17-18 When we have full faith in the **love** of God **we will not be afraid on the day of judgment** because **perfect [mature] love expels all fear**. So **live in God** and His love. Let your roots run down deep into God's love and you will be kept strong (see Ephesians 3:17-19).

vv.19-21 **We love each other because [God] loved us first**. And His Holy Spirit fills our hearts with love (see Romans 5:5) so that we can love not only the lovable, but also the unlovable (see Ephesians 3:20). We don't love by our own strength, else we will **hate our Christian brothers and sisters** and, therefore, lose good fellowship with God (v.8) and the confidence that He wants us to have (v.17). "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, love—and the greatest of these is love. Let love be your highest goal!" (1 Corinthians 13:13—14:1).

A**APPLY**

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. According to vv.1-3, it is important that we discern any message/messenger to see if the message and person are truly from God. Why do you think testing those messages/messengers is important?
3. Are there any ways to know/discern if someone belongs to the world or belongs to God? How does this chapter help us do that?
4. In verses 17-18, John says that we don't have to fear on the day of judgement. He is not saying we don't fear/revere God in general, but we do not have to be afraid on the day when God judges the world. How does Christ's work on the cross (verse 10) remove fear of God's judgement for believers?
5. How does the truth of verse four, "the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world," help you live in love (v.16) each day?

R**RESPOND**

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. This week, read 1 John 4 at least three different times. Write out 1 John 4:10-11 on notecards and place them around your house where you will see them. Journal about ways this chapter is meaningful to you during this time, as well as what you are learning about God through this chapter.
2. Reread vv. 11-12. How can you actively love your "fellow believers"?

Write out 2 ways you can do this this week: (These should be measurable, so you can see you've done them, and accomplishable, because if it's too big it won't get done.)

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- 2.