

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 4TH, 2026 // FIRST JOHN

DISCERNMENT (1 JOHN 4:1-6) "DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT"

This passage is not enforcing the belief that there are demons that specialize in certain afflictions ("spirit of addiction, jealousy, fear, etc."), but we are to "test" all things to see if they are of the Holy Spirit or a demonic spirit.

- **Not everything that feels or sounds spiritual is from God and not every display of spiritual power is from God.**

"TEST THE SPIRITS"

It is the responsibility of every Christian to "test the spirits to see if they are from God."

- We trust that God will never contradict Himself, so **we match up what we hear or read to what God has already said in His Word.** We are not to blindly accept all spiritual teaching but to **look at the motive and integrity of the person teaching theology.**

"MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE OUT"

With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes **discernment** and **wisdom**, which **allow us to sense when something is not right.**

- We need to seek the gifts of wisdom (James 1:5) and discernment, and when something seems off, we need to **go directly to the source of truth through prayer and reading the Word of God.**

"THIS IS HOW YOU KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD"

John points out that the main difference between those who teach truth and false teachers is **their view of Jesus' identity.**

- To distort or deny the true nature of Jesus is "the spirit of the antichrist," which both opposes the true Jesus and offers a substitute. **True teaching will always point to the true Jesus.**

HE WHO IS IN US IS GREATER!

John suggests that there are forces of spiritual darkness at work in the world. As Christians, **we are not told to be afraid of this reality, but we are told to be aware.**

- Though we will come against many spiritual enemies, we must know that **none of them are greater than the Spirit who lives in us** (John 12:31; Romans 8:9).

"THIS IS HOW WE KNOW"

The antichrist and false prophets are of the world, so the world listens to them, while those who are born of God listen to the things spoken by God.

- When we **receive what the Bible says and cling to Jesus** (John 14:6) we show that **we know the spirit of truth, but when we reject truth, we know the spirit of deception.**

LOVE IS FROM GOD (1 JOHN 4:7-12) FREELY WE RECEIVED, SO FREELY WE GIVE

John has talked previously about the need to love others, but here he shows why it's so important. If love is from God, then **those born of God must be able to love one another.**

- The Bible doesn't tell us to love others to be worthy of God's love. Because we are loved by God, we live in light of His love and **love others as an outpouring of the love received.**

"ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT KNOW GOD"

John says, **"everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."** The word for "knows" communicates knowledge by experience. What John is saying is that when we really experience God it will be evident in our love for others.

- Our love for others will not be perfect, but **as we grow in our relationship with God, so should our love for others.**

GOD IS LOVE

The love (agape) that John speaks of is the unconditional, no-strings-attached kind of love that is given without demanding or expecting reciprocation.

- God's very nature is this type of love, but this does not eliminate His holiness, righteousness, or perfect justice. **Everything God does is an expression of His love.**

JESUS IS GOD!

V. 9 says, **"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His one and only** ("begotten," KJV) **Son into the world..."** The word "begotten" shows that Jesus' relationship to the Father is unique: They are of the same substance or being.

- Jesus is the only begotten son and **His sonship differs from ours because we are created and adopted as sons and daughters.**

LOVE GIVES ITS BEST!

God sacrificially giving His only begotten Son shows the greatness of His love. There was nothing better that God could have given to show His love for us. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:15 that **Jesus was the Father's "incredible gift."**

- If we say we love God, then the question becomes, **"Am I giving Him my best?"**

ATONING SACRIFICE

The truest and purest example of love is God sending Jesus to die for us. The love God showed us was not a response to humanity's love for Him—no, **He loved us first.**

- God willingly sacrificed His Son **so that we might live.** Since no one has ever seen God, **the love God has for us is seen in how we love others.**

PERFECT LOVE (1 JOHN 4:13-21) "HE HAS GIVEN US OF HIS SPIRIT"

The Spirit in us is **the abiding presence of Jesus.** The Spirit in us also **testifies that we are abiding in Him and Him in us,** which gives us a great assurance.

- As Paul puts it in Romans 8:16, **"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."** We receive love from the Father, then extend it to others.

"THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE"

If we abide in His love, meaning to receive it and extend it to others, we can have confidence, not fear, on the day of judgment.

- Love that is complete or mature casts out fear because it comes from understanding that **God loves us on the basis of His character and not ours.** A love for others comes from Him first loving us.

HATE IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE GOSPEL

John ends this section by reminding us of this command from God: **"The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister."**

- A life dominated by hate towards another person, regardless of what they might have done, is not a life born of God. **How can someone love an invisible God if they hate his visible image—people He created?**

THE TRUE JESUS

- An understanding of the true Jesus must come from the Scriptures and not our own thoughts or personal opinions.
- To not acknowledge the true nature of Jesus is to not know the true Jesus.
- A false Jesus and a Jesus fashioned after our own thoughts and opinions is unable to save us.

DISCERNMENT

- Am I practicing discernment with what/who I allow to speak into my life?
- A good litmus test to see if something is of the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception is to ask this: **"Will this help me in my walk or hinder me?"**
- God has given us His Spirit and the gifts needed to navigate this life.

LOVING GOD AND LOVING OTHERS

- The world sees God's love expressed through us in how we love others.
- The best witness that we know God and love Jesus is how we love the people around us.
- Is God's love seen in how you are loving your family? Your spouse? Your co-workers? Your friendships?