

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 4TH, 2026 // FIRST JOHN

DISCERNMENT (1 JOHN 4:1-6) "TEST THE SPIRITS"

In Chapter 3, John shared that the ultimate assurance Christians depend on is given by the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Now, he moves back to the battle against false teachers for the minds and hearts of Believers.
- These false teachers would say that they were teaching under the guidance of the spirit.
- **When different theologies claim the same authority, we should be ready to "test the spirits."**

KNOW THE TRUTH

John says the way to recognize a false teacher is to know the one they are teaching about.

- It's a question of content. Does the message encourage God's people to worship and obey Him or does it lead them into idolatry?
- What a teacher says matters far more than how they say it. The test is not whether it feels right, but whether it is true.
- **We don't believe just because it was said; we believe because God says it in His Word.**

CONQUER THE LIES

John reveals that the false prophets were already defeated because Christ was with them.

- Just like the Holy Spirit testifies about our salvation, He testifies of Jesus Christ.
- Knowing Jesus means recognizing when someone describes Him as someone different than the biblical Jesus we know.
- **We don't have to go looking for a fight, but we should recognize where Scripture draws the line between truth and error.**

AUTHENTIC FOLLOWERS

Because we know Christ, John says we have already conquered the false prophets.

- Because the Holy Spirit applies the truth of Scripture, authentic Christians remain true.
- Our faith is not destroyed and our Savior is not denied. The truth always defeats lies.
- **This isn't about confidence in ourselves; it's knowing that Christ has proved His power over all of His enemies, including the ones we fight in our current culture.**

APOSTATES (FALSE TEACHERS) AND APOSTLES

John makes it clear that we don't have to point fingers; we just need to listen to what is being said.

- False teachers will sound like false teachers, and the teaching of the Apostles (the Bible) will expose them.
- **If we spend more time listening to preachers, teachers, gurus, and influencers than we do reading our Bibles, how are we going to recognize false teaching? We won't!**

LOVE (1 JOHN 4:7-12)

"LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

John has been addressing false teaching within the Church and seems to take a hard turn to begin talking about love.

- Difficult topics and godly love are not mutually exclusive. Godly love tells the truth in love.
- John is practicing what he preaches: tell the truth for the benefit of the hearer because you have the love of the Father in you.
- **What kind of love do we have in us?**

"GOD IS LOVE"

Because we (all humankind) are created in the image of God, we have the capacity to love.

- John is talking about a unique love that perfectly aligns with the character and essence of God.
- It's important that we understand that this isn't just a quality God possesses. God IS love.
- **Because we know Him, and He has given Himself to us through the Holy Spirit, we will love one another with His unique godly love.**

LOVE REVEALED

John reminds us that God sent His one and only Son into the world so we might live through Him.

- That action wasn't a response to people crying out for forgiveness, a relationship with God, or even a savior.
- Because God IS love, He sought to do what was for our benefit, even to the point of self-sacrifice.
- **God did not send His Son into a world that loved Him; He sent His Son to a world He loves.**

"ATONING SACRIFICE"

Jesus did many things while He walked the Earth.

- He corrected error, taught truth, healed the sick, trained disciples, provided for the needy, and confronted religious leaders.
- Many just see Him as a missionary and activist.
- God sent Him to be THE atoning sacrifice.
- **God's love for us cannot be measured by what we have but by what He gave: the ONLY sacrifice that would satisfy the judgment of unmeasurable sin—Jesus for us.**

SEEING GOD'S LOVE

John's next revelation is how authentic Believers will respond to the love God sent to earth.

- The same love that God sent will be seen in our relationships with each other, and will send us out so the world can see His Love, not just in our interactions, but in real down-to-earth actions.
- **The Church is His audiovisual presentation to a dying culture. When people see us, do they see the love of God? How can we maintain that kind of love in our lives?**

POWER (1 JOHN 4:13-21)

"REMAIN IN HIM AND HE IN US"

Any command that God has given to us, He also provides the power to keep.

- John knows that lives of self-doubt and "ifs" can outweigh confidence.
- John doesn't offer a dataset to be analyzed or a list of feelings we must experience.
- **John points to evidence of the love of God in our lives that gives us complete confidence and assurance of our salvation.**

HOLY SPIRIT, BELIEF, AND TESTIMONY

The Holy Spirit will always produce the characteristics of God in our lives; we will have a desire to love others unselfishly.

- Believers actually believe the testimony of the Apostles: the Bible.
- Believers confess that Jesus is THE Son of God.
- **This is more than encouragement; these truths assure us of God's presence in our lives. It's not that someone else tells us; this is God confirming our relationship with Him.**

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

Because of the reality of our relationship with God, He is always working toward our completeness.

We are growing every day.

- Even though He is in heaven and we are here, God has given us the opportunity to experience His love, share it with the world, and have confidence in our eternity, without fear.
- **If we live in fear of God's punishment, we may not have connected to the power of His love.**

POWER TO LOVE

It may seem like John is repeating himself over and over but he has revealed a strong truth.

- Those who know God have received His love and are now conduits of that love to others.
- If hatred and bitterness lead our hearts, we haven't experienced God's love.
- **The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.**

UNLOVELY

- We are called to love.
- **Some people seem unlovable.**
- **It's not that they are truly unlovable; it may be that they are simply unlovely. Because of the way they act now or what they have done in the past, we deny sharing any type of love with them.**

TRUTH

- The truth is that we are ALL unlovely.
- **If God applied our filters for love the way we do, we wouldn't know God's love.**
- **God saw us, sees us the way we are, and still sent Jesus to save us. How do we see our brothers and sisters in Christ? How do we see the world? How will we respond?**

CARRIERS

- As Believers, we are carriers of God's Love.
- **This isn't a choice or even a desire; it is surrender and obedience to the Holy Spirit who is within us.**
- **If we simply desire the benefits of Christianity and are not surrendered to the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who are we really loving? When we embrace the infinite depth of God's love for us, we WILL surrender to the way HE will love others through us; even the unlovely ones.**