

# 1 John

## Lesson 5

### Chapter 4:1-21

## Leader Guide

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# Test the Spirits

## Lesson 5, 1 John 4:1–6

### Prayers

#### Read 1 John 4:1-6

<sup>1Jn 4:1</sup> 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. <sup>1Jn 4:2</sup> 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, <sup>1Jn 4:3</sup> 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.

<sup>1Jn 4:4</sup> You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. <sup>1Jn 4:5</sup> They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>1Jn 4:6</sup> We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

### Discuss

1. What are the spirits John is referring to in verses 1-5?

**John is referring to the spirits of people. Some people have the Spirit of God in them; others have the spirit of Satan. The Spirit of God exalts Jesus as the Christ, but Satan wants to confuse people about Jesus and cloud their understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do.**

2. What test of the spirit does John offer his readers? What would be other tests?

**John writes that everyone who acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.**

**Some other affirmations of faith would be the following statements:**

1. **Jesus is a historical person**
2. **Jesus was both God and man,**
3. **Jesus was with God in the beginning, and all creation was made through him**
4. **Jesus is the Messiah**
5. **Jesus died for the sins of humanity. He died for my sins.**

3. What are some of the viewpoints of the world John referred to in verse 5?

**There is no God**

**God will save us if we are moral and do good deeds.**

**Bible is a book of morality, written by men, uninspired.**

**In John's day, the antichrists were false teachers who taught others not to believe Jesus was the Messiah. In the years after John wrote, Satan has produced many false teachings—denying salvation by grace, denying the inspiration of Scripture, denying the power of Baptism, etc.—which, in the end, deny the work (and subsequently the person) of Jesus. The spirit of Satan is working in all who teach any false teachings. However, we must be careful not to deny that such people may not have given up their Christianity like those who explicitly deny that Jesus is the Christ.**

## **1 John 4:7-21, Love**

Before we read about love 1 John 4:7-21, we should review the meaning of the four Greek words for love: agape, phileo, storge, and eros.

Agape is divine love, sacrificial, unconditional, and a love that is an act of will. God is agape love. Jesus taught that we are to have agape love toward our enemies. Agape is the root word for charity in Latin.

Phileo is affection and kindness between dear friends. It is love that does not seek a return for sharing kindness. Phileo is the type of love Peter thought he needed to have for Jesus and others in John 21:15-17

Jesus: (15) *Simon...do you love (agape) me more than these [fish?].*

Peter: (15) *Yes, Lord; you know that I love (phileo) you.*

Jesus: (16) *Simon...do you...love (agape) me?*

Peter: (16) *Yes, Lord, you know that I love (phileo) you.*

Jesus: (17) *Simon...do you love (phileo) me?*

Peter: (17) [Grieved] *"Lord...you know that I love (phileo) you."*

Storge (STORE-jay) is the natural affection parents have for their children. Storge is not often used in the New Testament. One example of storge is in Romans 12:9-10, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (storge). Honor one another above yourselves". In this case, storge is compounded with phileo to describe the love believers have for each other.

Eros is sexual love between spouses, physical passion, and emotional - "feeling" love. In Hebrew, the root word means to boil. Eros does not occur in the New Testament. References to sexual love in the New Testament use the Greek word "epthumeo," meaning lust.

Read 1 John 4:7-21. The word used for love is agape.

### **1 John 4:7-21, God's Love and Ours**

<sup>1Jn 4:7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>1Jn 4:8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

<sup>1Jn 4:9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>1Jn 4:10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>1Jn 4:11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>1Jn 4:12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.

<sup>1Jn 4:13</sup> We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>1Jn 4:14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>1Jn 4:15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. <sup>1Jn 4:16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. <sup>1Jn 4:17</sup> In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

<sup>1Jn 4:18</sup> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

<sup>1Jn 4:19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>1Jn 4:20</sup> If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>1Jn 4:21</sup> And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

## Discuss

1. In Verse 7, what is the sign that we have been born into God's family?

**We love others because we know God's love for us.**

2. Where does our love begin?

**All love begins with God. He sent his Son to save us from sin. Anything we do has its origins in God. Placing God as our starting point rules out all work-righteousness, and although John emphasizes our love as a sign of our relationship with God, he makes it clear that our love never earns anything for us. It is only a response to God's love for us.**

3. How can we know that we believe in God's act of love toward us—the sending of his Son to live and die for us?

**We reflect on his love. Although people cannot see God, they can see God at work in us.**

4. Why did God send his Son into the world?

- a. Verse 9

**God sent his Son into the world for us to live through him with eternal life in the future and abundant life in the present.**

- b. Verse 10

**God sent his Son into the world as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

c. Verse 14

### **As Savior of the world**

5. What do verses 9, 10, and 14 tell you about God's kind of love? Note the first part of verse 10 in particular.

**God's love for us was not conditional on us loving him; He loved us before we loved him. Last weekend I spent four days with Adam, a recovering drug addict. While Adam was stoned on meth, his friends left him for dead after being hit by a truck going 55mph. Part of his rehab was learning his friends were not his friends. The world gives its love conditionally. In Adam's case, his friends were friends as long as Adam was not a burden and was doing what they were doing, but they were out of there as soon as he needed help.**

6. What are the results of God's love in us?

Verse 13 **We know that God lives in us and we in him.**

Verse 17 **We are made like him so that we can have confidence at Judgment.**

Verse 18 **not fearful [of our salvation] before God**

7. More than 300 references to "fearing God" are found in the scriptures, yet 1 John 4:17-18 tells us that we should not fear God. Read the following four verses and consider how you understand these seemingly contradictory thoughts.

**John 4:17-18.** In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. <sup>1Jn 4:18</sup> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

**Proverbs 9:10** "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

**Proverbs 14:27** The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Love from the Lord is its completion.

**Acts 9:31** Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

**Matthew 10:28** [Jesus said] Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

**Fear of the Lord is meant to bring people to God for salvation and can keep us from sinning (Philippians 2:12 – work out your salvation with fear and trembling – for it is God who works in you), but love for God completes our relationship with God and drives out fear.**

8. Verses 19-21 tell us that a test of our faith is whether we have any hatred toward others. What are the implications of this statement, knowing that John is writing about agape love?

<sup>1Jn 4:19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>1Jn 4:20</sup> If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>1Jn 4:21</sup> And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

**Agape love is not conditional and not based on the other person's actions. It is an act of will, not a feeling. Ironically, we can keep this command to love our neighbor without "liking" our neighbor.**

**Closing Prayer**

**Dear Father in Heaven**

Your love for us is steadfast, everlasting, and unconditional. You gave us your Son so we might know you and be your children. You forgive our sins and remove our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. We confess that we do not love you or our brothers as you would have us love. Create in us a clean heart.