1 John 4:5-14 | Sunday March 22, 2026

Throughout the book of 1 John, we have been warned about false teachers who have left the truth and are not in fellowship with the apostles anymore. This has weighed heavy on John’s heart. He wants all believers to walk in an abiding relationship with Jesus and following false teaching breaks our fellowship with God. This is why we are called to test the spirits and see if the teaching that we hear is based in the world or based in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proclaims who Jesus is, fully God and fully man, and what He did as the Christ, paying for our sins. As we walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, He will guide us into truth. He enables us to have an abiding walk with God that will be shown by the love God produces in us.

1 John 4:4-14 ESV

> (4) Little children, **you are from God** and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world.
> (5) **They are from the world**; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.
> (6) **We are from God**. **Whoever knows God listens to us**; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. **By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**
> (7) Beloved, let **us** love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.
> (8) Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
> (9) In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.
> (10) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
> (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
> (12) No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.
> (13) By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.
> (14) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

John has been very careful to make sure who he is talking about in each section is clear. In verse 4 he addresses his audience, who are believers. “**You are from God**” and have the Holy Spirit in you, who is greater than any of the lies and falsehoods that are in the world. This is entirely different from the false teachers: “**They are from the world**.” The lies that they teach have their source in the world, and the world follows them. Then, in contrast, John declares that he and the other apostles "**are from God**.” The apostles message has not changed; they have taught about Jesus from the beginning. **Abiding believers will listen to John and the apostles because they proclaim Jesus.**

John 10:27 ESV

> (27) **My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me.

As sheep, we are to respond and listen to the voice of our shepherd. The Spirit of Truth proclaims Jesus and is rooted in scripture. He helps us hear our shepherd's voice.

John 16:13 ESV

(13) **When the Spirit of truth comes, He** will guide you into all the truth, for **He will not speak on His own authority,** but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come.

The Spirit of Truth is the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. He is not an impersonal force. He will guide us into truth and keep drawing believers back to the Word. **He did not come to keep giving new revelation**. He does not speak on His own authority and does not keep updating the message as the false teachers were claiming. **He takes God's truth found in the Word and makes it real to us.** His message does not change with each generation or new thought.

The spirit of error will constantly have a new, updated message. **The word error literally means wandering from the path of truth.** The spirit of error keeps wandering off the path and looking for new things. **The world does not care how it is wrong, as long as it is wrong.** Jesus promised that the Spirit of Truth would keep pointing us back to Him and His truth. One of the ways the Holy Spirit does this is by using the various roles Jesus gave to the church.

Ephesians 4:11-16 ESV

(11) And He gave **the apostles,** the prophets, the evangelists, **the shepherds and teachers,**
(12) **to equip the saints** for the work of ministry, **for building up** the body of Christ,
(13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, to mature** manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
(14) **so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**
(15) Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ,
(16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, **makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

Jesus gave the church specific roles to equip believers to be built up and grow in Him. The Holy Spirit empowers each of these roles. In John's time it was the apostles who were writing scripture and holding the line of truth. John's correction was meant to come with authority. Jesus also gave prophets and evangelists to build up the church. Today the main role we see is that of shepherd/ teacher. Shepherd teacher is one role; **there is one article introducing it**. This should be the role of pastors today. We are called to shepherd Jesus' flock and teach truth. **Every believer needs this building up because we are all children who get tossed** around by false teaching. We all need to mature by speaking truth in love with each other. As we help each other grow in the truth, we are to be built up in love. The more we grow in maturity, the more loving we are to be.

1 John 4:7-8 ESV

(7) Beloved, let us love one another, **for love is from God**, and whoever loves **has been born of God and knows God.**
(8) **Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

As John encourages us again to love one another, he puts into practice what he has been teaching by calling us beloved. John had a love and care for his audience that came from God, and he wanted us to have this same kind of love. True biblical love is from God. **When we have this love, it shows we are a child of His and are walking with Him.** We do not know God and are not in fellowship with Him if we are not loving. God is love. This is one of three other "God is…" statements in scripture. Each one teaches us a core truth about who God is.

John 4:24 ESV

> (24) **God is spirit**, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

1 John 1:5 ESV

> (5) This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that **God is light**, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Hebrews 12:28-29 ESV

> (28) Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,
> (29) for our **God is a consuming fire.**

God is spirit and **not bound by physical limitations**. He is not worshipped only in a certain place but can be worshipped everywhere in spirit and truth. God is light. This means God is **pure and holy** without any shadow of darkness or sin in Him at all. His purity is so amazing it is unapproachable (1 Tim 6:16). In His purity and **justice,** God is a consuming fire. All three of these truths are in perfect unity with the fact that God is love.

God is not light one day and loving the next. In all of His activity, He is spirit, loving, pure (light), and just (consuming fire). Based on these truths, He could not ignore sin or sweep it under the rug. **As light, He exposes sin** and shows it for the wickedness it is. **As a consuming fire, He was able to judge sin** fully, and **out of His love, He did so in a way not to destroy us as sinners.** As spirits, we can all approach Him on this truth and worship Him. The greatest manifestation of His love is seen in Jesus, and all these truths come together perfectly in Him.

1 John 4:9 NAS95

> (9) **By this the love of God was manifested in us**, that **God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him**.

God revealed, made known, and showed His love by sending Jesus. Love is not primarily an emotion but purposeful action. **His love caused Him to act.** We know the love of God **because He sent His Son Jesus**. Begotten does not mean that Jesus had a beginning, because He always existed as God (John 1:1). Only begotten means **unique, one-of-a-kind**. God the Father sent the unique, one-of-a-kind God the Son to the world so that we would have life through Him. Without Jesus we only have death; life is found in Him. When God sent Jesus, it was not in response to us or because we deserved it.

1 John 4:10 ESV

> (10) **In this is love**, **not that we have loved God but that He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God's love was not in response to our love for Him. It is the opposite. He loved us and sent Jesus when we were rebellious sinners.

Romans 5:8 ESV

> (8) but **God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.

This is what makes Jesus sacrifice on the cross all the more amazing to comprehend. It was not earned, or deserved, and we were not even asking for it. We were sinners and did not want God and had no interest in a relationship with Him. This is what makes Christianity so unique. **Every other religion is humanity seeking a way to come to God, yet the truth of scripture is God seeking a way to humanity.** It is a core truth that God initiated salvation. He loved us! If His love is warranted or in response to us, then it is not that amazing.

Matthew 5:46 ESV

> (46) **For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?** Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

It is very natural to love someone who loves you; even the tax collectors do this. God would not be worthy of much worship and praise if this is what the cross was. If Jesus came out of a response to our love, then it is not an amazing love. **God's love for us is free, uncaused, unwarranted, and spontaneous**. God sent Jesus in an incredible act of love to pay for sin.

1 John 4:10 ESV

> (10) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us **and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

God's love sought to meet our deep spiritual need. As sinners, we deserved death and God's wrath. Jesus willingly became the propitiation for our sins. **This means He was the payment that was given to God to appease God's wrath.** This word is often used in pagan writing as the physical payment that had to be offered to a god to stop a judgment, or calamity, like an earthquake or flood. We are not the ones bringing the payment. **God sent Jesus to become the payment, to give His blood and satisfy the wrath of God**. Nothing more can ever be added to that payment!

1 John 4:11 ESV

> (11) Beloved**, if God so loved us**, **we also ought to love one another.**

We are to respond to this kind of amazing love that God has shown to us by showing His love to one another. This has been the overall theme the last few weeks. John chose wording that echoes a statement he heard Jesus teach to Nicodemus.

John 3:16 ESV

> (16) "**For God so loved the world,** that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

God so loved. He loved to a degree that is beyond anything humanity had ever known before. He taught us what true self-sacrificial love is. As amazing as this love is, so many of us can struggle to accept and understand it. We feel unworthy. We know we sin and so feel we are ungrateful. We need to rest in this truth, **that God so loved**. **He so loved the world, He so loved us, He so loved you. This love is not because of us but is for us.** We are saved and are given eternal life the moment we believe in Jesus. God wants to bring this amazing love to completion in each of us as believers.

1 John 4:12 ESV

> (12) **No one has ever seen God; if we love one another,** God abides in us and **His love is perfected in us.**

The word perfected means **to bring to an end or full completion.** God wants to bring His self-sacrificial love to full completion in us, by having us show it in our lives. When His love is reflected in us, we truly get to be part of and see something amazing. God is so holy and amazing that no one can ever see Him.

John 1:18 NAS95

> (18) **No one has seen God at any time**; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him.**

Jesus came and **expounded, described, revealed, set forth in great detail, and made known** who God is. Jesus reveals God the Father to us, and through the Holy Spirit we can abide with Jesus. As we are abiding in Him, we get to see something amazing.

1 John 4:12-14 ESV

> (12) **No one has ever seen God**; **if we love one another**, **God abides in us** and His love is perfected in us.
> (13) By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us **of His Spirit.**
> (14) **And we have seen** and testify that **the Father** has sent **His Son to be the Savior of the world.**

The Holy Spirit that we have been given is **of God; it is of His Spirit**. It is not when we start loving that we receive the Spirit. When we believe in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit. As we abide, He enables us to start loving. **The Holy Spirit enables us to love, but we are not forced to.** "If we love one another" means we have a choice to love or not to love. When we show this kind of love that only comes from God, we know we are in the Spirit and that we are abiding.

The unseen God can now be seen in the love that He is producing in us as believers. This love shows and testifies that Jesus came to be the Savior of the world. We can only have this love because of all that Jesus has done. The word **see**, is the same in both verses 12 and 14 and means to **gaze intensely at something. We get to see the amazing love God has shown in sending Jesus to be the savior of the world through loving one another with His self-sacrificial love.** This literally means that we have an opportunity to see and have fellowship with God as we love each other. John physically saw Christ (different word) and wanted us to get to see Him and experience the same fellowship He had.

1 John 1:3 ESV

> (3) **that which we have seen** and heard we proclaim also to you, **so that you too may have fellowship with us;** and indeed our fellowship **is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.**
