

Lesson 6

Small Group Discussion

1 John 4:1-21



Context of the Chapter

Recommended song for worship:
Goodness of God - Bethel Worship



Throughout the first three chapters, the “Spirit” of God is only expressly used one time, and that is in the last verse of Chapter 3. John has emphasized the importance of our obedience to Christ through confession and love but now begins to emphasize the importance of the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Again, we must remember that these believers were living in a time of intense false teaching. They did not have the Bible as we know it today, and had to rely on the Apostles teachings, possibly a few epistles, but primarily they relied on the Old Testament Scriptures.

John encourages them to be discerning on what “Spirit” they are listening to. There were many demonic spirits that sought to influence the church, and they were causing confusion and apostasy. John boils down the importance of discerning the Spirits to love, professing the person and deity of Christ, and forgiveness. No antichrist spirit will demonstrate the above characteristics, and the Holy Spirit will produce the above characteristics in believers and especially in teachers led by God’s Spirit. Finally, the Holy Spirit will always elevate and focus on the love of Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

Questions/Sermon Study

1 John 4:1-6 • Discerning True & False Teachers

The Apostle John gives the church foundational truths on how to discern a false prophet from a true prophet or teacher from God. He also encourages the church that although these false prophets seem powerful, the Holy Spirit that resides in the believer is stronger than any antichrist spirit. Finally, John states that division is inevitable, because the Word of God will divide those who are truly of God and those who are deceived.

One thing the majority of cults have in common is that they deny that Jesus was both God and man. Mormons deny this, Jehovah witnesses deny this, and so do Muslims and many other religions. Just because someone says they believe in “Jesus” does not mean they believe in the God of the Bible or that they are being led by the Holy Spirit. **(4:1-3)**

1. Do you feel confident in explaining how Jesus is both God and Man?

- The Deity of Christ: **John 1:1-14**, **2 John 1:7**, **Hebrews 2:17**, **1 Timothy 2:5**, **John 20:28**

Teachers or religions that deny the deity and or the humanity of Christ are led by an “antichrist” spirit. The antichrist teachers seemed influential and powerful. However, the Spirit of God residing in the believer is much stronger! **(4:4-5)**

2. What is true of the Holy Spirit?

- **John 16:13** • He guides us
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** • He seals us
- **Acts 1:8** • He empowers us
- **John 16:8** • He convicts us
- **Romans 8:11** • He is the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead

This Spirit will guide us into the truth of the Gospel and will convict us of false teaching. However, the Spirit works in teamwork with our studying and knowledge of the Scripture. The more we know the Scripture the clearer the Holy Spirit's voice will be.

3. Do you sense a difference in your ability to hear God's voice when you are actively reading your Bible? What differences do you notice?

As spoken of in other sections, only those with the Spirit of God can understand God's voice. God's grace works on people's hearts, but if we do not respond in humility we become blind to God's calling. (4:6)

- Those who hear God's voice: **1 Corinthians 2:6-13** & **John 10:27-28**
4. Do you find yourself trying to convince others about God's truth? Or do you trust that God will be the one who works in people's hearts and you just have to simply obey?

1 John 4:7-14 • Christ-like Love

1 John has put an emphasis on love. In this section John through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit defines what true love really is, it is Christ-like love. Jesus sacrificed and suffered for us when we didn't deserve it. He was willing to lay down His life for us when we were actively rejecting Him.

5. Does your love look like Christ-like love?

- Jesus' love: **Romans 5:1-11** & **Philippians 2:1-11**

Showing us His love, Jesus was not only willing to die a physical death but also offered up His soul as a spiritual sacrifice for us. The wages of our sin is death and eternal separation from God. Jesus had to take this punishment for us on the cross. This is what it means that Jesus was our "propitiation" or "sacrifice." God treated Jesus as if He was a sinner so that He could treat us as if we are perfectly righteous.

6. Who did Jesus have to face according to **Matthew 10:28**? *Jesus had to face the wrath of the One who can destroy both soul and body*
7. In **Isaiah 53:10**, what was prophesied about what Jesus would encounter on our behalf? *On the cross Jesus had to "drink" the wrath of God on our behalf.*

We should love others with this selfless love. In fact the Bible tells us that He who has experienced the love and forgiveness of Christ will and has to return that type of love to the world.

- How we should love: **Luke 7:47** & **Matthew 18:21-35**

1 John 4:15-16 • Through faith in Christ we can be saved.

In chapter 1 we learned that confession means to "come into agreement with God." To confess and believe in the Gospel, or the good news about God's love, we must be in agreement with God. In **Romans 10:9**, confessing Jesus as Lord is not a matter of our mouth, but a matter of our heart. If we come into agreement with God about who Jesus is (The Messiah/Son of God) and who we are (sinners), embrace our need for Him, and receive His forgiveness through Jesus, we will be saved!

1 John 4:17-18 • True confession leads to confidence.

We have assurance of our salvation based upon the finished work of Christ. Faith is what perfects God's love in us, this perfecting leads to growth and confidence in God's love.

8. Do you feel as if you have come into "agreement" with God?
9. Do you understand God's holiness, your sinfulness, and the sacrifice of Jesus for your soul?
10. Do you feel as if you are growing in your receiving of God's love?

It is easy to walk in guilt or try to "gain victory" over our sin and shame. However, the Gospel states we already have victory in Christ, we are living from victory, not for victory. Meaning, Christ has already won, and He will give us the power to walk in freedom over our sin and freedom over our guilt when we fail. Faith in Christ's love is what brings us confidence!

1 John 4:19-21

The Apostle John closes this chapter with restating how we know if our confession has been genuine. We know this by our love. We do not love because we are good people, but as stated earlier our love is a reaction or a response to God's love for us. We cannot live in hatred or bitterness and be a Christ-follower. The commandment to love is not a suggestion, but a commandment for those who confess Jesus as Lord.

11. What does **John 13:34-35** tell us obedience to this commandment will do? *Shows us how living out this commandment leads us to being disciples of Jesus and a light to the world around us.*

Discipleship Focus & Challenge

We are a **church** on mission
to raise up **WHO** disciple makers
SHARE THE GOSPEL
where we
live, work & play

A disciple's heart posture is to be a lifelong follower, student, example, and teacher of Jesus Christ.

Luke 9:23 - Follower

John 15:1-8 - Student

John 13:34-35 - Example

Matthew 28:18-20 - Teacher

Fall Campaign Challenge #6: Be an example of Christ-like love!

Love starts with truth, we must place our love and our efforts towards what is true love, which is found in Jesus Christ. **Hebrews 4:11-13** tells us that the Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword. This is vital for us, because we can be deceived by our own emotions and desires. **Jeremiah 17:9** tells us of the deceits of our heart.

Before reading the Bible this week, pray to God to show you your hidden faults, or the sins in your heart you do not know about. Specifically you can ask Him to reveal selfishness. Selfishness is one of the main enemies of love. **Psalms 19:12-14** can be a Scripture to help guide your prayer time this week.

Memorize: 1 John 4:7-8

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.
But anyone who does not love
does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8