

# CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

## BIBLE STUDY

### 1 John Chapter 4 — Test the Spirits and Live in God's Love

#### A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

## Introduction

1 John 4 is a chapter about **spiritual discernment, the truth about Jesus Christ, the greatness of God, the love of God, assurance through the Holy Spirit, and the responsibility of believers to love one another.**

John begins with a serious warning.

Not every spiritual voice comes from God.

Not every person who claims to speak for God actually represents God.

Not every religious teaching is true.

Not every spiritual experience should automatically be accepted.

John therefore commands believers:

**“Test the spirits.”**

The primary test centers upon **Jesus Christ**. True teaching recognizes who Jesus really is. False teaching distorts, denies, or rejects Him.

But John does not stop with doctrinal truth.

He then moves into one of the greatest discussions of love anywhere in Scripture.

John tells us:

**“God is love.”**

God demonstrated that love by sending His Son into the world so that sinners might receive life through Him.

Because God loved us, we should love one another.

The chapter therefore brings together two truths that must never be separated:

**Truth and love.**

Christians must stand firmly for truth while walking faithfully in love.

1 John 4 teaches us that genuine Christianity is seen in both **what we believe about Christ** and **how we treat other people**.

## **I. TEST EVERY SPIRIT**

### **1 John 4:1 — “Do Not Believe Every Spirit”**

“Beloved, 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.”

John begins with the word:

**Beloved.**

His warning comes from pastoral concern.

He does not want believers to become spiritually gullible.

John says:

**Do not believe every spirit.**

Then he says:

**Test the spirits.**

The word “test” means to examine something carefully to determine whether it is genuine.

John understood that false prophets existed.

Some people claimed to speak for God but were actually spreading spiritual error.

Christians therefore need discernment.

## **Cross References**

### **Matthew 7:15**

“Watch out for false prophets. They may come to you looking harmless like sheep, but inwardly they are dangerous like hungry wolves.”

### **1 Thessalonians 5:21**

“Examine everything carefully. Hold tightly to what is good.”

### **2 Peter 2:1**

“False prophets arose among the people in the past, and false teachers will also appear among you. They will secretly bring in destructive teachings and may even deny the Lord who bought them, bringing destruction upon themselves.”

John's warning is extremely relevant.

A person can:

- Use Christian language.
- Quote Scripture.
- Speak emotionally.
- Claim spiritual experiences.
- Gather large crowds.
- Become popular.
- Claim that God spoke to him.

And still teach error.

The Christian's responsibility is not to believe something merely because it sounds spiritual.

## **Spiritual Principle**

**Spiritual claims must be tested by spiritual truth.**

God has given us His Word so that we can recognize truth and reject error.

# **II. THE FIRST TEST IS JESUS CHRIST**

## **1 John 4:2 — Christ Came in the Flesh**

“This is how you recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

John gives believers one of the most important tests of spiritual truth.

The test centers upon Jesus.

Specifically, John emphasizes that:

**Jesus Christ came in the flesh.**

Jesus was not merely an appearance.

He was not simply a spiritual vision.

He was not merely a prophet.

The eternal Son of God truly entered human history.

He became a real man while remaining the Son of God.

## **Cross References**

### **John 1:14**

“The Word became flesh and lived among us. We saw His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son, full of grace and truth.”

### **1 Timothy 3:16**

“The truth God has revealed is great: Christ appeared in human flesh, was shown to be righteous by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on throughout the world, and was taken up into glory.”

### **2 John 1:7**

“Many deceivers have gone out into the world. They refuse to confess that Jesus Christ truly came in the flesh. Such a person is a deceiver and works against Christ.”

John's test is Christ-centered.

A teacher may talk about:

- God.
- Spirituality.
- Morality.
- Love.
- Faith.
- Miracles.

But the crucial question remains:

**What does that teacher believe about Jesus Christ?**

Christianity cannot be separated from Christ.

## **Key Truth**

**Any teaching that changes the biblical identity of Jesus changes the Christian message.**

## **III. THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST**

### **1 John 4:3 — Opposition to Christ**

“But every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and is already in the world.”

John now presents the opposite side of the test.

The Spirit of God points people toward Christ.

The spirit of antichrist opposes Christ.

John says this spirit was already operating in the world.

This is important.

Antichrist describes more than a future individual.

There is also a present spirit of opposition to Jesus Christ.

## **Cross References**

### **2 John 1:7**

“Many deceivers have gone out into the world who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Such teaching is deceptive and opposed to Christ.”

### **1 John 2:22**

“Who is the liar? It is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person opposes Christ by rejecting the Father and the Son.”

### **2 Thessalonians 2:7**

“The hidden power of lawlessness is already at work, although it is being restrained until the proper time.”

False teaching often attacks Jesus in several ways.

It may deny:

- His deity.
- His humanity.
- His virgin birth.
- His sinlessness.
- His death for sin.
- His bodily resurrection.
- His Lordship.
- His return.

Whenever the truth about Jesus is distorted, the gospel itself is endangered.

## **Application**

Ask yourself:

**Do I know enough about the biblical Jesus to recognize a false Jesus?**

Discernment requires knowledge.

The better we know the truth, the easier it becomes to recognize the counterfeit.

## **IV. GREATER IS THE ONE WHO IS IN YOU**

### **1 John 4:4 — God Is Greater**

“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.”

After warning believers about spiritual deception, John gives encouragement.

He says:

**You are from God.**

Then:

**You have overcome them.**

Why?

Not because Christians are naturally stronger.

Not because believers know everything.

Not because Christians cannot be deceived.

John gives the reason:

**“The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”**

## **Cross References**

### **John 16:33**

“I have told you these things so that you may have peace in Me. In this world you will have trouble, but take courage—I have overcome the world.”

### **1 John 5:4**

“Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.”

### **Romans 8:31**

“What should we say about these things? If God is for us, who can ultimately stand against us?”

The believer's confidence is not based upon personal ability.

It is based upon God's presence.

The enemy is real.

Deception is real.

Temptation is real.

Spiritual opposition is real.

But God is greater.

## **Spiritual Principle**

**The believer does not face spiritual opposition alone.**

The God who lives within His people is greater than every force that opposes them.

# **V. THE WORLD LISTENS TO ITS OWN**

## **1 John 4:5 — The World's Viewpoint**

“They belong to the world; therefore they speak from the world’s viewpoint, and the world listens to them.”

John explains why false teaching can become popular.

False teachers often tell the world what the world already wants to hear.

They speak from the world's viewpoint.

Therefore:

**The world listens to them.**

## **Cross References**

### **John 15:19**

“If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. But you do not belong to the world, because I chose you out of the world. That is why the world may hate you.”

### **John 3:31**

“The One who comes from above is greater than all. The person who belongs to the earth speaks from an earthly point of view. The One who comes from heaven is above all.”

### **James 4:4**

“Do you not understand that friendship with the world's rebellious system puts you in opposition to God? Whoever chooses friendship with that system makes himself an enemy of God.”

This teaches us something important:

**Popularity does not determine truth.**

A teaching can be popular and false.

A preacher can be famous and wrong.

A message can attract large crowds and still contradict Scripture.

## **Important Truth**

Never ask first:

**“How many people believe this?”**

Ask:

**“Does God’s Word teach this?”**

# **VI. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR**

## **1 John 4:6 — “We Belong to God”**

“We belong to God. 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 error.”

John now identifies two opposing spiritual influences:

**The Spirit of truth.**

**The spirit of error.**

Truth leads toward God.

Error leads away from God.

John and the apostles had been entrusted with the message of Jesus Christ.

Those who genuinely knew God recognized the truth of that message.

## **Cross References**

### **John 8:47**

“The person who belongs to God listens to God’s words. The reason you refuse to listen is that you do not belong to God.”

### **John 14:17**

“He is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him because it does not see Him or know Him. But you know Him, because He remains with you and will live in you.”

### **John 10:27**

“My sheep listen to My voice. I know them, and they follow Me.”

The Holy Spirit never leads people away from God's truth.

He does not contradict Scripture.

He does not diminish Christ.

He does not glorify falsehood.

He is:

**The Spirit of truth.**

## **Application**

The Christian should develop a growing appetite for truth.

Ask yourself:

What do I listen to?

What influences my thinking?

What voices shape my beliefs?

Do I compare what I hear with Scripture?

# **VII. LOVE COMES FROM GOD**

## **1 John 4:7 — “Let Us Love One Another”**

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

John now makes a dramatic transition.

He moves from:

**Testing spirits**

to:

**Loving people.**

But these subjects belong together.

Truth matters.

Love matters.

John says:

**“Let us love one another.”**

Why?

Because:

**Love comes from God.**

## **Cross References**

### **John 13:34**

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should love one another.”

### **1 John 3:11**

“This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.”

### **1 Corinthians 13:4**

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful. It does not become proud.”

Biblical love is not merely emotion.

Love involves:

- Patience.
- Kindness.
- Sacrifice.
- Compassion.
- Forgiveness.
- Truth.
- Service.
- Faithfulness.

Those who know God should increasingly reflect His character.

## **1 John 4:8 — “God Is Love”**

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

This is one of the greatest statements in Scripture concerning God's nature.

**God is love.**

John does not say:

**Love is God.**

He says:

**God is love.**

Love is an essential part of God's character.

## **Cross References**

### **John 3:16**

“God loved the world so greatly that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”

### **1 John 4:16**

“We have come to know and believe the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him.”

### **Exodus 34:6**

“The Lord passed before Moses and declared, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and overflowing with faithful love and truth.’”

God's love is:

- Holy.
- Righteous.
- Faithful.
- Sacrificial.
- Patient.
- Merciful.

God's love never contradicts God's holiness.

## **Key Truth**

**To know the God of love should make us people who love.**

# **VIII. GOD PROVED HIS LOVE BY SENDING HIS SON**

## **1 John 4:9 — Love Became Visible**

“This is how God’s love was shown among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.”

God did not merely tell humanity:

“I love you.”

He demonstrated His love.

He sent His Son.

God's love became visible through Jesus Christ.

## **Cross References**

### **John 3:16**

“God loved the world so greatly that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”

### **John 3:17**

“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.”

### **Romans 5:8**

“God demonstrates His own love toward us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Notice when God loved us.

Not after we became perfect.

Not after we cleaned up our lives.

Not after we earned His favor.

Scripture says:

**While we were still sinners.**

That is grace.

## **1 John 4:10 — God Loved Us First**

“This is love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the sacrifice that takes away our sins.”

John explains the direction of salvation.

It begins with God.

We did not first love Him.

**He loved us.**

We did not provide salvation.

**He provided His Son.**

## **Cross References**

### **Romans 5:8**

“God demonstrates His love for us by the fact that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.”

### **1 John 2:2**

“Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that deals with our sins, and not only ours, but the sins of the whole world.”

### **Romans 3:25**

“God presented Christ as the sacrifice for sin, received through faith in His blood. In this way God demonstrated His righteousness in dealing with sin.”

The gospel is not humanity climbing upward to reach God.

It is God reaching downward to rescue humanity.

## **Spiritual Principle**

**Grace begins with God.**

God loved.

God sent.

Christ came.

Christ sacrificed Himself.

We receive salvation through faith.

## **IX. GOD'S LOVE SHOULD FLOW THROUGH US**

### **1 John 4:11 — “We Ought to Love One Another”**

“Beloved, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

John makes the application unavoidable.

God loved us.

Therefore:

**We ought to love one another.**

## **Cross References**

### **John 13:34**

“I give you this command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.”

### **John 15:12**

“This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you.”

### **1 John 3:16**

“This is how we understand love: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. Therefore, we should be willing to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

The cross becomes the standard for Christian love.

Jesus did not merely love when it was convenient.

His love was sacrificial.

## **Application**

Ask yourself:

Is my love sacrificial?

Is my love patient?

Is my love forgiving?

Is my love practical?

Do people experience the love of Christ through me?

## **1 John 4:12 — The Invisible God Made Visible Through Love**

“No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is made complete in us.”

No human being has seen God in the fullness of His divine glory.

Yet something remarkable happens when believers love one another.

The invisible God becomes visible through the transformed lives of His people.

## **Cross References**

### **John 1:18**

“No one has ever seen God in His fullness. The one and only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, has made Him known.”

## **1 Timothy 6:16**

“God alone possesses immortality and lives in light that no one can approach. No human being has seen Him or can see Him in His full glory.”

## **1 John 3:24**

“The person who keeps God's commandments remains in Him, and He remains in that person. We know that He lives in us because of the Spirit He has given us.”

People may not see God with physical eyes.

But they should see evidence of God in Christians.

## **Spiritual Application**

When Christians:

- Forgive.
- Serve.
- Help.
- Show compassion.
- Love sacrificially.
- Demonstrate patience.
- Remain faithful.

They display something of God's character.

# **X. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES ASSURANCE**

## **1 John 4:13 — “He Has Given Us His Spirit”**

“This is how we know that we live in Him and He in us: He has given us His Spirit.”

John now gives another assurance of salvation.

God has given believers the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is not merely external religion.

God actually lives within His people through His Spirit.

## **Cross References**

### **Romans 8:9**

“You are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if God's Spirit truly lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.”

### **1 John 3:24**

“The one who keeps God's commands lives in Him, and He lives in that person. We know He lives in us by the Spirit He has given us.”

### **2 Corinthians 1:22**

“God placed His seal upon us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee of what is still to come.”

The Holy Spirit:

- Convicts.
- Teaches.
- Guides.
- Strengthens.
- Produces spiritual fruit.
- Points believers toward Christ.
- Assures believers that they belong to God.

## **Key Truth**

**The Christian life is not lived through human strength alone.**

God has given us His Spirit.

# **XI. JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD**

## **1 John 4:14 — The Apostolic Testimony**

“And we have seen and testify that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.”

John speaks as an eyewitness.

He says:

**“We have seen.”**

Then:

**“We testify.”**

The apostles did not preach a religious theory.

They testified concerning Jesus Christ.

## **Cross References**

### **John 3:17**

“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.”

### **John 1:14**

“The Word became flesh and lived among us. We saw His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son, full of grace and truth.”

### **John 4:42**

“They said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not merely because of what you told us. We have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this Man truly is the Savior of the world.’”

Jesus is:

**The Savior.**

Not merely a moral teacher.

Not merely a religious leader.

Not merely an example.

He came to save sinners.

## **1 John 4:15 — Confessing the Son of God**

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God lives in them, and they in God.”

John again returns to the believer's confession concerning Jesus.

True faith recognizes Jesus as:

**The Son of God.**

## **Cross References**

### **Romans 10:9**

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

## **Matthew 16:16**

“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

## **1 John 5:5**

“Who is the one who overcomes the world? It is the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

Faith has content.

Biblical faith is not simply:

“I believe in something.”

It is trust in the biblical Jesus Christ.

# **XII. LIVING IN GOD'S LOVE**

## **1 John 4:16 — “We Have Come to Know and Believe”**

“We have come to know and believe the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”

Notice John's words:

**Know.**

**Believe.**

It is possible to know intellectually that God loves us while struggling to truly believe and rest in that love.

John says believers have come to both know and believe God's love.

## **Cross References**

### **1 John 4:8**

“The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

### **John 15:9**

“As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love.”

### **John 17:26**

“I have made Your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love You have for Me may be in them, and I may be in them.”

The Christian life should be rooted in God's love.

We do not obey God in order to convince Him to love us.

We obey because He has loved us.

We do not serve to earn His love.

We serve because His love has changed us.

## **XIII. PERFECT LOVE GIVES CONFIDENCE**

### **1 John 4:17 — Confidence on the Day of Judgment**

“This is how love is made complete among us so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment: in this world we are like Jesus.”

John brings us forward to the day of judgment.

For many people, judgment produces terror.

But John says believers may have:

**Confidence.**

Why?

Because Christ has transformed them.

His life is increasingly reflected in theirs.

### **Cross References**

#### **1 John 2:28**

“Dear children, remain in Christ so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

#### **1 John 3:21**

“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”

#### **2 Corinthians 5:10**

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each person may receive what is appropriate for what he has done while living in the body, whether good or bad.”

Christian confidence is not based upon personal perfection.

It is based upon:

- Christ's saving work.
- God's grace.
- The believer's relationship with Christ.
- The transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

# **1 John 4:18 — Perfect Love Casts Out Fear**

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. Fear has to do with punishment, and the one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

John is speaking specifically about the fear connected with punishment and judgment.

The mature understanding of God's love replaces terror with confidence.

## **Cross References**

### **Romans 8:15**

“You did not receive a spirit that makes you slaves and leads you back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit who brings you into God's family, and by Him we cry, ‘Father.’”

### **2 Timothy 1:7**

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and sound judgment.”

### **Psalm 23:4**

“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, because You are with me. Your rod and Your staff comfort me.”

This verse does not mean Christians never experience fear.

It means fear does not need to control us.

There is a difference between:

**The reverent fear of God**

and

**The terror of condemnation.**

Believers should reverence God.

But those who belong to Christ do not need to live every day terrified that God is waiting to destroy them.

## **Important Truth**

**The more deeply we understand God's love, the less power the fear of condemnation should have over us.**

# **XIV. WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US**

## **1 John 4:19 — God Took the First Step**

“We love because He first loved us.”

This verse is short.

But it summarizes the gospel of grace.

God acted first.

God loved first.

God sent Christ first.

God offered salvation first.

## **Cross References**

### **John 15:16**

“You did not choose Me first. I chose you and appointed you to go and produce fruit that will remain.”

### **Romans 5:8**

“God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

### **Titus 3:4**

“When the kindness and love of God our Savior toward humanity appeared, He acted to save us.”

Our love for God is a response.

Our love for others is also a response.

We love because we have been loved.

## **Spiritual Principle**

**Grace received should become grace given.**

# XV. LOVE FOR GOD MUST PRODUCE LOVE FOR PEOPLE

## 1 John 4:20 — The Contradiction of Hatred

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

John uses extremely direct language.

Someone says:

**“I love God.”**

But at the same time:

**He hates his brother.**

John says:

**He is a liar.**

## Cross References

### 1 John 2:9

“The person who claims to be in the light while hating his brother is still living in darkness.”

### 1 John 3:17

“If someone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but closes his heart against him, how can God's love remain in that person?”

### Matthew 22:39

“The second command is like the first: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

John is not saying Christians will never experience:

- Conflict.
- Disappointment.
- Hurt.
- Anger.
- Disagreement.

But hatred cannot be accepted as the settled condition of the Christian heart.

God calls His people toward:

- Forgiveness.

- Mercy.
- Compassion.
- Reconciliation when possible.
- Love.

## **1 John 4:21 — The Command to Love**

“And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

John ends the chapter with a command.

Not a suggestion.

Not a preference.

A command.

## **Cross References**

### **Matthew 22:37**

“Jesus said, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’”

### **Matthew 22:39**

“The second command is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

### **Leviticus 19:18**

“Do not seek revenge or hold a grudge against your people. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

Christianity moves in two directions:

**Upward toward God.**

**Outward toward people.**

We love God.

And because we love God:

**We love others.**

# XVI. Answers for Personal Study

## Question 1

### Why does John command believers to test the spirits?

John commands believers to test the spirits because not every spiritual message comes from God. He warns that **“many false prophets have gone out into the world”** (1 John 4:1). Some people may claim divine authority while teaching spiritual error.

Testing the spirits means examining teaching carefully according to Scripture, especially what it teaches about Jesus Christ. Christians should not accept a message merely because it is popular, emotional, religious, or delivered by someone claiming to speak for God.

Biblical discernment requires us to ask:

**“Does this agree with God's revealed truth?”**

## Question 2

### What is the central test John gives for recognizing true spiritual teaching?

John directs our attention to Jesus Christ. True spiritual teaching confesses that **Jesus Christ has come in the flesh** (1 John 4:2).

This means that biblical Christianity recognizes Jesus as the divine Son who truly became human.

A teaching that denies, changes, or diminishes the biblical identity of Jesus is not merely a minor doctrinal difference. The truth about Christ stands at the center of the gospel.

The Christian must therefore know the biblical Jesus well enough to recognize a false representation of Him.

## Question 3

### What does the “spirit of antichrist” mean in 1 John 4?

John describes the spirit of antichrist as spiritual opposition to the truth about Jesus Christ.

He explains that this influence was already active in the world (1 John 4:3). This shows that opposition to Christ is not limited only to a future individual. Whenever teaching denies, distorts, or opposes the truth about Jesus, it reflects the spirit of antichrist.

This should motivate Christians not toward fear, but toward greater knowledge of Scripture and deeper faithfulness to Christ.

## Question 4

**What does it mean that “the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”?**

John is reminding Christians that God is greater than every spiritual power that opposes Him.

Believers may face:

- Temptation.
- False teaching.
- Spiritual deception.
- Opposition.
- Persecution.
- Fear.

But none of these things are greater than God.

The believer's victory is not based upon personal strength.

It is based upon God's presence.

**The Christian can stand confidently because the God who lives within His people is greater than the enemy who opposes them.**

## Question 5

**Why can false teaching become popular?**

John explains that false teachers belong to the world and therefore speak from the world's viewpoint. Because their teaching agrees with worldly thinking, **“the world listens to them”** (1 John 4:5).

This teaches us an important lesson:

**Popularity does not prove truth.**

A message can attract crowds and still be wrong.

A preacher can become famous and still teach error.

A teaching can become culturally accepted and still contradict Scripture.

Christians should therefore anchor their faith in God's Word rather than human approval.

## Question 6

**What does John mean when he says, “God is love”?**

John is describing an essential part of God's character.

God's love is:

- Holy.
- Faithful.
- Righteous.
- Compassionate.
- Sacrificial.
- Merciful.

The statement **“God is love”** does not mean that every idea people call love is automatically approved by God.

God defines love according to His own holy character.

The greatest demonstration of God's love is Jesus Christ.

God loved us and sent His Son so that we might receive life through Him.

## **Question 7**

**How did God demonstrate His love for us?**

God demonstrated His love by sending His one and only Son into the world so that sinners could receive life through Him (1 John 4:9).

John makes it clear that salvation began with God.

He says:

**“Not that we loved God, but that He loved us”** (1 John 4:10).

God did not wait for humanity to become worthy of salvation.

Romans 5:8 explains that Christ died for us **while we were still sinners**.

God's love was therefore demonstrated through action.

He loved.

He sent.

Christ came.

Christ died.

Salvation was provided.

## Question 8

**How should God's love toward us affect the way we treat other people?**

John gives the answer directly:

**“Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”** (1 John 4:11).

Those who receive God's love should become people who demonstrate God's love.

This involves:

- Forgiving others.
- Helping those in need.
- Showing compassion.
- Serving others.
- Being patient.
- Refusing bitterness.
- Showing kindness.
- Speaking truth in love.
- Sacrificing for others when necessary.

God's love should not stop with us.

**It should flow through us.**

## Question 9

**What does “perfect love casts out fear” mean?**

John is specifically discussing fear connected with punishment and judgment.

When believers understand and rest in God's love, they do not have to live under constant terror that God is waiting to condemn them.

Christ has provided salvation.

God has given His Spirit.

Believers have been brought into God's family.

This does not eliminate reverence for God. Christians should still honor God's holiness and take His Word seriously.

But mature faith replaces the terror of condemnation with confidence in God's grace.

## **Question 10**

**Can someone truly claim to love God while continually hating another believer?**

John answers this very directly.

He says that anyone who claims, **“I love God,”** while hating his brother is lying (1 John 4:20).

Why?

Because our relationship with God affects our relationships with people.

This does not mean Christians never experience hurt, disagreement, anger, or conflict.

It means hatred cannot be allowed to become the permanent settled condition of the Christian heart.

The person who loves God is commanded to love his brother.

## **Personal Application**

1 John 4 gives us a powerful progression:

**Truth must be tested.**

**Testing leads us to Christ.**

**Christ reveals the truth about God.**

**God's Spirit lives within believers.**

**God's Spirit is greater than the spirit of the world.**

**God's love was revealed through Christ.**

**Receiving God's love leads us to love others.**

**Mature love produces confidence.**

**Confidence drives away the terror of condemnation.**

**Love for God becomes visible through love for people.**

1 John 4 does not allow us to separate **truth from love.**

We need both.

Truth without love can become harsh.

Love without truth can become deception.

The Christian is called to:

**Stand firmly in truth and walk faithfully in love.**

# **XVII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE**

## **“Test the Voice, Know the Christ, and Show the Love”**

1 John 4 gives Christians three responsibilities.

First:

### **Test the voice.**

Not every spiritual message comes from God.

Second:

### **Know the Christ.**

The better we know Jesus through Scripture, the easier it becomes to recognize teachings that distort Him.

Third:

### **Show the love.**

Christianity does not end with correct doctrine.

Truth should transform the heart.

And a transformed heart should become visible in the way we treat people.

There is a dangerous imbalance when someone claims to defend truth but continually treats people with hatred.

There is also a dangerous imbalance when someone claims to practice love while abandoning biblical truth.

God calls us to both.

### **Truth protects love from becoming deception.**

### **Love protects truth from becoming cold and lifeless.**

The mature Christian holds firmly to Christ and walks faithfully in love.

# **XVIII. FINAL APPLICATION**

1 John 4 asks us several searching questions.

### **What voices am I listening to?**

Not every voice should have access to your mind.

Test what you hear.

Compare it with Scripture.

Examine what it says about Jesus.

Do not allow popularity to replace truth.

Then ask:

**What do I believe about Jesus?**

He is not merely a teacher.

He is the Son of God.

He came in the flesh.

He is the Savior of the world.

Then ask:

**Am I living in fear?**

John reminds us:

**The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**

Do not magnify the enemy until you minimize God.

God is greater.

Then ask:

**Do I truly understand God's love?**

God did not merely tell us He loved us.

He demonstrated it.

He sent His Son.

Christ became the sacrifice for our sins.

Then ask:

**Does God's love show through my life?**

It is easy to say:

“I love God.”

John asks us to look at how we treat people.

Do we forgive?

Do we serve?

Do we show compassion?

Do we hold grudges?

Do we help those in need?

Do we love our brothers and sisters?

John's message is unmistakable:

**You cannot separate loving God from loving people.**

Therefore:

Test every spirit.

Know God's Word.

Know Jesus Christ.

Stand against error.

Do not fear spiritual opposition.

Remember that God is greater.

Receive God's love.

Live in God's love.

And allow that love to become visible through your life.

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us Your Word so that we can recognize truth and reject error.

Give us wisdom and discernment.

Help us not to believe every spiritual claim simply because it sounds religious.

Teach us to test what we hear according to Scripture.

Help us know Jesus Christ more deeply so that we can recognize teachings that distort who He is.

Thank You that Jesus truly came into the world.

Thank You that He is Your Son.

Thank You that He is the Savior of the world.

When spiritual opposition surrounds us, remind us that **the One who lives within us is greater than the one who is in the world.**

Keep us from fear.

Give us courage.

Give us faith.

Thank You for loving us before we ever loved You.

Thank You for sending Your Son as the sacrifice for our sins.

Help us understand the greatness of Your love.

Then help us demonstrate that love toward others.

Remove bitterness from our hearts.

Remove hatred.

Remove unforgiveness.

Give us compassion.

Give us patience.

Give us kindness.

Teach us to love our brothers and sisters as Christ has loved us.

May our lives demonstrate both Your truth and Your love.

May we stand firmly upon Your Word without compromise.

And may we treat people with the grace, compassion, and love of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

## Key Verse

**“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.” — 1 John 4:4**

## Central Truth

**Believers must test every spiritual message by the truth about Jesus Christ while demonstrating the reality of their faith through genuine love for God and one another.**

## 1 John 4 in One Sentence

**Test every spirit by the truth of Christ, trust the God who is greater than the world, receive His perfect love, and let that love become visible in the way you treat others.**