

# An In-Depth Study of the First Letter of Apostle John

## [Part 6]

**1 John 4:1-3** [NIV] *“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. This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 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.”*

To test the spirits, means we should **not** believe everything we hear, just because that person says their message is inspired by God.

There are many ways to test teachers to see if their message truly is from God.

- 1 Check to see if their message matches what God tells us in His Word, the Christian Bible.
- 2 Are these teachers committed to serving all who believe God’s Word, the Christian Bible, or are they seeking to draw people away from Christian fellowships to follow them?
- 3 What is the “*fruit*” of their ministry? Are they helping others to develop the “*fruits*” of the Holy Spirit? [**Galatians 5:22-23**]
- 4 Does this teacher’s lifestyle harmonise with what they are preaching and that of our Saviour Jesus Christ?
- 5 Does this teacher believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human?

Unfortunately, many ideas printed and taught are **not** true. Christians should have faith in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, but **not** be gullible to some teacher’s interpretation of the scriptures.

If the teacher’s message is truly from God, it will be consistent with Christ’s recorded teachings and those of His Holy Spirit inspired apostles, as recorded in God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

Any teacher who fails the above tests will be a teacher influenced by a spirit other than the Holy Spirit.

They will be among those who are influenced by the spirit of antichrist.

**1 John 4:4** [NIV] *“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.”*

True Christians do **not** need to fear the influence of these false teachers who are part of the “*spirit of antichrist*.”

Why?

**Romans 8:9** [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

The true Christian is controlled by the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Jesus Christ.

**2 Timothy 1:7** [King James] *“For God hath **not** given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

The indwelling Holy Spirit gives us confidence in God’s power so we do **not** fear death or anything that humans may do to us.

**John 16:13** [NIV] *“But when he, **the Spirit of truth**, comes, he **will guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

The Holy Spirit will show us what is true and what is false, as we have God’s Word, the Christian Bible, opened up to our understanding by Him.

This is why we overcome the influence of these false ministers who are influenced by the spirit of antichrist.

**1 John 4:5** [NIV] *“They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.”*

Those who have **not yet** been blessed with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will listen to and be deceived by these false ministers of antichrist.

**1 John 4:6** [NIV] *“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 recognise the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.”*

True Christians who are influenced by the indwelling Holy Spirit, will be able to distinguish who are influenced and speak as from God and those who are speaking on behalf of the spirit of antichrist.

False teachers are popular with the world because they tell people what they want to hear. People do **not** like to hear their sins denounced; they do **not** want to listen to demands from God’s true ministers, that they change their behaviour.

True Christians who teach God’s Word, the Christian Bible, will never win any popularity contests in this world.

A false teacher will be well received by non-Christians.

**1 John 4:7-8** [NIV] *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”*

The only source of true love is the Creator God.

Everyone believes that love is important in life, but the love most people know and express is emotional, a feeling we experience.

**True love is a choice and an action.**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** [NIV] *“Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It does **not envy**, it does **not boast**, it is **not proud**. It is **not rude**, it is **not self-seeking**, it is **not easily angered**, it **keeps no record of wrongs**. Love does **not delight in evil** but rejoices with the truth. It **always protects**, always **trusts**, always **hopes**, always **perseveres**.”*

Each of these qualities is a choice that leads to a loving action.

The meaning of the Greek word used in this passage of scripture is “*agapé*,” a spontaneous love, irrespective of the rights or response of the person receiving this love, a sacrificial love where any selfish desires are sacrificed in order to show this love to others.

This “*agapé*” love **cannot** be generated by human will.

**Galatians 5:22-25** [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

This “*agapé*” love is the first and foremost “*fruit*” of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of a true Christian.

**1 John 4:9-12** [NIV] *“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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*

Two things are shown to us in this passage of scripture, that are vital to our maturing as Christians.

1 Jesus Christ is the perfect example of this “*agapé*” love in action.

As we study and reflect His life we are also expressing this “*agapé*” love.

2 Only when we allow this love to be our choice and action in life will the very character [“*likeness*” of **Genesis 1:26**] of our Creator God be formed and made complete in our lives.

As physical human beings we **cannot** see the Creator God in His glorified state and live, but if we look at the life of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, we can see God and reflect His character. [**John 14:9**]

**1 John 4:13** [NIV] *“We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”*

Again the apostle John reminds us that we are only a true Christian when the Holy Spirit is working in us and directing our lives.

**1 John 4:14-15** [NIV] *“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.”*

Note what our response must be. To testify to all who will listen that Jesus Christ is the **only** Saviour of humanity, as the **only** non-created Son of God.

**1 John 4:16** [NIV] *“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.”*

If we are living this “*agapé*” lifestyle of love for God and all other human beings, we can have confidence that God is living in us and working through us to fulfil His will that all humans will eventually repent and acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Saviour. [**2 Peter 3:9**]

**1 John 4:17** [NIV] *“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.”*

This is the only way we can have confidence when we stand before Jesus Christ on our day of judgement. [**2 Corinthians 5:10**]

**1 John 4:18** [NIV] *“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.”*

When love comes, fear goes, because fear is the characteristic emotion of someone who expects to be punished.

As long as we regard God as judge, king and law-giver, we can expect nothing but punishment and even annihilation.

But once we come to know God is love [“*agapé*” love], fear is swallowed up in this love that God is.

Fear of punishment is replaced by a fear of grieving the God who loves us beyond our human understanding.

**Romans 8:35-39** [NIV] *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

This is as near that words can evaluate this love that God has for every human being.

Does this make God a “*soft touch*”?

No!

For our own present and future life God expects of us certain moral standards that in the end will help us respond to this love that God has for us.

**Hebrews 12:5-11** [Phillips Translation] *“You have perhaps lost sight of that piece of advice which reminds you of your sonship in God, My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him. For whom the Lord loves the chastens and scourges every son whom he receives. Bear what you have to bear as chastening, as God is dealing with you as sons. No true son ever grows up uncorrected by his father. For if you had no experience of correction which all sons have to bear you might well doubt the legitimacy of your sonship. After all, when we were children we had fathers who corrected us, and we respected them for it. Can we not much more readily submit to the discipline of the father of men's souls, and learn how to live? For our fathers used to correct us according to their own ideas during the brief days of our childhood. But God corrects us all our days for our own benefit, to teach us His holiness. Now obviously no chastening seems pleasant at the time, it is in fact most unpleasant. Yet when it is over we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit.*

**1 John 4:19** [NIV] *“We love because he first loved us.”*

We only know what true godly love is when God shows us by His love for us. God did this through the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. [**John 3:16-17**]

Unless love is a free response it is **not** true love.

There can be **no** true love unless it is spontaneous love.

**Romans 12:1-2** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

This is the loving response to the love that God has for us and has expressed in His mercy.

We allow God's mercy and love to mould us into beings who will find great joy and fulfilment in God's presence for eternity.

Only if we reject this mercy and love of God does God have to punish us, out of love, with eternal death.

Such a free decision to reject God would make us into a being who would be totally “*out of place*” in God’s family and bring pain and suffering on God’s true created children, as well as God Himself.

**1 John 4:20-21** [NIV] *“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. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”*

As physical human beings the **only** way we can express the love we have for our Creator God is to love other human beings.

It is easy to say we love God when that love does **not** cost us anything more than weekly attendance at religious services. But the real test of our love for God is how we treat other human beings every day of the week.

We **cannot** truly love God and neglect to love other human beings who are made in His “*image*”.  
[**Genesis 1:26**]