

1 John 4:1-10 – Test the Spirits

In John 13:34, Jesus told his disciples that they needed to love one another as he loved them. John understood that this command did not just apply to the disciples at the Last Supper. The command to love one another is a command for all Christians. By loving our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we prove that we are truly disciples of Christ. Jesus proved his love for us by laying down his life for us. We need to love not with words only but also with deeds. If we know a brother or sister in Christ has a need and we have the means to provide for that need, we should give as Christ gave.

Read 1 John 4:1-6.

In 1 John 2:18-27, John talked about the many antichrists that had already come into the world. Antichrists deny that Jesus is the Christ. They deny the Father and the Son. This current passage again addresses antichrists. John said that we should not automatically believe every spirit. He said that we need to test the spirits. When he talked about “spirits” what was he talking about? There is a big hint in the second half of verse 1. John had already written about some ways to test teaching and to determine whether or not it is from God. What are some of the ways we can detect false teaching based on the first 3 chapters of 1 John? Based on the second half of verse 1, why do we need to test the spirits? (4:1)

Based on verse 2, how can we know if someone is speaking by God’s Spirit?

How do we know when someone is a false teacher or a false prophet? (4:3)

In verse 1, John said that “many false prophets have gone out into the world”. In 1 John 2:18, John said “so now many antichrists have come”. In verse 3, John said that the spirit of the antichrist “now is in the world already”. Are the false prophets the same as the antichrists? Why or why not?

In verse 4, what encouragement and confidence did John give to the recipients of the letter? Who is in them? Who is the one in the world? (4:4)

Who was John talking about when he said “They are from [of] the world”? Since they are of the world, they speak of the world. Who listens to them? Can you think of any general examples of people who fit the profile of false prophets or antichrists in our time? (4:5)

John said “we are of God”. Who listens to someone from God? Based on verse 6, how can we discern between someone who is of God and someone who has a spirit of deceit / error? (4:6)

Read 1 John 4:7-10.

The phrase “love one another” appears 10 times in the writings of John. 4 are in the Gospel. 5 are in 1 John. 1 is in 2 John. When we love one another, what is the source of our love? What is true of us if we love one another? (4:7)

What is true of someone who does not love? In 1 John 1:5, John said that God is light. In verse 8, John said that God is love. How has this truth been twisted? What does it mean that “God is love”? (4:8)

Based on verse 9, how has God demonstrated his love for us? What famous verse does this remind you of?

Did we love God first or did God love us first? Why does the order matter? (4:10)

Verse 9 said that God sent Jesus into the world “so that we might live through him”. Verse 10 gives a related reason why God sent Jesus into the world. Part of verse 10 is similar to 1 John 2:2 in that it says that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. What is a “propitiation”? Can you give another example of a propitiation?

It is important to remember God’s love in sending Jesus to die for us so that we might live. Knowing God’s love for us, how should this change how we think about ourselves? How should it change our perspective during difficult times?