

STUDY GUIDE 8

1 John 4

Study warm-up: Do you consider yourself a theologian? Why or why not?

OBSERVATION – Lord, help me to discover it!

In chapter 4, John elaborates on the two parts of God's commandment that he gave near the end of the previous chapter. As you begin your study of chapter 4, review 1 John 3:23 to set the context:

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

Read 1 John 4:1-6. Pay attention to every occurrence of *from God*.

1. How do you identify that a spirit is truly from God and is one which you should believe?

2. Read 1 John 4:4-6 again. Note the different pronouns with which each sentence begins. Complete the table:

Subject Pronoun	Subject Pronoun refers to:	are from:	and are listened to by... (if applicable)	and are NOT listened to by... (if applicable)
v. 4				
v. 5				
v. 6				

(If you need a little help with to whom the subject pronoun is referring in verse 6, look back at 1 John 1:1-4.)

Now let's look at what John expands about the second half the command from 1 John 3:23.

Read 1 John 4:7-21.

3. Let's breakdown John's teaching on *love* in these verses. As you respond to each question, note the verse number(s) in which you find the answer.

a. From where/whom/what does this love originate?

b. Who loves in this manner and what does it indicate about them?

- c. How is God's love associated with our sin?
- d. What is the connection between love and remaining (abiding)?
- e. How does this love prepare us for the day of judgment?

INTERPRETATION – Lord, help me to understand it.

In distinguishing between the *spirit of truth* and the *spirit of error* (verse 6) the key test John provides is to look at what each sided confesses about Jesus Christ (verses 2.)

The Greek word for *confess* in 1 John 4:2 is *homologeō* (G3670.) As used here, it means “to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep conviction of facts.” (Vines)

4. Read about the unclean spirits' response to Jesus in Mark 3:7-12. How does their "confession" differ from a believer confessing Jesus Christ?

The Greek word for *love* in chapter 4 is *agape* (G26.) You may already know that this differs from romantic love (*eros*) and brotherly love (*philia*.) By letting Scripture interpret Scripture, let's look at what distinguishes *agape*.

5. From the following Scriptures, what do you discern about love (*agape*, G62?)
- a. 1 John 4:9-10

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- b. Romans 5:8

c. 1 Corinthians 13

d. Galatians 5:13

6. With a better idea of what *agape* involves, explain what John intends when he tells believers to love their brothers and sisters?

APPLICATION – Lord, help me to live it!

9. How comfortable are you distinguishing between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error? How does a Christian grow in the area of discernment?

10. How do you demonstrate *agape* to the difficult people in your life?

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CONTEMPLATION:

- I) Why is it so paramount to get our theology (“the study of God”) correct?
- II) How does the Holy Spirit safeguard us against the “spirit of error?”
- III) Does loving others ever require us to compromise truth for the sake of a different goal, say, *unity*?
- IV) Why do believers need to be commanded to love one another?

 *Cole Women's Bible Study Writing Team, 2023*

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 8

□ Mark 3:7-12

⁷ Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, ⁸ and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. ⁹ And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; ¹⁰ for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. ¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" ¹² And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

□ Romans 5:8

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

□ 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give

all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. ¹³ But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

□ **Galatians 5:13**

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

□ **Matthew 5:43-48**

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

