

Study Guide #7

Virtual Study of I John – 1 John 4:1-21 Bellevue Church of Christ – Summer / Fall 2020

John is again looking
in two directions

Locate the Spirits (1-6)

1Jn 3:24 "the Spirit who he has given us."

(1) Christians have to be equipped to test whether or not these spirits are truly from God. How do we do that?

-Phil 1:9-11

(4) The Spirit in believers is greater than the false spirit in the antichrists!

-1Jn 3:24; Acts 2:38

Love the Saints (7-5:12)

Love one Another (7)

-1Jn 2:7-11; 3:10-24
-Jn 13:31-35

The love he describes is not naturally within us, because it is from God

(9) John 3:16

(10) True love can only be given to God after it has first been received from Him through His Son. It exists only as a response to what He has done for us.

No one has ever seen God (12)

This is a humbling, terrifying statement because it indicates the ONLY way in which the world will see God is through the love we reflect from God within the community of believers.

-Jn 1:14-18

(17-18) God's love is perfected by the love shown within the community of believers. This leads to confidence in eternity (Rom 5:1-5), which replaces fear of judgment.

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¹Beloved, do not believe every **spirit**, but *test the spirits* to see **whether they are from God**, for many **false prophets** have gone out into the world.

²By this you know the **Spirit of God**: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the **spirit of the antichrist**, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. <- *Parallels 2:18-27 concerning antichrists*

⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for **he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world**.

⁵They are **from the world**; therefore they *speak from the world*, and the *world listens to them*.

⁶We are **from God**. Whoever knows **God listens to us**; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

⁷Beloved, let us **love one another**, for love is **from God**, and whoever **loves** has been **born of God** and knows God.

⁸Anyone who does **not love** does **not know God**, because **God is love**.

⁹In this the **love of God** was made manifest among us, that **God sent his only Son into the world**, so that we might live through him.

¹⁰In this is **love**, not that we have **loved God** but that **he loved us** and **sent his Son** to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, if **God so loved us**, we also **ought to love one another**.

¹²**No one has ever seen God**; if **we love one another**, God abides in us and **his love is perfected in us**.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because **he has given us of his Spirit**. <- *1Jn 3:24; Acts 2:38; Rom 8:9-11*

¹⁴And **we have seen and testify** that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <- *We = Apostles - 1Jn 1:1-4*

¹⁵Whoever **confesses that Jesus is the Son of God**, God abides in him, and he in God.

¹⁶So we have come to **know** and to **believe** the **love** that God has for us. **God is love**, and whoever abides in **love abides in God**, and **God abides in him**. <- *Have to KNOW before we can BELIEVE*

¹⁷By this is **love perfected with us**, so that **we may have confidence for the day of judgment**, because as he is so also are we in this world.

¹⁸There is **no fear in love**, but perfect **love casts out fear**. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in **love**.

¹⁹We **love** because **he first loved us**.

²⁰If anyone says, "**I love God**," and **hates his brother**, he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother** whom he has seen **cannot love God** whom he has not seen. <- *HORIZONTAL and VERTICAL relationship*

²¹And this commandment we have from him: **whoever loves God must also love his brother**. <- *Mt 22:34-40; Mk 12:28-31*

(1) Tests to know the Spirit of God

(2) Tests to know the spirit of the antichrist

(2-3) The false spirits will deny the Christ came in the flesh.

-Mk 13:22-23

(5) The world listens to the false prophets, because their message accommodates the world's beliefs.

(6) Belief of the gospel is the true test of the Holy Spirit's presence and work. In order to detect false prophets and evil spirits, we MUST be people who listen to and follow God's word!

-Jn 8:39-47

God is Love (8, 16)

*Love is not just one of God's many activities but rather all His activity is loving activity, because that is His nature.

*Our failure to love can only mean that we have no true knowledge of God, we have not really been born of him, we do not have his nature.

(11) We must be loving because He is loving...God's love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom we have received (Rom 5:5). This love must motivate us to love each other.

(15) Confesses Jesus as opposed to anything else. (2:24)

-Confession is more than just speaking His name, but implies faith, belief, obedience, etc.

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Virtual Study of I John – 1 John 4:1-21
Bellevue Church of Christ – Summer / Fall 2020

Article

God is Love...What are We?

In I John 4:7-21, the apostle digs deeper into a topic he has already covered extensively: a Christian's love of their brother. This was first introduced as a test of being in the light in 2:7-11. The command to love was also identified as a test of being born of God in 3:11-24. In chapter four, the love of fellow believers is described as representation of the Father's being and activity ("God is Love" vv. 8, 16)

In preparing for the sermon this morning, I spent a lot of time thinking about the ways we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. This led me to ask myself the following question...Why is it that in spite of all the anti-Christian sentiment that is pervasive in this country, I receive more direct persecution from fellow-Christians over my strongly held beliefs than anyone else? On the surface it may sound like an absurd question, but I truly believe it is accurately stated.

We expect the world to mock us. We expect non-Christians to persecute us for our beliefs. However, when these things come from inside the church, or the Christian community at large, it can feel like a blindside attack. Some of this persecution might seem fairly trivial, because it stems from different interpretations of the Bible, or accusations that I am "too conservative," "too literal," "legalistic," or something similar. I don't like these types of attacks, but understand that it comes with the territory of holding a conservative view of scripture.

However, some attacks from fellow Christians go beyond simple differences in interpretation and get more to differences in priority. For example, sometimes U.S. citizenship can supersede heavenly citizenship in priority, causing Christians to attack others in the church who are viewed as not doing enough for their country. How does this benefit the kingdom of God? What does this communicate to the world?

Now if I turn the tables on this question, and look at myself, what do I see? How do I treat my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? Am I any better than those who attack me? I am humbled by John saying in v. 12 that "No one has ever seen God." He said the same thing in his gospel in 1:18 as it relates to God being made known through the Son who came in the flesh. However, I think John's intent here is different. The Son is no longer on the earth with us, and he is emphasizing that it is now through the love within the community of believers that God is made known to the world.

How does my own love of fellow believers serve to represent God to the world?

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1 John 4:1–21 (ESV)

I. Locate the Spirits (1-6)

Warning Against False Spirits (parallels 2:18-27 concerning antichrists)

1 John 2:18–27 (ESV)

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

1 John 4:1–6 (ESV)

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

*This second warning concerns the spirit of the antichrist, who is inspiring false prophets. Per v.5, these prophets were very successful in their message, which may make them seem authentic. **Christians have to be equipped to test whether or not these spirits are truly from God.***

Mark 13:22–23 (ESV)

²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

Philippians 1:9–11 (ESV)

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⁹ *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

As is typical, John looks at this from both directions. The false spirits can be detected because they will deny Jesus Christ came in the flesh. These early Gnostics believe that Jesus did not come in the flesh because he was a spiritual being, and spirit and flesh could not intersect.

⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

The community of faith will overcome the false prophets because believers belong to God, and the Spirit in them is greater than the false spirit. The false prophets do not have the Spirit of God.

1 John 3:24 (ESV)

²⁴ *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

³⁸ *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.

The world listens to the false prophets. Their message accommodates the world's beliefs....you can live however you feel, and it will not affect your spirit.

⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

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The children of God listen to the apostolic declaration. Belief of the gospel is the true test of the Holy Spirit's presence and work. In order to detect false prophets and evil spirits, we MUST be people who listen to God's word!

John 8:39–47 (ESV)

³⁹ They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

II. Love the Saints

Requirements for Fellowship With God Who Is Love (4:7–5:12)

The third main division of the epistle has as its major thesis an analysis of love. Love of one's brother was first introduced as a test of living in God who is light (2:9–11). The command to love received an even more significant treatment as a test of being born of God who is righteous (3:10–24). Here love of fellow believers finds its most complete representation in the Father's own being and activity.¹

1 John 2:7–11 (ESV)

⁷ Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. ⁸ At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 3:10–24 (ESV)

¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

¹⁹ By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴ Whoever

¹ Barker, G. W. (1981). 1 John. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation* (Vol. 12, p. 342). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

John 13:31–35 (ESV)

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

God is Love (vv. 8, 16)

1 John 4:7–21 (ESV)

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

“Beloved” makes clear that the author is speaking primarily to the community itself. The type of love he describes is not naturally within us, because it is from God. John revisits the idea of brotherly love being a requirement of knowing God, just as he did in Chapter 2.

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

Love so conceived is not to be understood as one of God’s many activities but rather that “all His activity is loving activity. If He creates, He creates in love; if He rules, He rules in love; if He judges, He judges in love. All that He does is the expression of His nature, is—to love” (Dodd, Johannine Epistles, p. 110). Since this is true of God, our failure to love can only mean that we have no true knowledge of God, we have not really been born of him, we do not have his nature.²

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his **only** Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

John 3:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his **only** Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

² Barker, G. W. (1981). 1 John. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation* (Vol. 12, p. 342). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

True Agape love can only be given to God after it has first been received from Him through His Son who paid for our sins. It exists only as a response to what He has done for us. His act through His Son was what love required of Him.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Now he directs attention to God's own example: "Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." The nature of the argument is not properly deductive but analogical, as Bruce (p. 109) has shown: "If the children of God must be holy because He is holy (Lev 11:44f; 1 Pet 1:15f and merciful because He is merciful (Lk 6:36), so they must be loving because He is loving—not with the 'must' of external compulsion but with the 'must' of inward constraint: God's love is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit whom they have received (Rom 5:5).³

Romans 5:5 (ESV)

⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

¹²**No one has ever seen God**; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

See below. God's love which originates in Himself (7, 8) and was manifested in His Son (9, 10) is perfected in His people (12)

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9–11 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead

³ Barker, G. W. (1981). 1 John. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation* (Vol. 12, p. 343). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

We = Apostles – Those who had direct knowledge of Jesus' earthly life. Direct contradiction of early Gnostic teaching concerning Jesus.

1 John 1:1–4 (ESV)

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Confesses Jesus as opposed to anything else. (2:24) – Confession here carries with it more than just speaking his name, but implies faith, belief, submission, etc.

¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

We have to know about the love of God before we can believe. We have to KNOW the word of God before we can BELIEVE it!

¹⁷By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

God's love is perfected by the love shown within the community of believers. This love leads to confidence in eternity, which replaces fear. This fear is not the same as reverence or awe, but instead fear of eternal death.

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Romans 5:1–5 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

¹⁹We love because he first loved us. See v.7

²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Horizontal and Vertical relationship must both be in place

²¹And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Matthew 22:34–40 (ESV)

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Mark 12:28–31 (ESV)

²⁸ And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

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“No one has ever seen God” (v. 12)

This is a humbling, terrifying statement because it implies that the ONLY way in which the world will see God is through the love we reflect from God within the community of believers.

John had used this exact phrase before in his gospel...

John 1:14–18 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ **No one has ever seen God**; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

In 1:18 above, John is stating this as it relates to God being made known through the Son who came in the flesh (The Word – v. 14). However, I think John’s intent in I John 4:12 is different. The Son is no longer on the earth with us, and he is emphasizing that it is now through the love within the community of believers that God is made known to the world.

What have I seen or experienced:

- Been called many names over the years by fellow Christians because of my conservative view of scripture.

In Business:

- Openly lied to by Christians in order to gain a business advantage.
- Stabbed in the back, or generally treated unethically or immorally by Christians because business was a higher priority than Christianity.

In Politics

- Chastised by fellow Christians for my lack of involvement in political or governmental matters.
- I know some who have been angrily chastised and openly mocked on Social Media by fellow Christians regarding their plans for the upcoming presidential election.
- I know some who have been angrily chastised and openly mocked on Social Media over their decision to no longer shop at Target, Starbucks, etc. There are reasonable points made on both sides of this argument, but is this something worth fighting another Christian over?

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Social Media

- Constantly see divisive statements posted on Facebook or Twitter by Christians that can only be for the purpose of initiating conflict.
- Knock-down, drag-out arguments between Christians on Facebook over politics or other matters.

How does my own love of fellow believers serve to represent God to the world?

- When we have knock-down, drag-out arguments on Facebook over politics, does the world see God there?
- When we openly fight with or mock our brother or sister about their plans regarding the upcoming election, does the world see God there?
- When we openly fight with or mock our brother or sister about their decision regarding whether or not to shop at Target, Starbucks, etc., does the world see God there?
- When we treat other Christians unethically in business matters, does the world see God there?
- If the world does not see God in the interactions we have as a community of believers, where do we expect they will see God?