

**Scripture Reference:** 1 John 4

**Date:** May 25, 2014

**Title:** "Testing the spirit"

**Focus:** The Danger of Self-Deception (John Series 4 of 7)

Uncertainty is a paralyzing force. It can literally freeze a person in his steps. Furthermore, uncertainty is disconcerting, disturbing to the heart, because a person is robbed of assurance and therefore peace.

At times I hear people say something like this, "I hope I'm alright with God," like there is no way a person can know with certainty whether or not they are abiding in the life of God.

As John moves into this portion of his writing, he speaks about how people can know, with certainty, whether or not they abide in the life of God and He is present with them.

## **v. 1; John warns of competing *spirits***

What does he mean by this? Traditionally we have understood this to refer to demonic influence vs. that of the Holy Spirit.

There is validity in this position. Satan seeks to deceive, and if possible will (2 Cor, 11:14)

However, this is not the only source of deceptive spirit John is referencing. John has just come off of a discussion with them about the heart.

1 John 3:19-22; *“This, then, is how we will know that we belong to the truth; this is how we will be confident in God’s presence. If our conscience [heart] condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience [heart] and that he knows everything. And so, my dear friends, if our conscience [heart] does not condemn us, we have courage in God’s presence.”*

Therefore, it only makes sense that here he is talking about the *spirit* of a person, their self-perception, perspective, and opinion.

John is warning them against self-deception as well as that which may come from another person. Jesus did as well.

Matt. 7:15; *"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?"*

## **vv. 2-3; Distinguishing spirits**

Since being deceived by one’s self or another is a real danger, John lays out a very simple and clear explanation of how to distinguish the truth from the lie.

Truth Agrees with Jesus

Lies Do Not

If God is moving on a person's heart to act, it will concur with what is witnessed in the life of Jesus.

When he says, "confess," is he not limiting this to words. He is saying it will testify to Jesus in word, actions, and His very person.

If the desire of a person's heart, the words he is saying, or the actions he is carrying out do not, then this person is not motivated by God.

It is that simple.

*James 1:19-20; "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."*

## **vv. 4-5; The Promise of Being in Relationship with God is a Changed Life (Eternal Life)**

Transformation is possible, leaving behind a life dominated by what one personally thinks, feels, or desires, is possible, because God is now joined to the life of the disciple.

*v. 4; "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."*

This is an assurance of sin and the devil, whether that influence comes from without, or within.

There is a fundamental difference between people who are experiencing eternal life and those who are not. The disciple needs to recognize this.

2 Cor. 6:14-16; “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, *or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said. I will dwell in them and walk among them. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*”

## **vv. 6-12; God Will Manifest Himself Through Love**

Those in relationship with God **will demonstrate** His love in thought, word, and deed. If God’s love is absent, that person **is not experiencing** God.

John leaves no doubt as to this fact.

1 John 4:8; “*The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*”

We attempt to redefine or measure love differently than God has plainly laid out. Love is simple in its identification:

John 15:13; “*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*”

This is what John appeals to in vv. 9-11.

## **vv. 13-21; The Manifestation of God’s Love Assures Believers They Belong to Him**

People cannot produce the quality of love demonstrated by God. It only comes as a result of God’s abiding presence

It is its presence that proves who God is and that the words and service of Jesus are true (v. 14).

The presence of God’s love gives disciples the peace of knowing they are loved of God and have escaped His wrath.

1 John 4:16-17; “*We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.*”

## The Last 18 Inches

John closes this portion of his lesson with these words, “*this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also*” (v. 21).

Be honest with yourself, do you harbor, express, and demonstrate love of such a quality that it undoubtedly comes from God?

Many disciples do not, because we do not accept that the life of God dwells in us. Therefore, we do not pursue His life, we express own.

This leads to unbelievers, who do not experience God, accepting that as long as they love with their own ability, they are okay with God.

It is simple, If God dwells with you, you will manifest His love. If a person does not manifest His love, God does not dwell with that person.