

— 1 John —
Lesson #13 Chapter 4:1-6

Read 1 John chapter 4 to discover practical help in discerning truth from error. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to ways you can apply the truths from this section to your life.

1. First John 3:24 ends with John explaining how we can know the Lord Jesus abides in us. What helpful information is given in 1 John 3:24?
2. What is the *connecting thought or word* between John's encouragement in 1 John 3:24 and his shift in focus in 1 John 4:1?
3. What command is given in 1 John 4:1 and to whom?
4. What *reason* is given for this wise counsel according to verse 1? How does the reason for the command make *obeying* this command of utmost importance? See also Jeremiah 29:8-9; Matthew 7:15; 24:4-5, 11, 24; Ephesians 6:11-17; 2 Peter 2:1.
5. As you consider how to implement 1 John 4:1, what *quality or qualities* must every believer possess and/or employ? See Proverbs 14:15; John 5:39; Acts 17:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 3:14; Titus 1:9; Jude 3-4.

6. It might seem a bit daunting to obey the command given in 1 John 4:1, yet John doesn't leave us hanging. How do verses 2-3 help you "test" what a teacher's message?
7. What's the big deal about not recognizing that Jesus came in the flesh or acknowledging Him as God (verses 2-3)? See John 1:14; 1 John 1:2; 2:22, 23; 2 John 7.
- a. Now look at Hebrews 2:14-15; 9:11-12; 10:4, 10, 19-22 to gain further insight into why it's essential to recognize Jesus' full humanity and deity.
- b. What kind of fallout in our faith can happen as a result of denying Jesus' life on earth "in the flesh"?

"To deny the reality of the incarnation has certain definite consequences.

- (1) It is to deny that Jesus can ever be our example. If he was not in any real sense a man, living under the same conditions as other men and women, he cannot show them how to live.
- (2) It is to deny that Jesus can be the high priest who opens the way to God. The true high priest, as the writer to the Hebrews saw, must be like us in all things, knowing our weaknesses and our temptations (Hebrews 4:14–15). To lead people to God, the high priest must be human, or else he will be pointing them to a road which it is impossible for them to take.
- (3) It is to deny that Jesus can in any real sense be Saviour. To save men and women, he had to identify himself with those he came to save.
- (4) It is to deny the salvation of the body. Christian teaching is quite clear that salvation is the salvation of the whole person. The body as well as the soul is saved. To deny the incarnation is to deny the possibility that the body can ever become the temple of the Holy Spirit.

(5) By far the most serious and terrible thing is that to deny the incarnation is to deny that there can ever be any real union between God and human beings. If spirit is altogether good and the body is altogether evil, God and humanity can never meet, as long as we are human. They might meet when we have cast off the body and become *disembodied* spirits. But the great truth of the incarnation is that here and now there can be real communion between God and humanity.

Nothing in Christianity is more central than the reality of the humanity of Jesus Christ." ~William Barclay¹

8. What do you learn about the *spirit of the antichrist* from verse 3?
 - a. What else do you learn from 1 John 2:18-24 and 2 John 7-9 about that spirit?

9. How does John affirm his little children in verse 4? Why would John's readers need his encouragement after what he's just said in verses 1-3?

10. In 1 John 4:4, John says we have overcome *them*. Who is he talking about according to verses 1-4?

11. What spiritual reality is John referring to when he says, "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)? See John 14:16-17; Romans 8:9-11; 1 John 3:24; 4:13, 16.

¹ Barclay, William. 2002. *The Letters of John and Jude*. 3rd ed. The New Daily Study Bible. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.

12. Explain how the truths of 1 John 4:4 should have an impact upon how you live, think, and respond to what's going on around you.

13. What else do you learn about *them* according to verse 5?

14. In contrast to “them,” what do you learn about *us* according to verse 6?

15. Compile a list of how you can *test* the messages you may hear or read from the following passages in Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:7-8.
 - a. How would the principles gained from the above passages help you grow in discernment, wisdom, and steadfastness in your faith and the building up of the body of Christ?

16. What are some steps you have taken—or possibly, need to take—to skillfully obey this command to test and assess any reading or teaching you receive?
 - a. What attitudes should also be present as we test and assess the messages being taught? See Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 5:12-14; 1 Timothy 1:3-5; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:6-8.

17. As believers, we are responsible to make use of the resources God gives us and to seek to strengthen ourselves spiritually and doctrinally. What do you learn from Hebrews 5:11-14 and Hebrews 6:1-2 about how, when, and why we should do that?
18. You may go brain dead and feel woefully deficient at countering a false teacher's claims, yet what encouragement is given in our text (1 John 4:1-6) even if we lack maturity in the faith or skill in the Scriptures?
19. What do you learn about those who *hear/listen* to God's Word and those who teach it from 1 John 4:1-6?
- a. Now consider what you learn about those who hear/listen to God's Word and those who teach it from John 3:29; 5:24-25; 8:43, 47; 10:27-28. What do you see?
 - b. How can the truths you have uncovered in this question give you wisdom in counseling others or even your own heart? Is there any one truth or principle that stands out to you right now?

"The Spirit teaches us "of *all things*" (1 John 2:27). False teachers have a way of "riding a hobby"—prophecy or sanctification or even diet—and neglecting the *whole* message of the Bible. Jesus implies that we are to live by "*every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Paul was careful to preach "*all* the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). "*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16)."

"If you ignore or neglect *any* part of the Bible, you invite trouble. You must read and study the *whole* Book, and be able to "rightly divide" it (2 Tim. 2:15); that is, you must "handle it accurately" (cf. NASB).

You should discern in the Bible what God says to different people at different times; there are passages that apply specifically to the Jews, or to the Gentiles, or to the church (1 Cor. 10:32). You must be careful to distinguish between them. Though all of the Bible was written *for* you, not all of it was written *to* you. False teachers, however, pick (out of context) only what they want, and often apply to believers today passages that were given only for ancient Israel.” ~Warren Wiersbe²

“There are many today who are saying more than the Scriptures say so that we need to be very careful. Just because a man comes along saying, “Lord, Lord,” does not mean that we should love him. That may be the man who is more dangerous than a rattlesnake because he may be teaching a false doctrine. He may not really be teaching the Word of God, although he carries a big Bible under his arm. ~J. Vernon McGee³

² Wiersbe, Warren W. 1996. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Vol. 2. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ McGee, J. Vernon. 1997. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Electronic ed. Vol. 5. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.