

GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION

Testing the Spirits and the Tests of Love

1 John 4:1–12

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.” 1 John 4:8

Day 1: Read 1 John 4:1–6.

1. What compelling reasons does John give to prompt us to “test the spirits” (vs. 1)?

2. What is the test in verses 2–3 that reveals to believers whether someone is truly speaking for God? Why do you think John says that this is the pivotal test? (2:22; 1 Cor. 12:3)

3. There is a spirit that indwells those who flunk the exam in question two. What is it? In what way is this spirit that is “in the world” (vs. 3) reflected in the “the viewpoint of the world” (vs. 5)? (2:15–16)

4. Jot down and reflect on some of the warnings Jesus gave his disciples about false prophets. (Mt. 24:23–26) And what warnings in turn do the apostles give to other believers? (2 Thess. 2:3–12; 2 Pet. 3:3–7)

Day 2: Read 1 John 4:1–6.

5. Even though the believers to whom John is writing may be feeling weak and vulnerable, of what does John assure them? (vs. 4; see also Jn. 10:3–5; 16:33)

6. John’s encouragement has traces of Jesus’ last prayer for his disciples. What promise and comfort does this prayer give to you? (Jn. 17:9–19)

7. Why is it that false prophets are so popular with the world? (vs. 5; 2 Tim. 4:3–4)

8. In verse 6, John tells his little flock that the message they bring will have a limited audience. Why is this, and of what are we confident that allows us to share the gospel freely? (2 Cor. 4:4–6)

Day 3: Read 1 John 4:7–12.

9. What does one have to experience in order to love others? (vs. 7; compare Jn. 3:3–8)
10. What is the reason why knowing God must result in loving others? Meditate on the truth of this as seen in the relationship between the Father and Son from all eternity. (Jn. 17:24)
11. If knowing God causes us to love others, why do you think the repeated commands to “love one another” are given?
12. Spend a few moments asking the Holy Spirit to reveal unloving attitudes that you may be harboring against another believer. Ask God to give you the grace and strength to specifically show love to that person during the next month.

Day 4: Read 1 John 4:7–12.

13. In verses 9–10 how do we see *God’s love in action*? (Jn. 3:16) Look at this with fresh eyes. List from these verses and from Romans 5:6–10 the many ways that God manifests his love.
14. What benefits does Jesus’ “atoning sacrifice” bring about for us? (Rom. 5:1–2, 18; Eph. 2:18; 1 Pet. 2:24–25)

Day 5: Read 1 John 4:7–12.

15. What is it that enables us to live a life of love? (vs. 11; Rom. 5:5)
16. There is an implication in verse 12 that our loving has cosmic proportions. “No one has ever seen God” (cf. Ex. 33:20; Jn. 6:46) But what does John say our role is in making God seen to the world? (Jn. 13:35)

17. How is the world going to see God's love in you today?