

# Finding *Renewal* in the Love of God

## Unit 3: Discovering Renewal in the Presence of the Spirit

### Study Questions

Read 1 John in the New Living Version. As you read, **keep John 14.16-17, 26 in mind.** (You might want to use a different colored pencil to mark ideas related to each of the three questions you considered in the introduction.) When you have completed this task, respond to the questions below:

1. How does 1 John further interpret, clarify, or expand upon the teachings of Jesus found above from John 14.15-17, 26? (The following questions will help you answer this question, but before you proceed take a moment to jot down your own observations, feelings, or thoughts. Even writing things like, “I am wondering if...,” “It seems to me now that...,” “I have the sense that...,” and “I think I have experienced this when...” will be helpful in your exploration.) **By teaching about the Holy Spirit in response to conflict within the church, John confirms that the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to send has been sent; it is confirmed reality. Jesus had told the disciples that the HS would come; John now declares that He has. Jesus said he would live in them; John says He does. Jesus said that the Spirit would bring to remembrance everything that He had spoken to them and teach them; John says that He does just that. By John teaching this, we also realize that the Christians in the first century also needed to be reminded or taught to trust the work of the HS within them—just as we do. If they did not need this instruction, John would not have reason to write these things.**
2. Read these verses and make brief lists to include the different names or images that John uses in 1 John to speak of the **Spirit of truth** and the **Spirit of falsehood** (4.6). (Scriptures may or may not contain images for both Spirits.)  
As you write these names/images, consider what they teach us about these two spirits. Jot down a few notes, if you need to.

	<u>Spirit of truth</u>	<u>Spirit of deception</u>
2.18		Antichrist
2.22		Liar
2.27 (in view of 2.20)	Holy Spirit/teacher	
3.9	God’s life	
3.24	assurance that He is in us (“the proof” in some versions)	
4.1	the Spirit	false prophet
4.2	Spirit of God (also an assurance, as in 3.24)	
4.4	greater than ...	Spirit of Antichrist

Any others you found:

What can you discern about the possibility of **any** common ground between these two spirits? **Impossible**

3. Can one...should one attempt to identify these two spirits? (4.1-6) **Essential**
4. Using the verses noted below, what “tests” might one use to correctly identify each of the two spirits?

	<u>Spirit of truth</u>	<u>Spirit of deception</u>
2.22-23	acknowledges the Son	says Jesus not Christ
3.1	from what is inferred about the people of this world, you could infer that God’s children DO recognize Him because they do know Him	don’t recognize God’s children because they don’t know Him
3.7-8	does not sin	<b>keeps on</b> sinning (note the difference here between one who does not sin and one who “KEEPS ON” sinning. John is not saying that children of the Father never sin (see 1. 8); it is the LIFESTYLE or the CAREER of sin that proves that we are not of Him.)
3.8-10	do not <b>make a practice</b> of sinning	<b>keeps on</b> sinning; does not live righteously, nor love His brother
4.1-3	acknowledges Jesus came in flesh	does NOT recognize
4.5-6	those who know God listen to us	speak from world; listen to world

Any others you found:

5. Why is it so important that the recipients of this letter “test” the spirits of the teachers they encounter? (2.19, 26) **There are those who are trying to lead them astray, and in fact some of their number have already split away from the rest. This is impossible for the body of Christ. John wants to encourage those who remain to stand firm, to remember Jesus’ teaching about obedience and loving the brothers. He tells them that they can test the Spirits. Jesus supplied each of them with His own Spirit—the very Spirit of God--thus providing them with the ability to know the Truth. They are not helpless. They need only to trust the One who lives in them.**

Should we—can we—test the spirits today? Why? Using the tests you noted above, write how you think these might apply to those who would presume to teach us today? Yes, we must as well. Does their life exemplify what they teach? Do they claim the name of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, who came in the flesh, lived, died and was raised to the Father’s right hand? Are they intent to listen to us (If they are children of God, they also must test our Spirits before they listen to us, but they should have a desire to hear us, since if we are in fact Christians and they are as well, we are also brother and sister).

6. What about this “anointing” these Christians received? What earthly good is it to them? Reread (a-gain) the passages below. This time, look for ways that this “anointing” will serve these Christians.

2.20-28      a) In possessing His Spirit, we “know” the truth”  
                  b) Enjoy eternal life (now and then)  
                  c) Spirit teaches you everything you need to know  
                  d) Makes us “full of courage” and unashamed on the Day of His return

3.24            Is our assurance that God lives in us.

4.4-6           a) Because the Spirit is stronger than the Evil One, we have “already won  
                  b) Those who know God will “hear” us, as well

4.13            It provides “proof” that we live in Him and He in us (Note that this is the very unity that Christ has with the Father).

5.5-6           Testifies to us that Jesus is the Christ (That is, since He lives in us, we know that Jesus was not just a man; He promised the Holy Spirit to come after His death and the Spirit did come).

Any others you found:

7. Consider the Spirit of God that dwells in you. How well do you hear his testimony? How much comfort do you receive from him? Have you experienced “teaching” from Him? What was it like? How did you recognize it as the Spirit of God?  
Urges to check on fellow members, to call and encourage; words to explain ideas that I don’t even think I understand; outlines and teaching points provided when I teach; encouragement to stand back and allow God to work—rather than me. All of these things are outside my ability without the Spirit. He is a calming presence within.

8. Do you think that we as a church trust one another to hear the Spirit? What would it look like for me to trust you to possess the His Spirit? What problems could we encounter if we attempted to trust one another in this? In whom must we trust to actively believe that God dwells in, works through, testifies to and teaches each one of His children? Explain your answer based on teachings from 1 John and personal experience. **I think we are weak in trusting another's leadings in large part because we have a hard time believing that people today possess the same Holy Spirit given to the apostles. Some even teach that the Bible (as we read it and learn it) is the Spirit of God in our lives, that the apostles were the only ones filled by the Spirit, so we must carefully examine their words and practices even to catch a glimpse of the Holy Spirit's Truth and operation among men. Though not as prevalent today as they were two generations back, these thoughts simply don't hold up in 1 John, a book in which the first few verses differentiate between the apostles who "experienced" Jesus in the flesh on the earth and those who have been welcomed into that fellowship fully but did not experience Him on earth. Those without the personal experience with the fleshly Jesus are those who are instructed to trust the Spirit of Truth that lies within them *in order* to test others who claim to speak for that Truth. Some who speak for Christ **will be speaking for Him**; others will not.**

If I trust you to possess the Spirit of God, I first assume that you should/are obedient to His teaching in you—that you hear Him and that He is leading you in a direction that will lead to peace and obedience. Only when I see that your teaching or way of life does not promote peace and love among the fellowship or that you live continually in a state of disobedience and sin would I fail to trust that you follow Him. Similarly, I might also assume that if I have questions about what I witness in your life or a Word of encouragement or teaching for you that you would listen to me (in honor of Him) and that I would owe you (really the Spirit within you) the same respect.

Truly, some of the most direct teaching the Lord has provided me has been offered through the mouths and experiences of others that belong to Him. My ability to trust the Spirit to work in you and through you reveals as much about my faith in God as about my trust in you.

9. In the mid-80s, I taught a ladies Bible class in San Antonio on the Holy Spirit. The title was not advertised, yet on the day that I taught, we had visitors from three different congregations—an oddity. I'll never forget one woman who caught me by the arm. She said, "Honey, at our church we teaches about God, and we teaches about Jesus, but honey, we just leave that Holy Spirit alone." How true it is; yet I am struck by 4.13, 15, and 17. *"And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.... All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.... As we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the Day of Judgment but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus in this world."* **Here's my question: If the spirit of God were as illusive as many seem to think, as difficult to hear, and as easy to misunderstand, why would John continue to offer his presence, testimony, and actions in us as the way we can KNOW that He is with us—that is, the proof of His presence, therefore the peace of our lives with Him? What might be a likelier reason that we "think" these things about the Spirit?**

I can only assume my failing to hear and understand the Spirit of God within me are my own. I lack a mature understanding of the Spirit. Thus my situation experiencing this life with God is not that much different from that of John's readers. What a waste! I possess a powerful vehicle—the very Spirit of God, the One who is the point of unity between the Father and the Son...and the church, yet I leave it in the garage. I can't help but wonder how God feels about this. I can't help but wonder how I can know Him better. And if we believe this, why do we behave as we do, failing to take time to listen, scurrying around as if we must provide all the answers, arguing and bickering over insignificant tests of fellowship, fearful of my relationship with Him.... Why?

Once—just once as a child—I thought I heard my dad call me, but failed to answer. I wasn't sure, and I was busy. Shortly, he entered my room, took off his belt and spanked me. I had to spend the rest of the day alone in my room. He said, "Young lady, you will answer me when I call!" I never made that mistake again. From then on, if I **thought** my dad was calling, I was right there to check, and you know, the older I got, the better able I was to tell. As my three sons became men and their voices changed, they began to sound to me very much alike on the telephone. Yet failing to recognize a voice can hurt, minimize, and offend. I had to work hard to recognize them, but today I rarely mistake one for another. I hear the inflections; I know their greetings, the time of day they are most likely to call, the pet name they might use...I know my children.

10. This week, determine to dedicate yourself to responding to the urges of the Spirit within you. What if you respond to an urge that could be the Spirit, but you misunderstood? Might that experience lead you closer to a truer understanding, making you better able to recognize Him the next time? Take a moment to pray that God will teach you to recognize His voice within so that you might gain the peace, the proof He intended from the possession of His Holy Spirit.