

**King James Bible Study Correspondence Course**

*An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries*  
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

**I John Lesson 10**

I John 4:1-6

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**Discerning Truth and Error**

*Christians must be careful to discern between truth and error.*

Every day we make choices between what is genuine and what is false. We have to choose which commercials to believe, which brands to buy, and which politicians to support. If we make poor choices, we will feel disappointed, shortchanged, and foolish.

In our spiritual lives, we also have to choose between what is good and what only sounds good. In John's day, as today, false teachers tried to take advantage of Christians. John did not want Christians to be deceived by frauds, so he defined several tests by which they could determine who to believe.

In our modern world with so many competing religions and philosophies, John's teaching is especially needed and helpful. The tests that he provided enable us to evaluate the different religious claims we hear. Instead of being taken in by attractively packaged error, we have a clear yardstick by which to measure what people claim to be, God's truth.

Even if we ourselves do not struggle with this kind of choice, we doubtless will have friends and loved ones who face this sort of challenge. What John wrote in 1 John 4:1-6 can help us to show them how to see through religious frauds. John's teaching on how to discern between truth and error is designed to protect Christians from falling for a lie. His epistle teaches us how to know what is true so that we can embrace it and what is false so that we can avoid it.

**What Is the Problem Here?**

To many people in our society, much of what John wrote in his epistle sounds odd. We live in a culture that values diversity of opinions and beliefs. We are told that we must be tolerant of all people and of the beliefs that they hold. We think of freedom of religion as freedom for everybody to choose what to believe or for them not to believe at all.

In our society "tolerance" has come to mean more than respecting the right of others to differ. It now implies not criticizing or evaluating other beliefs, but rather saying that all beliefs are equally valid. People who claim that their belief is the truth and that contradictory views are erroneous are considered intolerant extremists. Today, holding to the notion of exclusive truth is both poor manners and wrong. In contrast to that brand of tolerance, John drew a clear line between truth and error (1 John 4:1). He warned his readers not to

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believe every spirit but to try, or evaluate, the spirits to determine whether they truly found their source in God. The fact is that throughout history many false prophets have pretended to speak for God. John wanted to put Christians on their guard against frauds who could lead them astray into spiritual trouble.



### Scripture Memorization

*1 Jn 4:2*

*2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*

*(KJV)*

Christians can and must discern the truth, Truth finds its source in GOD. A person's view of JESUS CHRIST is an indicator of his truthfulness.

John had just completed a powerful challenge to Christian love in chapter 3. True love, however, must not be careless, naive or over-romanticizing. God wants love to be bounded by spiritual discernment. Christians must combine a loving heart with a clear mind. Love does not say that everybody is equally right despite the fact that a person teaches contradictory beliefs.

At the same time, John was certainly not encouraging Christians to be harsh and/or rude. He wanted us to evaluate everything that we hear, including the religious themes in the media, to determine if they really meet the standards of God's Word. Not everything that says it comes from God truly does, so we need to be able to tell the difference between what is truth and what is error.

### The Real Issue

What is the real issue that we need to consider when we evaluate different religious claims? Some people say that if a person sincerely believes what he teaches, then that is what really matters. This view is actually saying that all paths lead to God, as long as a person is sincere about which path he follows.

The Bible totally disagrees with that approach. It teaches that it is possible and necessary to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. It is not a matter of sincerity or insincerity. Rather, each claim can be tested by what it says about Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2).

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In recent years, religion and talk about God have taken a more prominent role in the media. Religious Stations are cropping up on every channel. Several popular television programs even focus regularly on Angels & God's help. What is missing from virtually all of these programs, however, is explicit reference to Jesus Christ. They present God as a generic, one-size-fits-all divine being. Nothing is mentioned of Christ's death on the cross for our sin and our need to repent and trust in HIM solely to be our Saviour.

John stated emphatically that the spirit of truth always speaks the truth about Jesus Christ. That truth about Christ is essential to the Christian faith. Any teaching that diminishes the person and work of JESUS CHRIST cannot be the truth.

### **Style or Substance?**

Advertisers know that many people are prone to make choices on the basis of style rather than of substance. Because of this tendency, they try to get consumers to associate a product with status, prestige, comfort, or pleasure, rather than simply presenting facts to demonstrate that it is superior. Political campaigns typically seek to stir up positive feelings toward one candidate and negative feelings toward his opponent, rather than focusing on a clear presentation of issues.

If we buy or vote on the basis of style, we may well find out that we have made a poor choice. In the same way, 1 John challenges us to consider the substance of religious claims, instead of being deceived by how they are stated.

To cut through all of the confusion, the Bible teaches that what a spiritual teacher affirms about Jesus Christ is the real substance that must be considered (1 John 4:3). All teaching that comes from God confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

When we think of antichrist, our thoughts turn immediately to the great opponent of God who will arise in the tribulation period. That ultimate Antichrist is the final example of a whole succession of antichrists. John stated that in the first century they were already in the world. They have continued through history to confuse people by their erroneous religious ideas. By presenting attractive alternatives to the truth, the spirit of antichrist tries to turn attention away from Christ and the truth to subtle, but dangerous, errors. To avoid this trap, Christians must be careful to look for the substance, rather than being deceived by the style.

### **Who's Number One?**

For sports fans, one of the great questions each year is "Who's number one?" As the teams progress through the season, first one team seems best, and then replaced by another. Polls of coaches and sportswriters differ. Finally,

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the question is answered in the championship game. The winner then can maintain that it is indeed number one.

In the spiritual realm a conflict exists between God and the world. Many times the world seems to be winning the day because it appears convincing and it attracts many followers. Appearances and popularity, however, are not necessarily good measures.

In 1 John 4:4, John reminded his readers of three crucial facts. First, they were of God. Those who have put their faith & trust in Jesus Christ have become the children of God (John 1:12). Second, in the past they had overcome the challenge of false teachers. They knew from their own experience that God's truth can overcome error. **\*\*From these two facts, John drew a third lesson: God's people can remain confident because "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.\*\*** The struggle between God and the world is not a battle between two equals. Sometimes people may have the mistaken idea that Satan is an evil god, who is as powerful for the cause of evil as God is for the cause of good. The Bible teaches, however, that Satan is a created angel, not a god (Ezekiel 28:15). Although he is indeed mighty and clever, there is no way he can match the power and wisdom of God.

The power behind the world is Satan. The power within Christians is God. When we Christians face the challenge of the world, God's power within us is more than enough to give us the victory we need. We do not have to surrender to the world, because in God's power we will overcome.

### What the World Applauds

John was convinced that his readers and the false teachers were completely different in their allegiances. In 1 John 4:4 he stated that his readers were of God. In verse 5 he stated that the false teachers were of the world. The source of their teaching was not God, but the world that opposes God.

In 1 John 2:15 John had warned Christians not to love the world or the things that are in the world. Because the false teachers are of the world, Christians must not accept what they teach.

We often can tell where a person's home is by listening to him speak. Our background affects our accent. In the spiritual realm, a Christian will have a godly accent in what he teaches, but non-Christians will speak with the accent of the world. What they say will be influenced by the values, priorities, and delights of people apart from God. The Bible teaches us that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" Luke 6:45.

John added that the world hears or accepts and applauds, those who agree with it, but it cannot appreciate or even understand God's values (1 Corinthians 2:14).

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We can tell a lot about a person by observing who applauds him. If the world finds him convincing and appealing, that is likely because he reflects what the world regards as true and important. That in itself should be a red flag to Christians.

**Hearing and Knowing**

Verses 5 and 6 (1 John 4) are two sides of the same coin. John wrote in verse 5 that the world hears, or understands and applauds, the false teachers who are of the world. In verse 6 he contrasted himself and the other apostles with the false teachers. "They" (the false teachers) are of the world, but "we" (the apostles) are of God.

Just as the world accepted its own, so those who truly knew God recognized and accepted the apostles. The world was unable to hear the apostles as they taught God's truth. Real believers, however, recognized, and do recognize, the distinctive accent of other children of God.

We live in a world that for the most part rejects the idea of absolute truth. Many people in our culture insist that truth is relative or that it depends on the situation. The Bible rejects that position, because it clearly distinguishes between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

In our world, people are often attracted by a speaker's style rather than by the substance of what he says. John instructed Christians to determine what religious teachings say about Jesus Christ, rather than being impressed with how smoothly they are presented.

John also taught that we can tell a lot about a religious teacher by observing who finds him acceptable. The world applauds error and rejects the truth. Those who know God applaud the truth and reject error.

God does not want HIS children to be harsh and/or rude. At the same time, He does not want us to believe everything we hear. He wants us to listen carefully and to evaluate discerningly all religious claims. Being Christian does not mean that we must be gullible. If we believe everything, then we will fall for anything. Being Christian means measuring everything we hear by the standard of God's truth The Scriptures, so that we accept what is truly from GOD.

**Notes**

<i>KJV</i>
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### 1 John Lesson 10

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. In our society today a person who criticizes or speaks against another's belief is considered what?
2. If a person does not believe that JESUS CHRIST is the virgin born Son of GOD, is it OK, to still fellowship with him? (provide a scripture to prove your point)
3. What are we told that from the world as to how we should treat others from different religions?
4. From where comes all teaching that does not confess the truth about Jesus Christ?
5. In 1 John 4:1-6 what can help us how to see through religious frauds?
6. According to chapter 1 and verse 14 of the Gospel of John, Who is Jesus Christ, and why did He come to earth?
7. When does the Bible say that everybody is equally right despite the fact that a person teaches contradictory beliefs?
8. What is the key verse in this lesson?
9. How does a true Christian react upon first meeting another so-called Christian?
10. In 1 John 2:15 John had warned Christians not to love the world or the things that are in the world. Why?
11. What are the three crucial facts.
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
12. Out of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ speaketh.

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13. What do political campaigns and false teachers have in common?
14. If a person is completely sincere and dedicated to their religion, will GOD honor that and allow that person an entrance into heaven? Why ?
15. Are false teachers in the world today? Where would you find one if you were looking to find one? How could you tell that they were a false teacher? Explain all !!!
16. What was the purpose of this Lesson?

**True/false**

- If we gullibly accept every advertisement we hear, we will soon see how foolish we have been.
- Everything we believe needs to be backed up by the Bible.
- If the teacher is performing miracles and says that GOD spoke to him and it does not match what the Bible says, that's OK, it is a Prophecy.
- If the teacher can speak in tongues and has a degree at a 4 year college of divinity, he is a great teachers and ought to given our full undivided attention.
- We must reject error, but at all times we must extend Christ's love and kindness toward those who teach the error.



Scripture Memorization (Write these out on the back page)  
Amos 3:3; Ephesians 5:11; 1 John 4:1-6