

## Module 17: 1 John 4:13-16

### Group Exercise 1

If verses 13-16 are taken as a paragraph and verses 17-21 are taken as another paragraph, how do these two paragraphs directly tie into verse 12?

### Group Exercise 2

The NAS states in verse 13, “By this we know that we abide”, not “By this we abide”. What is the significance of this distinction? Does this relate to 1 John 5:13 and if so, how?

### Group Exercise 3

In verses 3:24; 4:13, 15 & 16, what do you observe about the order of who abides in whom? What does this mean?

### Group Exercise 4

The Holy Spirit (His Spirit, NAS) is mentioned only once (13) in verses 13-16, yet multiple commentators think that the Holy Spirit is a major part of this paragraph. Do you agree or disagree? If you agree, what do you see as the Holy Spirit’s significance in this paragraph?

#### 1) Observations and Observational Questions that guide Interpretation

- a) Read 1 John 4:7-21 for context.
- b) What words do you see as important, either because they are repeated often or they are part of a key teaching in verses 4:13-16?
- c) What title do you suggest for the paragraph starting in verse 4:13?
- d) Transition – links to previous verses
  - i) Verse 12 says “if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us”
  - ii) Verses 13-16 expand on God abiding in us.
  - iii) Verses 17-21 expand on perfect love.
- e) “By this we know”
  - i) Basic assurance
  - ii) WHAT we know
    - (1) “that we abide in Him and He in us”
    - (2) Was mentioned only in one direction in verse 12, now is reciprocal.
      - (a) Close, intimate, two-way relationship.
      - (b) Mutual relationship first mentioned in 3:24 – connected with the keeping of God’s commandments
      - (c) In verse 13, it is connected with the duty of brotherly love
    - (3) Mentioned 3x in this paragraph (13, 15, 16)
      - (a) we abide in Him and He in us (13)
        - (i) plural pronouns
        - (ii) the experience of the Christian community (Hiebert)

- (b) God abides in him, and he in God (15)
  - (c) the one . . . abides in God, and God abides in him (16)
- (4) The order of who abides in whom changes. There is no set priority; the two aspects are mutually interrelated. (Hiebert)
- iii) HOW we know this
  - (1) One piece of evidence (or test) each time it is mentioned in this paragraph
    - (a) “because He has given us of His Spirit” (13)
    - (b) “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God” (15)
    - (c) “the one who abides in love” (16)
  - (2) The last two tests are developments of the first. By the Spirit we confess the deity of Jesus and are enabled to love. (Stott)
  - (3) Emphasis on the Holy Spirit is the predominant idea of this paragraph. (Ebrard)
  - (4) “This, then, is the sequence of thought in this passage: we know that we abide in God and God in us ‘because he hath given us of his Spirit’ (13), and we know He has given us of His Spirit because we have come to ‘confess that Jesus is the Son of God’ (15), and to dwell ‘in love’ (16).” (Stott)
- iv) Not “by this we abide”, but “by this we know that we abide”, in support of 5:13.
- f) “of His Spirit”
  - i) A possible meaning is that God has given us “from His Spirit”
    - (1) Lenski – The Holy Spirit does not enter our hearts without gifts for us, but with gifts all of which come ‘from’ the Spirit as source.
    - (2) Marshall – These gifts were charismatic gifts which were proof of the Spirit’s indwelling.
  - ii) Another possible meaning is the “presence of the Spirit” (see Romans 8:15-16) (Burdick)
    - (1) Only a share of the Spirit, who fills the whole church, is given to us. (Smalley)
    - (2) The Spirit is not divisible into parts. (Jackman)
- g) “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world”
  - i) “And” – An objective criterion is also needed (besides the Holy Spirit’s subjective work)
  - ii) “We have seen”
    - (1) Same word as used in verse 12, “No one has seen God at any time”
    - (2) Refers to actual eyewitnesses. John’s “we” refers to himself as representing the Apostles.
  - iii) “and testify”
    - (1) *Martureo* – to be a witness, to bear witness (i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration); to give (not to keep back) testimony.
    - (2) 10x in 1 John (1:2, 4:14; 5:6, 7, 9 [4 times], 10 twice)
    - (3) Conviction of what the Apostles saw prompted them to testify, to continue to bear witness, concerning Him.

- iv) “sent the Son to be the Savior of the world”
  - (1) No verbal form. Literally, “has sent the Son Savior of the world”
  - (2) Describes what He is, not just what He was sent to do.
  - (3) “Savior of the world” is in the NT only twice (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14)
- v) All three of John’s tests are implicit in this verse (Stott)
  - (1) Doctrinal – the Son whom the Father has sent
  - (2) Social – God’s love is seen in sending His Son
  - (3) Ethical – we must forsake our sin. (This is the reason the Son came to earth to be Savior.)
- h) “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God”
  - i) This is the experience of the individual believer (15). See how the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural (we) and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (he) are used in this paragraph.
  - ii) In this case, a specific, apparently public confession born of an inner persuasion (Hiebert)
  - iii) Public? The commentator writings viewed don’t explain why they think it is public. The context helps.
    - (1) He who confesses (15) is saying the same thing about the deity of Jesus as the Apostles testified (publicly) in the previous verse (14).
    - (2) The greater context of this paragraph is the outworking of the Holy Spirit in the believer as he loves God and his brethren, all this so that man can see God at work (12).
  - iv) Progression (Hiebert)
    - (1) How the believer enters into fellowship with God. (15) (“Whoever” introduces this 3<sup>rd</sup> class conditional. The fulfillment is restricted only by the willingness of the individual to make confession.)
    - (2) Restates the assurance of believers concerning God’s love (16)
- i) “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.”
  - i) Believing this love which God has for us is one thing. Learning to love and abide in love ourselves is another thing.
  - ii) The only way to love, as the only way to believe, is by dwelling in God and God in us.
- j) What other observations do you see? (Words, grammar, construction, history, content, etc.)

## 2) Interpretation

By this following evidence we in the Christian community know that we are dwelling in God and God us. The evidence is that God has given us the presence of His Spirit.

We, that would be me, John, on behalf of my fellow Apostles, and as your teacher, have physically seen with our eyes and bear witness publicly that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

Whoever says publicly, based on an inner persuasion, that Jesus is the Son of God,

that is, deity Himself, God dwells in him, and he in God.

We, all of us who have confessed Jesus, have come to understand and have accepted the love which God supplies to us. God by essence is love, and the one who remains in love with God or his brothers shows that he dwells in mutual relationship in God, and God in him.

### 3) Applications

- a) John emphasizes the reciprocal, enduring relationship we have with God, if we are a believer. John also describes how God shows His love to us. List one thing you have done or can do as a direct act of love back toward God.
- b) Since we are human, there are ebbs and flows in our relationships, even with God. What can you do to reinvigorate your relationship with God during a low period?
- c) What do you think and feel when you consider that you have a mutual love relationship with the one and only God of the universe?
- d) What other application do you have?