

1 John Sections 4-5: Full-Scale Faith

		OPENING WORDS	THEMES
1	1:1-2:6	“That which was from the beginning ...”	Central Burden: God Is Light
2	2:7-2:17	“Beloved, I am writing to you ...”	Central Commandment: Embody the Age-Old Message
3	2:18-3:8	“Children, it is the last hour ...”	Key Counsel: Remain in His Anointing and Receive Eternal Life
4	3:9-4:6	“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning ...”	Central Warning: Beware Cain’s Error and False Prophets
5	4:7-4:14	“Beloved, let us love one another ...”	Foundational Imperative: God’s Love
6	4:15-5:15	“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God ...”	Necessary Instruction: Believing in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God
7	5:16-5:21	“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death...”	Concluding Admonition: The True God and the Threat of Imposters

IV. Central Warning: Beware Cain’s Error and False Prophets (3:9–4:6)

A. Summons to Love (3:9–18)

1. Two Paternities: Divine Versus Devilish Origins (3:9–10)
2. Two Options: Love or Hate (3:11–12)
3. Two Paths: Life or Death (3:13–18)

B. Confirmation of Love (3:19–24)

C. Summons to Choose (4:1–3)

D. Confirmation of Choice (4:4–6)

A. Summons to Love (3:9–18)

1. Two Paternities: Divine Versus Devilish Origins (3:9–10)
2. Two Options: Love or Hate (3:11–12)
3. Two Paths: Life (Love) or Death (3:13–18)

1 John 3:9 No one born of **God** makes a practice of sinning, for **God's** seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of **God**.¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of **God**, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of **God**, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.¹³ Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does **God's** love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

1. Vv. 9–10: In the wake of schism (2:19), identifying those born of God is possible.
2. Vv. 11–12: The flip side of 1:5 (God is light) is love one another (not separate from them).
3. Vv. 13–18: Love is not just a noun: it is also a verb. It is also a primary marker and assurance of the possession of eternal life.

B. Confirmation of Love (3:19–24)

1 John 3:19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, **God** is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before **God**; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his **Son Jesus Christ** and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in **God**, and **God** in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the **Spirit** whom he has given us.

1. Vv. 19–20: Assurance lies in God's character not our self-confidence.
2. V. 23: Faith, obedience (works), and love are the hallmark of gospel reception.
3. V. 24: The Spirit works assurance in conjunction with God and his Son and our responsiveness to him (belief, works, love).

C. Summons to Choose (4:1–3)

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from **God**, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the **Spirit** of **God**: every spirit that confesses that **Jesus Christ** has come in the flesh is from **God**, 3 and every spirit that does not confess **Jesus** is not from **God**. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

1. V. 1: Love does not mean naive gullibility.
2. Vv. 2–3: Convictions about Jesus Christ reveal the truth or not of claims or ideas.

D. Confirmation of Choice (4:4–6)

1 John 4:4 Little children, you are from **God** and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from **God**. Whoever knows **God** listens to us; whoever is not from **God** does not listen to us. By this we know the **Spirit** of truth and the spirit of error.

1. V. 4: Steadfastness lies in he who is with/among us.
2. V. 5: Church division occurs when the world gets the upper hand over the word (Scripture).
3. V. 6: The apostolic message and teaching comes from God and is the test of spirits (ideas, claims, teachings, as well as the people who advocate them).

V. Foundational Imperative: God's Love (4:7-4:14)

A. First Exhortation to Love (4:7–10)

B. Second Exhortation to Love (4:11–14)

1. The Effect of God's Love (4:11)
2. The Importance of Expressing God's Love (4:12)
3. The Assurance of God's Love (4:13)
4. Apostolic Confirmation That the Father Sent the Son to Be the Savior (4:14)

A. First Exhortation to Love (4:7–10)

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1. V. 7: To know God (in Christ) is to exude and exercise love.
2. V. 8: “God is love” does not mean that love is God. God is a person, not an attribute. John means that God’s love is so powerful and prominent in his self-disclosure in Christ that we can equate the two in some respects, though not all.
3. Vv. 9-10: The measure of love is not human feeling but divine action in Christ and especially the atonement.

B. Second Exhortation to Love (4:11–14)

1. The Effect of God’s Love (4:11)
2. The Importance of Expressing God’s Love (4:12)
3. The Assurance of God’s Love (4:13)
4. Apostolic Confirmation That the Father Sent the Son to Be the Savior (4:14)

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

1. V. 11: God’s love catalyzes ours.
2. V. 12: God’s love is shown and perfected (it completes its intended effect) when believers love each other.
3. V. 13: Response to the Spirit so as to love is an assurance of abiding in God and vice versa.
4. V. 14: John testifies to the assurance that he offers to his readers.