

1 John 4:5 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 4:5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them

Greek - autoi ek tou kosmou eisin (PAI) dia touto ek tou kosmou lalousin (PAI) kai o kosmos auton akouei (PAI):

- **are:** Ps 17:4 Lu 16:8 John 3:31 Jn 7:6,7 Jn 8:23 Jn 15:19,20 17:14,16 Rev 12:9
- **and:** Isa 30:10,11 Jer 5:31 29:8 Mic 2:11 John 15:19 17:14 2Ti 4:3 2 Pe 2:2,3
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HOW TO IDENTIFY IF SOMEONE IS FROM THE WORLD

The short answer is that someone proves who they are (1) by what they say and (2) by who listens to them.

Hiebert on 1Jn 4:1-6 - These verses show no close connection with what follows and are best viewed as an elaboration of the reference to "the Spirit which he hath given us" in 1Jn 3:24. The conflict now presented forms the final aspect of the conflicts that mark the Christian life which John has been depicting since 1Jn 2:18. He has already dealt with the conflict between truth and falsehood (1Jn 2:18–28), the conflict between the children of God and the children of the Devil (1Jn 2:29–3:12), and the conflict between love and hatred (1Jn 3:13–24). This section points to the supernatural character of this conflict as ultimately involving "the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." It sets forth the crucial importance of the proclamation of a sound Christology for assurance and victory in the Christian community. ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary](#))

They - Who are **they**? Those individuals (false prophets) who are energized (if you will) by the false spirits of antichrist.

David Smith on **they** (in contrast to **you** - see his comment in 1Jn 4:4-note) that they are ek tou kosmou eisin (are out from the world), as its delegates, messengers, representatives, and as such ek tou kosmou lalousin (out of the world speak) . not "speak" (λέγειν), but "talk," with a suggestion of prating (cf. John 4:42). ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

From the world - Literally *out of the world*, not describing them as born on planet earth, but as those who are adamantly opposed to God and subject to the spirit of this world, for John says "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." (1Jn 5:19, cp Jn 12:31 = He is a defeated foe!)

Hiebert on **from the world** - "Out of the world" (literal) indicates their spiritual derivation and their personal allegiance. In 1Jn 4:3 John has identified the antichristian spirits negatively as being "not of God"; now their human agents are identified as being "of the world," indicating their essential orientation and character. In relation to the Church of God, they reflect the distinctly negative reaction of the Christ-rejecting world. The triple use of "**the world**" in 1Jn 4:5 underlines their fundamental attitude and motivation. They belong to the godless world-system of which Satan is the prince (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, cp 1Jn 5:19, Lk 4:5-6).

Vincent on **from the world** - Proceeding from, as their source. Different from **from the earth** (John 3:31), as marking the whole worldly economy morally considered. ([Vincent's Word Studies](#))

In contrast in His great prayer in John 17 Jesus speaking of disciples (including us) says "I have given them Thy Word; and the **world** has hated them, because **they are not of the world**, even as I am not of the **world**." (Jn 17:14)

Guzik - Those who are of the **world** are evident because they speak as of the **world**; the influence of the **world** is evident in their speech. As Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34).

Steven Cole - The **world** system is built around the principle of taking glory from God and transferring it to proud, self-willed man. That was Satan's original temptation to Eve in the garden. He challenged God's Word and suggested to Eve that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she would become like God, knowing good and evil (Ge 3:1-5). Any teaching that detracts from God's glory and sovereignty and exalts man by feeding his pride is satanic at the core. ([Spiritual Discernment 1 John 4:1-6](#)) (Bolding added)

Notice that **world** appears three times in this one verse! Clearly this word is significant to John (and to us)! **World** is defined more fully below but for now note that the same Greek word **kosmos** has a different meaning in 1Jn 4:1 and 1Jn 4:3 (cp similar sense in 1Jn 3:17, 1Jn 4:9, 1Jn 4:14, 1Jn 4:17), referring simply to inhabited "planet earth." In our present passage **kosmos** takes on a more ethical or moral meaning. This difference in nuances of definition in the same paragraph emphasizes how important it is to always carefully consider the **context** when performing Greek or Hebrew word studies. Remember that **context is always King**!

Related Resources:

- Web Tools to perform a Greek Word Study
- How to Perform a Hebrew Word Study using resources on the Web

World ([2889](#)) (**kosmos** related to the verb **kosmeo** = to order or adorn, to put in order [Mt 25:7 = "trimmed"], to adorn literally [1Ti 2:9], to adorn figuratively [Titus 2:9-note]) means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. Kosmos refers to an ordered system or a system where order prevails. Kosmos is used here with its moral/ethical sense to describe all that is opposed to God, that godless "system," with its possessions, positions and pleasures, all radically, irrevocably alienated against the Almighty.

Marvin Vincent defines **kosmos** (in its ethical sense) as "The sum-total of human life in the ordered world, considered apart from,

alienated from, and hostile to God, and of the earthly things which seduce from God (Jn 7:7; 15:18; Jn 17:9,14; 1Cor 1:20, 21; 2Cor 7:10; Jas 4:4)."

James Montgomery Boice writes that John's use of **kosmos** in this section is in its **ethical sense** "The idea here is of the **world** of men in rebellion against God and therefore characterized by all that is in opposition to God. This is what we might call "the world system." It involves the world's values, pleasures, pastimes, and aspirations. John says of this world that the world lies in the grip of the evil one (1Jn 5:19), that it rejected Jesus when He came (Jn 1:10), that it does not know Him (1Jn 3:1-note), and consequently that it does not know and therefore also hates His followers (John 15:18,19, 20, 21; 17:14). It is in this sense that John speaks of the world in the passage before us. (Boice, J. M. The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary. Baker Books)

H A Ironside explains that the "**world**" is that "system that man has built up in this scene, in which he is trying to make himself happy without God. You get it away back in Genesis, where Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and built a city, and there what we call the world really began (Ge 4:16, 17, 18, 19,20, 21, 22, 23, 24). It was a wonderful world; they were exercised in all kinds of arts, sciences, business, and pleasure, anything and everything to make them happy without God; but it ended in corruption and violence, and God had to sweep the whole thing away with a flood. (cp Ge 6:5) The principles of the world that caused the corruption and violence before the flood were carried into the ark in the hearts of some of Noah's children. They brought the world into the ark, and when the new world was started after the judgment of the flood, they brought the world out of the ark with them, and again set it up. ([Epistles of John](#))

Therefore (for this cause) - **term of conclusion**. What does John conclude? He concludes that their origin (world) is reflected by their message (worldly).

They speak as from the world - They speak with the same godless language as the godless world speaks. This is the evidence of their origin **from the world**, not from God.

Westcott - The character of their speech and the character of their hearers are determined by their own character. They draw the spirit and the substance of their teaching **from** (out of) **the world** and therefore it finds acceptance with kindred natures. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

As Hiebert says "What they are is revealed by their message as well as by the followers they draw... Because their being is rooted in the world, their message reveals what they are (John 3:31). They draw the substance of their teaching from the philosophy of the godless world, while the issues of eternity are left unmentioned or are perverted through their restatement of them. Thus they reveal that they have no connection with the divine fountain of revealed truth; because they have their origin in the world, therefore the things they speak belong to the world. In adjusting and formulating their message to conform to the spirit and interests of the world, they distort and deform the message of God. Therein lies their danger. ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

Speak (2980)(laleo) originally meant simply to make a sound like the chatter of birds or the prattling of children. Laleo takes note of the sound and the manner of speaking. Smith writes that John use of laleo instead of lego another Greek word which means "speak" gives "a suggestion of prating (Ed: Webster = talking much without much weight or purpose, talking long and idly, chattering)."

Vincent on **speak as from the world** - "Literally it is: "*they speak out of the world*; i.e., the character of their utterances corresponds to their origin." ([Vincent](#))

Robertson on from the world (literally "out [ek] of the world") observes that "their talk proceeds from the world and wins a ready hearing. The false prophets and the world are in perfect unison." ([Word Pictures of the New Testament](#))

And the world listens to them - This fact confirms the true identity of those **who speak as from the world**. These individuals are speaking on the "AM" band so to speak and the unregenerate people listen to them. Have you ever wondered why some of the liberal commentators refuse to acknowledge a righteous truth even when it is unequivocal and "in their face?" Their anti-god stance is resolute and they filter out anything that is God glorifying!

David Jackman - The world of mankind in rebellion against God is attracted by the false prophets and their cults because fundamentally they have the same desires and inclinations. ([The Message of John's Letters - Bible Speaks Today](#))

Hiebert - The additional comment "and the world heareth (listens to) them"... confirms their true identity by the fact that their message appeals to the world. The verb "**hear**" ("**listen to**") denotes a receptive hearing of the speaker's message. Their message arouses the interest of the world and stimulates its basic attitudes and desires." (**Ed**: Hiebert's description reminds me of the ear ticklers in 2Ti 4:3-4).

Kistemaker - What the false prophets say, however, is persuasive, for "the world listens to them." The world agrees with the teachings of the false teachers and thus participates in opposing God. ([New Testament Commentary - James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude](#))

Steven Cole - 1Jn 4:5 may imply that these false teachers were drawing a big crowd. The world was listening to them. When you tell the world what it wants to hear, you will not lack an audience. When a false teacher sets aside the unpopular notion that all have sinned, and he tells people that they are wonderful and that God exists to help them fulfill their desires, he will gain a following. But the problem is, that message is not from God. It is from the world and the god of this world. The practical application for us is, don't judge the success of a ministry by its size! Judge it by its faithfulness to the truth of the gospel as revealed in the Bible.. ([Spiritual Discernment 1 John 4:1-6](#))