

# 1 John 3:24 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
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 3:24** The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit Whom He has given us:

**Greek** - kai o teron (PAPMSN) tas entolas autou en auto menei (3SPAI) kai autos en auto kai en touto ginaskomen (1PPAI) hoti menei (3SPAI) en hemin ek tou pneumatous ou hemin edoken (3SAAI) .

**KJV** And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

**NET** And the person who keeps his commandments resides in God, and God in him. Now by this we know that God resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us.

**Wuest** - And the one who as a habit of life exercises a solicitous care in keeping His commandments, in Him is abiding, and He himself is abiding in him. And in this we know experientially that He is abiding in us, from the Spirit as a source whom He gave to us.

- **One who keeps** - 1Jn 3:22 John 14:21-23 15:7-10
- **Abides**: 1Jn 4:7,12,15,16 John 6:54-56 Jn 17:21 1Co 3:16 6:19 2Co 6:16 2Ti 1:14
- **we**: 1Jn 4:13 Ro 8:9-17 Ga 4:5,6)
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **WE HAVE ASSURANCE OF AN IMMUTABLE UNION WITH CHRIST**

The NAS, ESV, NIV, and RSV all omit translation of the **kai (and)** which serves to connect this verse with 1Jn 3:23.

**Sam Storms** - Having mentioned the issue of obedience to Christ's commandments in 1Jn 3:22-23, John feels it necessary before closing the paragraph to say something concerning **abiding**. His words are often taken as saying that obedience is the condition of God abiding in us and, in a certain sense, this is true. But here I believe the meaning is that **obedience is the expression or evidence of the fact that we are abiding in Him and He in us.** ([First John 3:10b-24](#))

**Hiebert** - The one thus characteristically keeping God's commandments experiences a reciprocal spiritual fellowship: "he dwelleth in him, and he in him" (en autō menei kai autos en autō). Such a mutual abiding marks the heart of a vital Christianity (John 15:1–5; Col. 1:27–28). The present-tense verb "dwelleth" marks the closest and most permanent union between the human and the divine.

**Plummer** - John once more insists on what may be regarded as the main theme of this exposition of Christian Ethics; that **conduct** is not only not a matter of indifference, but is all-important. We may possess many kinds of enlightenment, intellectual and spiritual; but there is **no union with God**, and indeed **no true knowledge of Him**, without **obedience**: comp. 1Jn 1:6, 2:4, 6, 29, 3:6, 7, 9. 'He that wills to do His will shall know' (John 7:17).

**The one who keeps His commandments** - cp 1Jn 3:22. As discussed below under "**abides**" the pronoun **His** seems to refer to God the Father rather than God the Son. As **Harris** says "the person who keeps his commandments clearly refers to the genuine believer, the faithful member of the community to whom the author is writing (the previous verse defines what the commandment is)." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

**Keeps His commandments** - **Be careful!** John is not advocating keeping a list of things we are not to do! He is not placing us under legalism and that's what a list will do (whether the list is written on paper or simply written in your mind). The truth be told, the only way for even saved sinners to keep His commandments is by learning to daily rely on God's supernatural enablement provided by the indwelling Spirit. We need to learn to daily yield our will to His will, confess any known sins that might quench Him (cf 1 Th 5:19+, Eph 4:30+) and then rely wholly on the Holy Spirit, Who will give us both the desire and the power to keep God's commandments (see Php 2:13NLT+). Even then we will not be able to keep them perfectly. So what John is referring to is not perfection, but "direction." That is, we need to examine ourselves and determine honestly whether our life is characterized by progress toward Christ-likeness or is our life characterized by habitual, continual lawlessness. A consistently unholy walk strongly suggests absence of a power to walk holy, in other words, an absence of the indwelling Holy Spirit! **Do not be deceived.** Do not think you are regenerate (born again, saved) simply because you made a profession or prayed a prayer! There needs to be at least some evidence of progress toward a holy walk (cf 2 Cor 5:17+). If there has been absolutely no change in your life or lifestyle, then you made need to be born again. (See Romans Road of Salvation).

**Keeps** (5083)(tereo) means to observe, keep watch over, heed, guard and in the **present tense** "describes what is to be the characteristic habit of the believer." (W E Vine) He is not saying that keeping saves us (cp James 2:10 where keeps = tereo) but keeping does show we are saved. This is John's fourth use of the verb **tereo**. Earlier he had written "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we **keep (tereo in the present tense)** His commandments." (1Jn 2:3-note) In fact "The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not **keep (tereo in the present tense)** His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1Jn 2:4-note) On the other hand "whoever **keeps (tereo in the present tense)** His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him." (1Jn 2:5-note)

**Abides in Him... abides in us** - Reciprocity. As **MacArthur** says "That shared life is possible only by the Spirit whom He has given (cf. Luke 11:13; 12:12; John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; Acts 1:4–8; Rom. 5:5; 8:11, 16; Gal. 4:6; 5:16, 22; Eph. 1:13–14; 1 John 2:20, 27; 4:1–2, 13)." ([1-3 John- MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**John Stott** - The concept of a mutual **'abiding'** (RSV), mentioned here in the letter for the first time, we in Him and He in us, is derived ultimately from our Lord's allegory of the Vine and the branches (John 15:1-11). There it is Christ Who dwells in His own, and they in Him. Here, if we may judge from the use of 'Him', 'His' and 'He' in 1Jn 3:22–23, it is 'God' (**Ed**: The Father) Who dwells in us, as in 1Jn 4:12, and we in Him... Both here and in John 15 (Jn 15:10) **the condition of continuous mutual indwelling is obedience; although obedience is also the issue and evidence of the indwelling**. Cf. 1Jn 2:3–6 for an exposition of the same truth... **No-one may dare to claim that he lives in Christ and Christ in him unless he is obedient to the three fundamental commands which John has been expounding, which are belief in Christ, love for the brothers and moral righteousness**. 'Living in Christ' is not a mystical experience which anyone may claim; its indispensable accompaniments are the confession of Jesus as the Son of God come in the flesh, and a consistent life of holiness and love. ([The Letters of John by John R. W. Stott](#)) (Bolding and highlighting added for emphasis)

**David Allen** - If anyone does what God commands him to do, that person lives united with God in the sense that he or she maintains close fellowship (abides) with God and God lives (abides) in him. In this situation God's fellowship with us remains uninterrupted. Of course, it is true that all who are genuine believers are constantly united with God and God is constantly united with them. The assurance of this abiding is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, whom Jesus has given us. The Holy Spirit is the believer's assurance of salvation. John 14:17 speaks of the Spirit as abiding "with you" and "in you." This promise finds its fulfillment in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19). (Preaching the Word - 1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family)

**Henry Mahan** - This is what John has been saying throughout this entire chapter. Faith and conduct cannot be separated; belief and obedience are always found in the same heart. When His Spirit and His word governs our hearts and lives, it is evident that Christ dwells in us and we dwell in Christ. Whatever good works are done by us proceed from the grace of His Spirit Who dwells in us. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

**Abides** (3306)(**meno**) means to remain or stay and is in the **present tense** which speaks of permanence of our remaining in **Him**. Who is **Him**? Observe 1Jn 3:23 where John says "**His** Son Jesus Christ" and then says "**He** commanded us" both of which would be references to God the Father. And thus in the immediate context, when he says "abides in **Him**" this is almost certainly a reference to the Father.

**Harris on abides** - The verb here refers to the **permanence of relationship between God and the believer**, as also in 1Jn 2:6, 4:12, 4:13 (2x), 1Jn 4:15 (2x), and 1Jn 4:16 (2x). The present verse implies that this is a **mutual and reciprocal** relationship. Previously the author has introduced the concept of believers residing in God and/or Jesus in 1John 2:5–6, 24, 27–28, and 1Jn 3:6 (cf. also 1Jn 5:20). The author also mentions God residing in the believer in 1Jn 4:12 (cf. 1Jn 2:14; 3:9). Here, however, the ideas are combined and mutual for the first time in the letter (cf. later references in 1Jn 4:13, 15, 16). ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

**And He in him** - We abide in God and God abides in us through the Holy Spirit.

John 14:10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

John 14:17 [that is] the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, [but] you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, [art] in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

**Kistemaker** - They who keep God's word in their heart experience that God makes His home with them **Ed**: This is referring to experientially at home, to daily communion with God, to intimate fellowship, but positionally God is forever at home in the genuine believer's heart, because His presence is independent of our behavior. In other words we can't merit His presence by our obedience any more than we can lose His presence by our disobedience.). ([Epistles of John- Simon J. Kistemaker](#))

**We know** (1097)(**ginosko**) speaks of knowledge gained by experience and notice John includes himself in this statement. **Ginosko** is in the **present tense** which conveys the sense that we can continually know this truth. **What do we know?** That God lives in us, in our mortal bodies.

## How do we know? By this!

**By this - By what?** This phrase could refer to what has preceded - we know that **He abides in us** by our obedient lifestyle of loving our brethren (1Jn 3:11-18) or it could refer to what follows - we know **He abides in us** because **the Spirit** has revealed that truth to our heart. I favor the latter interpretation, but in a sense both are probably operative.

**Now you still might be saying "Well that is somewhat subjective to say we know by the Spirit Who is in us."** Not really. In fact His indwelling is quite objective as demonstrated by our changed conduct. When we were dead in our trespasses and sins, we were continually disobedient to God. Now the fact that we desire to obey God and are able to obey God is evidence of a supernatural power abiding in us. There is no way we would be able to keep God's commandments (e.g., to love our brothers and sisters in Christ) unless we had the Spirit "at work in (us), both to will (give us the desire) and to work (give us the power)" to live in a way that pleases God. (Php 2:13) And thus we can know (**ginosko**) because we have experienced His power.

**John Stott** adds that we desire to "set our hearts at rest, when they accuse and condemn us, we must look for evidence of the Spirit's working, and particularly whether he is enabling us to believe in Christ, to obey God's commands and to love our brothers; for the condition of Christ dwelling in us and of our dwelling in him is this comprehensive obedience (24a), and the evidence of the indwelling is the gift of the Spirit (24b)." ([The Letters of John by John R. W. Stott](#))

This verse is similar to another verse that speaks to **assurance of salvation**...

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him] in order that we may also be glorified with [Him.] (Ro 8:16-17-note)

**He abides** ([3306](#))(**meno**) is at home, remains in our heart with the **present tense** signifying God continually abides in the genuine believer. While fellowship may wax and wane, especially if we have unconfessed sins, His presence in our heart does not cease. The essence of the new covenant is union and oneness which is not based on our behavior but upon His immutable promise. He is the covenant keeping God. He has clearly promised to never, ever, at any time, leave us nor forsake us (Heb 13:5) The day we entered covenant with Him by grace through faith, was the day our eternal destiny was forever sealed and secured, because He signed the covenant agreement with His blood (Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20, 1Cor 11:25)!

**Barnes** - That is, this is another certain evidence that we are true Christians. The Saviour had promised John 14:23 that he would come and take up his abode with his people. John says that we have proof that he does this by the Spirit which he has given us. That is, the Holy Spirit is imparted to his people to enlighten their minds; to elevate their affections; to sustain them in times of trial; to quicken them in the performance of duty; and to imbue them with the temper and spirit of the Lord Jesus. When these effects exist, we may be certain that the Spirit of God is with us; for these are the "fruits" of that Spirit, or these are the effects which he produces in the lives of men. ([1 John 3 Commentary - Albert Barnes' Notes](#))

## BY THE SPIRIT HE HAS GIVEN

**John MacArthur** - The church's understanding of the Spirit's Person and ministry has been seriously distorted over the past few decades. Charismatics have given an undue emphasis to certain pentecostal gifts so that subjective experience is often elevated over objective scriptural truth. At the same time, many non-charismatics have overreacted to charismatic excesses by almost ignoring the Holy Spirit. For most, an in-depth study of the Spirit does not fit with the pragmatic, psychological approach to solving spiritual problems. But we can't afford to go to either extreme; otherwise we'll miss out on what it really means to know the Spirit and to minister by His power. (Strength for Today)

**Hiebert** - John insists that the ultimate source of our experience of the divine indwelling in our lives is the Holy Spirit Himself. The certainty "that he abideth in us," which is the heart of true Christian assurance, is wrought in us "by the Spirit which he hath given us". The Holy Spirit is the source from which the certainty of our relationship with God is drawn. The indwelling Spirit is God's gift to the believer. As Houlden remarks, "Whatever man has by way of relationship with God is never the result of his own effort or initiative, but the gift of God."

## Related Resources:

- [Of the Manner and Importance of the Spirit's Indwelling](#) - John Flavel
- [What is sanctification? What is the definition of Christian sanctification?](#)
- [What is progressive sanctification?](#)
- [What is positional sanctification?](#)

**He has given us** - The verb given is in the **aorist tense** which speaks of a point in time, the day we believed and were born from above is the day we received the Gift of salvation and the Gift of His Spirit! Tracking the preceding pronouns in context supports the premise that this pronoun refers to the Father Who has given us the Spirit. For John this gift would have been realized at Pentecost. For all others it would have been realized at the time of the new birth, when the Spirit took up residence in their bodies, God's temple.

**When did He give the Spirit?** when first we believed.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22 who also **sealed us and gave [us] the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge**

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—**having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise**,<sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of [God's own] possession, to the praise of His glory.

Romans 8:15-16 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but **you have received a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

**Candlish** - We are to distinguish here between our dwelling in God and His dwelling in us. Our dwelling in God is to be known by our "keeping His commandments"; God's dwelling in us, by "**the Spirit which He giveth us**" And yet, the two means of knowledge are not far apart. They are not only strictly consistent with one another; they really come together in one point. For the Spirit is here said to be given to us--not in order to our knowing that God abideth in us, in the sense of His opening our spiritual eye and quickening our spiritual apprehension--but rather as the medium of our knowing it, the evidence or proof by which we know it. And how are we to recognize the Spirit as given to us? How otherwise than by recognizing the fruit of the gift? The Spirit given to us is, as to His movement or operation, unseen and unfelt. But the fruit of the Spirit is palpable and patent. "It is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." For "against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). ([Our Abiding in God by Obedience](#))

**Stott** concludes "The Spirit whose presence is the test of Christ's abiding in us, manifests himself objectively in our life and conduct. It is he who inspires us to confess Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh, as John immediately proceeds to show (iv. 1ff.; cf. ii. 20, 27). It is also he who empowers us to live righteously and to love the brethren (cf. iv. 13; Gal. v. 16, 22). So if we would assure our hearts when they accuse and condemn us, we must look for evidence of the Spirit's working, and particularly whether he is enabling us to believe in Christ, to obey God's commandments and to love the brethren; for the condition of abiding is this comprehensive obedience (24a), and the evidence of abiding is the gift of the Spirit."

**Rensberger**: "Although the possession of the Spirit and mutual abiding with God are interior events, they are validated by means that are not individualistic or esoteric but thoroughly public: confession of faith and love for one another."

**Harris** - The Spirit's role in the believer's assurance in 1Jn 3:24. Here in v. 24 is the first explicit reference to the Spirit in 1 John, although the "anointing" mentioned in 1Jn 2:20, 1Jn 2:27 is best understood as a reference to the Spirit also. After this there will be additional references to the Spirit in 1 John, all more or less explicit (1Jn 4:2, 13; 5:6, 8; cf. also 1Jn 4:6). Appeal to the Spirit as proof of God's presence residing in the believer may appear at first subjective, but it is very important to note (especially in light of the debate over Christology with the secessionist opponents, which amounts to a claim to be receiving new revelation) that the ground of assurance is not based on some revelation by the indwelling Spirit, but on the fact of the Spirit's presence in the life of the believer. No content of any "message of reassurance" from the Spirit is mentioned or alluded to here. Second, as Smalley notes, "the Spirit, according to John, manifests himself objectively in the life and conduct of the believer, inspiring a true confession of Jesus (1Jn 4:1-3) and enabling his followers to act righteously (cf. 1Jn 2:29) and lovingly (cf. 1Jn 4:12-13)." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

**Sam Storms** on the **Holy Spirit** - Finally, lest all that has preceded fail to bring full assurance to the doubting heart, John appeals to one final source of confidence, the Holy Spirit. John says that yet another way of knowing that God truly lives in us is by the Holy Spirit who indwells us. But how or in what way does this assurance manifest itself? In other words, what does the Holy Spirit do which brings us assurance? There are two possibilities: \* Stott takes one view, what may be called the objective view, and explains: "The Spirit whose presence is the test of Christ abiding in us, manifests himself objectively in our life and conduct. It is he who inspires us to confess Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh... It is also he who empowers us to live righteously and to love the brethren. So if we would assure our hearts, when they accuse and condemn us, we must look for evidence of the Spirit's working, and particularly whether he is enabling us to believe in Christ, to obey God's commandments and to love the brethren" (151). \* The other view, which I call the subjective view, is similar to the thought of Romans 5:5 and Ro 8:14-16.

The **Holy Spirit** is the gift from the Father and the Son

"And **I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes (God's sovereign enablement), and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (Our personal responsibility)." (Ezekiel 36:27)

Jesus said "And I will ask the Father, and **He will give you another Helper**, that He may be with you forever." (Jn 14:16)

Jesus said "And behold, **I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you**; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24:49)

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the **Father had promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me. (Acts 1:4)

Jesus said "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom **the Father will send in My name**, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." (Jn 14:26)

Jesus said "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me."

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and **having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.**" (Acts 2:33)

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**Taking Orders** - Read: 1 John 3:18-24 | This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. —1 John 5:3

A sergeant in the Indiana National Guard was demoted and sentenced to 4 days in jail because he refused to take off his cap.

It really wasn't that simple. The incident occurred during winter training exercises when temperatures were well below freezing. The man wore a soft cap with ear flaps under a regulation helmet. The previous spring he had suffered burns to his face and ears, and doctors had advised him to wear a cap to protect his sensitive skin.

At this point you're probably feeling sorry for the guardsman. But there's more to the story. In the official report, there was evidence that the man was intoxicated, and this incident of insubordination had been preceded by two other warnings about proper headgear.

The soldier was not excused, though he thought he should have been. Like so many of us, he made the mistake of thinking he was within his rights to dismiss the orders of someone in authority.

In the family of God, we too are apt to think we know what is best for us. But no one is in a better position to understand our needs than the Lord. His commands are given with an understanding of the outcome. They are for His honor, the good of others, and our eventual joy. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Master, make me ready  
When Thy voice is truly heard,  
With obedience glad and steady,  
Still to follow every word. —Havergal

To love God is to obey God.

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**Mysterious Invisibility** - Across the United States and around the world, we often experience the dramatic effect of something no one can see. In 2011, for instance, several US cities were devastated by tornadoes that blew apart neighborhoods and business districts. And during each hurricane season, we are shocked as winds of more than 100 miles an hour threaten to destroy what we have built.

All of this is the result of an unseen force. Sure, we see the wind's effects (flags flapping, debris flying), but we cannot see the wind itself. It works in mysterious invisibility.

In a sense, this is also true of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, when believers experienced the filling of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). That wind was a tangible demonstration to those early Christians that the unseen Spirit was at work in their lives. And He still

works in our lives today! If you are a follower of Christ, be encouraged. The Holy Spirit bears fruit in your life (Gal. 5:22-23), forms believers into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), and **assures you of God's presence** (1 John 3:24). The Holy Spirit is a powerful Person in our lives—even though we can't see Him. By Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Silently now I wait for Thee,  
Ready, my God, Thy will to see;  
Open my heart—illumine me,  
Spirit divine. —Scott

The Holy Spirit works powerfully, though invisibly.