

# 1 John 4:5 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

[1 John 4:1](#)  
[1 John 4:2](#)  
[1 John 4:3](#)  
[1 John 4:4](#)  
[1 John 4:5](#)  
[1 John 4:6](#)  
[1 John 4:7](#)  
[1 John 4:8](#)  
[1 John 4:9](#)  
[1 John 4:10](#)  
[1 John 4:11](#)  
[1 John 4:12](#)  
[1 John 4:13](#)  
[1 John 4:14](#)  
[1 John 4:15](#)  
[1 John 4:16](#)  
[1 John 4:17](#)  
[1 John 4:18](#)  
[1 John 4:19](#)  
[1 John 4:20](#)  
[1 John 4:21](#)

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			

## STUDY GUIDE

### 1 JOHN 4

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+[a](#)

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

*Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading.* (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

*"Asking questions is the key to understanding."*

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

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## 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):

KJV 1 John 4:5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

BGT 1 John 4:5 α το κ το κ σμου ε σ ν, δι το το κ το κ σμου λαλο σιν κα κ σμος α τ ν κο ει.

NET 1 John 4:5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world's perspective and the world listens to them.

CSB 1 John 4:5 They are from the world. Therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.

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

NIV 1 John 4:5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.

NLT 1 John 4:5 Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them.

NRS 1 John 4:5 They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.

NJB 1 John 4:5 They are from the world, and therefore the world inspires what they say, and listens to them.

NAB 1 John 4:5 They belong to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world, and the world listens to them.

YLT 1 John 4:5 They -- of the world they are; because of this from the world they speak, and the world doth hear them;

MIT 1 John 4:5 They are from the world; therefore, they speak from the world's standpoint, and the world listens to them.

GWN 1 John 4:5 These people belong to the world. That's why they speak the thoughts of the world, and the world listens to them.

BBE 1 John 4:5 They are of the world, so their talk is the world's talk, and the world gives ear to them.

RSV 1 John 4:5 They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them.

NKJ 1 John 4:5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.

ASV 1 John 4:5 They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them.

Wuest They themselves are out of the world as a source. On this account out of the world as a source they are constantly speaking. And the world listens to them.

- **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.

*The difference between false prophets  
and true believers is their origin.*

-- Danny Akin

**They are from (ek) the world (kosmos); therefore they speak (laleo - present tense - continually speak) as from (ek) the world (kosmos), and the world (kosmos) listens (akouo) to them** - Who are **they**? First **they** presents a striking contrast with the **little** (dear) **children** who are **from God** (1Jn 4:4)! Those individuals (false prophets) who are energized (if you will) by the false spirits of antichrist. **From the world** is 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!) **Therefore** (for this cause) is a term of conclusion begging the question what does John conclude? He concludes that their origin (world) is reflected by their message (worldly). They speak the same godless language as the godless world speaks and their language is the evidence of their origin **from the world**, not from God. **And the world listens to them** which confirms the true identity of those **who speak as from the world**. These individuals are speaking on the "AM" band ("SAME WAVE-LENGTH") 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!

**Hiebert on from (ek) the world (kosmos)** - "Out of the world" (literal) indicates their spiritual derivation and their personal allegiance. In 1Jn 4:3 John has identified the anti-christian 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 (kosmos)**" 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). ([1 John 4:1-6](#))

**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+), 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. (Borrow [The Epistles of John](#))

**Vincent** on **from (ek) the world (kosmos)** - Proceeding from, as their source. Different from **from the earth** (John 3:31), as marking the whole worldly economy morally considered. **speak as from the world** - "Literally *"they speak out of the world"*, i.e., the character of their utterances corresponds to their origin."

*"The world listens to those  
who speak its own language."*

--D Edmond Hiebert

**A T Robertson** "their talk proceeds from the world and wins a ready hearing. The false prophets and the world are in perfect unison."

**R C H Lenski** - They speak (ever) from the world, for all their utterance they have no higher source, draw from no divine fountain, and no stream rises above its source. All these facts help us in our testing these spirits. So also does this, that the world hears them, genitive, listens to them as admired and authoritative spokesmen. It likes their speech; this their speech is the world's own language. It never rises any higher than that which the world considers wisdom. The world hears and nods full approval whenever they speak. This is true to this day. It generally also pays its speakers well. (BORROW [The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude](#))

**Glenn Baker** - The false teachers are successful "in the world" because their thinking, their theology, is accommodated to the world's beliefs. So their teaching is philosophically congenial to the prevailing currents of the day. Naturally the world hears such teachers gladly. (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition](#))

**Bob Utley** makes a good point that "Another evidence of Christian teachers versus false teachers is who listens to them (cf. Jn 15:19; 1Ti 4:1)."

**Thompson** puts it this way (referring to 1Jn 4:1-6) - What this passage gives us is in its own way a "field guide" to identifying or discerning "spirits." Specifically, it calls attention to two distinct "field marks" of various spirits: first, what they say or teach; second, who hears or accepts their teaching. (Borrow [1-3 John](#)).

**Simon 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](#))

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

**Robert Yarbrough** adds that "Jesus stressed two things that relate to John's talk of people who are "of the world." First, Jesus claimed he was not of the world. To detractors he said, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23 NIV). Second, his followers, while obviously  $\nu \tau \kappa \acute{o} \sigma \mu$  (en tō kosmō, in the world), are not of the world: "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (Jn 15:19 NIV; cf. Jn 17:6, 14-16). In this sense Jesus envisions a clear polarity between the community of his followers and everyone else. (See [1-3 John Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**David Guzik** - Those who are of the **world (kosmos)** are evident because they speak as of the **world (kosmos)**; the influence of the **world (kosmos)** is evident in their speech. As Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34+). (**ED: AND AS "WORLDLINGS" THEIR HEARTS ARE EVIL AND WICKED AND THE FRUIT OF THEIR LIPS IS THE SAME!**)

**Pulpit Commentary** - The source of their character and their teaching is the world; from it they derive their inspiration; and of course the world listens to them. Once again (see on ch. 3:23) we have an echo of Christ's last discourses: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own" (John 15:19).

**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)

**B F 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. ([1 John 4:1-6](#))

**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. (BORROW [The message of John's letters](#))

**Robert Yarbrough** adds that "naturally, John continues, **'the world listens to them.'**" "The world welcomes their message gladly because they are saying just what the world wants to hear" (Schnackenburg 1992: 204). John's reasoning here is a direct reflection of an axiom laid down by Jesus: "He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God" (John 8:47 NIV). By inference John would know that those who are of the world listen to voices from the world, and vice versa. (See [1-3 John Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**D Edmond 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." ([1 John 4:1-6](#)) (**ED**: Hiebert's description reminds me of the ear ticklers in 2Ti 4:3-4+ "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*").

**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](#))

**Rod Mattoon** on those **from the world** - Carnality is the goal, the appeal, and the aim of the unsaved and those who are carnal. The main priorities of life of many that are unsaved and carnal are getting drunk, getting high, getting rich, and sexual immorality. Others thirst for power and control over people. Whatever can provide emotional or physical thrills is sought, sometimes at any cost. This is the world's siren song and the masses are drawn to it because they don't know anything else. Most people think that this is what life is all about because they are spiritually blind...If you are a parent living a life of sin, understand that you are setting a terrible example for your children who will most likely follow your footsteps when they get older. You think you have problems now, you have not seen anything yet if your kids get involved in living a worldly, ungodly life. God's warning to us is to not love the lifestyle and philosophies of this world. Multitudes of those who live worldly, wicked lives find that after a while, the thrills of their escapades are gone because they do not satisfy any more and the cheap flings have become expensive. The cost of addiction, health problems, damaged relationships, and punishment for crimes take their toll. There is a reaping process to what you sow! When partying and perversity have been pushed to the limit, many feel empty and dissatisfied and ask, "Is this all that life has to offer? What am I really doing here? What in the world have I done? What is the purpose of my life?" Unfortunately, multitudes without hope end it all and commit suicide, just as Satan hoped they would do. They could not find clarity in their confusing mess. ([Treasures from First ... Second ... Third John](#))

**Bruce Barton** applies the truth of this verse - John warned that Christians who faithfully teach God's Word will not win popularity contests in the world. People don't want to hear their sins denounced; they don't want to listen to demands that they change their behavior. A false teacher will be well received by non-Christians....To "sophisticated, urbane, educated" people, the gospel seems far-fetched, even nonsensical. "God becoming a man? An invisible world beyond this existence? That doesn't make sense!" The Christian faith also seems crude and offensive to "enlightened" men and women. "A bloody cross to satisfy a holy God's wrath? Only one way to heaven? How archaic and narrow-minded can you be!" Keep in mind as you attempt to communicate the gospel to this generation that you are dealing with a "captive audience"—captive in the sense that they are blind to God's truth by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). As you are faithful in prayer and in proclaiming his message, God will open eyes and hearts, enabling

**From** (1537) (ek) a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out (of place, time, or cause, literal or figurative. Out of, from, by," suggesting "the source from which something is done," is sometimes rendered "by means of," e.g., Luke 16:9, RV, "by means of (the mammon of unrighteousness);" AV, "of;" 2 Cor. 1:11, "by (the) means of (many)."

1 John 4 has 8 phrases that begin with **"from"** (ek) - 1 John 4:1, 1 John 4:2, 1 John 4:3, 1 John 4:4, 1 John 4:5, 1 John 4:6

**GINGRICH Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament** - EK before vowels ex prep. with genitive (possessive) = **from, out of, away from—**

**1. to denote separation** Mt 2:15; 26:27; Mk 16:3; Jn 12:27; 17:15 ; Ac 17:33; Gal 3:13; Rev 14:13; **from among** Lk 20:35; Acts 3:23.

**2. to denote the direction from which something comes from, out from** Mt 17:9; Mk 11:20; Lk 5:3; in answer to the question where? at, on Mt 20:21, 23; Ac 2:25, 34.

**3. to denote origin, cause, motive reason from, of,** by Mt 1:3, 5, 18; Jn 1:13, 46; 1 Cor 7:7; 2 Cor 5:1; Gal 2:15; 4:4; Phil 3:5. **Because of,** by Mk 7:11; 2 Cor 2:2; Rev 8:11. **By reason of, as a result of, because of** Lk 12:15; Ac 19:25; Ro 4:2; **with** Lk 16:9. **Of, from of source or material** Mt 12:34; J 19:2; 1 Cor 9:13; Rv 18:12. **According to, in accordance with** Mt 12:37; 2 Cor 8:11, 13. ek toutou **for this reason, therefore** Jn 6:66. oi` ek nomou partisans of the law Ro 4:14.

**4. in periphrasis for the partitive** gen. Mt 10:29; 25:2; Lk 11:15, which may even function as subject of a sentence ek t matheton some of the disciples Jn 16:17; used with einai = belong to someone or something Mt 26:73; Ac 21:8; 1 Cor 12:15f. After verbs of filling with Lk 15:16; J n12:3; Rev 8:5. For the gen. of price or value for Mt 20:2; 27:7; Ac 1:18.

**5. of time from, from this or that time on** Mt 19:12; Mk 10:20; J 9:1, 32; for Lk 23:8; **after** 2 Pt 2:8.

**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+]) 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)."

**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](#))

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](#)

**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)."