**Wednesday 21st October – 1 John**

**Study 5.1- Free to overcome**

*Spirituality is far more popular than religion these days. And we tend to see what is “spiritual” as by definition good. John does not agree..*

**Test the spirits**

**Read 1 John 4:1-3**

* **Questions**

*What are the “spirits” that John says we should test (v 1)?*

*What test should we apply?*

Whether it’s teaching, prophecy, a new spirituality or whatever, the key issue is Jesus. How does this “spirit” answer these kinds of questions:

Is he the Son of God?

Is he fully human?

Is he the only Saviour?

Is his work sufficient to save us?

Did he die as our substitute?

Is he unique?

Is he the King?

Will he judge the world?

**Apply**

In John’s day, the main issue was whether Jesus came “in the flesh”—was Jesus really fully human (see 1:1-3)?   
The issue will vary from one generation to another, but always

it will be about who Jesus is and what he has done.

* **Question**

*What do you think the issues are for us?*

**Oppose the spirits**

**Read 1 John 4:4-6**

* **Questions**

*What great truth in verse 4 helps us in our battle against these various spirits?*

*Who listens to whom, according to verses 5-6?*

*How is this both an explanation and a challenge for us as we seek to share the truth with others?*

Whether “the spirits” are demonic forces or alternative spiritualities or worldly viewpoints, we have already overcome them. We don’t need to fear them or their arguments because God is greater. Verse 6 might sound arrogant at first glance, but John is talking about the apostolic testimony to Jesus—”what we have seen and heard” (1:3).

It is a further refinement of his truth test.

There are many different versions of who Jesus is and what he has done, but the only version that counts is the apostolic one, which we have in the New Testament. After all, the apostles were there. They saw Jesus and they heard him for themselves. It is not arrogant to claim that we know the truth. It is not arrogant to say that other

people are wrong. We don’t know the truth because we were clever enough to figure it out or good enough to attain it, but because God was gracious enough to reveal it to us.

**Pray**

* **Questions**

*Are you ever frightened to speak out and put a Christian point of view?*

*Do you worry that you’ll be laughed at or argued down?*

Remember that the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. Pray for opportunities to humbly and gently but confidently tell others about the real Jesus, who can rescue us from our sins for a glorious future.

**Study 5.2 - Free to love others**

*John has been talking about a truth test—we can test the spirits by what they make of Jesus. Now he talks about a love test.*

**God is love**

**Read 1 John 4:7-8**

* **Questions**

*Where does love come from?*

*Is John saying that people who aren’t Christians cannot love?*

*If not, then what is he saying, do you think?*

*What is the difference between saying “God loves” and “God is love”?*

God is *always* loving. Everything he does is characterised by love. He doesn’t act in love sometimes and in wrath at other times. So even when he is acting in judgment, it is a loving act. When God judges sin in sinners, he is showing that he loves those that their sin has hurt, and loving the world he has made.

He doesn’t have a split personality or changeable moods. All his actions have complete integrity with every part of his character. He never compromises his love for the sake of his holiness or his justice for the sake of his love.

By God’s common grace, non-Christians can be loving, sacrificial and generous— sometimes more so than some who would call themselves Christians. But they will never love God’s people or God himself in the same way that those who truly belong to him do.

**The love test.**

**Read 1 John 4:7-12**

* **Questions**

*How would you summarise the love test from these verses?*

No one has ever seen God, John says (v 12).

*But in what two places can people see God’s love?*

*What does this tell us about our priorities as Christians?*

God is love, and love comes from God. So if we claim to be born of God, then we must be characterised by the kind of sacrificial love that we were shown at the cross. God’s love has a purpose for us—eternal life. And it didn’t wait for someone else to make the first move.

We see God’s love at the cross. But we can also experience it in the fellowship of the church family (v 12). That’s why the quality of our life together as Christians is so vital if we are to bring the forgiveness and mercy of God to those who are lost without him.

**Pray**

Pray that people will be able to see God and his love in the relationships that you have with one another in your church.