

love with the kind of love that God the Father and God His Son had for me, then I don't really know God, at all. I've become nothing more than *sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*. If I wish to truly **abide** in God, I must **esteem the saints**—I must love the very people that God loved.

### CONCLUSION

While **“Fargo”**, **“The Man who Wasn't There”**, **“No Country for Old Men”**, and **“True Grit”** would be the Coen Brother's only major award winning projects, it's Jeff Bridges **“The Big Lebowski”** that most often makes on the list as a cult classic—beloved by millions and preserved in the United States National Film Registry in 2014.

I'll be honest: I've tried to make it through it without success, though I'll admit that a perusing of the Wikipedia article for it is fascinating. Maybe it's one of your favorite movies. Or maybe, like me, you just couldn't make it past its more...unique...moments. It's certainly rated **“R”** for a reason. The movie has, like its main character, **“abided”** through the subsequent years since its release. But to truly **“abide”** takes something greater than just memorable characters and witty dialogue.

John sought for his readers to **abide in God**—to remain in Him throughout all that happens, and all that may come: unflappable and unchangeable. But for the **Christian to abide**, they needed to do so by **examination of the Spirits**—verifying that they were remaining within the true teaching of Christ.

**1JN 4.13-15 (NKJV)** ~ *By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

But that is only a part of the Christian's mission. If they are truly to **abide**, they must also **abide by esteeming the saints**—continuing in the example of love that God set in Christ—knowing the love that He has shown for us, and showing that love for the Brethren.

**1JN 4.16-21 (NKJV)** ~ *And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup> We love Him because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup> If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

### INVITATION

#665 [Exp-NTGE]  
09/06/2025

The Christian Abides  
PC \_\_ Pchd \_\_\_\_\_

1JN 4.1-21

QUESTION: How is the Christian to “**abide in God**”?

### TRN TO 1JN 4

### INTRODUCTION

**MOVIES/The Coen Brothers/Filmography**

**MOVIES/The Big Lebowski/Inspiration – Part 1**

**MOVIES/The Big Lebowski/Inspiration – Part 2**

**MOVIES/The Big Lebowski/Summary**

**MOVIES/The Big Lebowski/Quotes**

That last one, **“The Dude abides”** is viewed as being the central thesis of Jeff Bridges' character: the idea being that throughout all that happens, and all that may come, he remains, unflappable and unchangeable. It's a nice concept. And it's utter hogwash. No matter how “cool” the character might have been, his philosophy and way of life would never really result in him truly **“abiding”**.

### BACKGROUND

We've been spending our Sunday evenings following the text for the month's Bible Bowl chapters: **1JN 1-4**. With this evening being our Song Service, and tomorrow the first competition, we're going to shake things up by looking at the final chapter of the month's text. If this is your first time joining us for our series on **1JN**, the rest of the lessons are all available online—available on our website, YouTube channel, and Facebook page.

John is widely believed to have written his letters to the brethren in Asia. They struggled with Gnosticism, which taught a kind of intangible Christ—**“real”** only in the content and affect of His teachings. Last week, we looked at **1JN 3**, and how they could see the difference by understanding just what made a Christian a Christian: **purity from sin** and **purity from hate**.

John desired, more than anything, for the church and her members to **“abide”**—to remain throughout all that happens, and all that may come: unflappable and unchangeable. And for the next chapter, that's his focus: to help **the Christian abide** against their struggles and throughout their lives. And if we take the time to understand his teachings, we to, can **abide** throughout all that happens, and all that may come: unflappable and unchangeable.

### BD1: Abide by Examination of the Spirits (vs. 1-6)

**1JN 4.1a (NKJV)** ~ *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God;*

**EX:** The literal translation of the text is not just **“don't believe”**—but **“stop believing”**. The implication is that some of the readers to whom John

wrote had fallen in with the Gnostic teachers. John's call to them was to **abide with God**—and to do so, they needed to **examine the spirits**—those who claimed to be speaking by inspiration of God.

He doesn't say this just to the elders, or the preacher, or just to the super-spiritual among them. This command is one he gives to all his audience: to test the words of the people who claim to be of God— *because many false prophets have gone out into the world.* (1JN 4.1b - NKJV)

John seems to be saying that these prophets are inspired by a spirit—the question is whether it's a godly one or not. **But how would they know the difference?** *By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.* (1JN 4.2-3 - NKJV)

**“Oh, so the key to whether a person is a false teacher or not is whether they claim Jesus is come in the flesh?”** This is where we need to be reminded: the book of 1JN is written *for* us, but it's not written *to* us. To John's audience, this was the one most dangerous and prevalent false teaching they were facing. And so, for them, teachers were broken into two groups: those who claimed Jesus came in the flesh (the faithful), and those who didn't (the false—the antichrist). **So, what should we be on the lookout now? What else is a sign of the “spirit of the antichrist”?**

**1JN 4.4-6 (NKJV)** ~ *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. <sup>6</sup> We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

**EX:** There are two key aspects of those who speak from the “*spirit of error*”—those who speak like the world (ie: people more concerned with earthly philosophies and concepts than spiritual ones) and the one who *does not hear us*—those who don't follow the teachings of the apostles.

If I were to say, **“If someone doesn't agree with me, they don't know God,”** I'd sound prideful. Honestly, I'd BE prideful. But I'm not one of the inspired authors of the Bible. They could say that, because they spoke by inspiration of His Spirit. And to disagree with them *was* to disagree with God.

John encouraged for his audience to **abide** in God—and to do so, they needed to **abide** in the apostles' teaching—and they could know whether they were doing so or not by **examination of the spirits**—testing to see whether these things were so or not. *These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and*

*searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.* (AC 17.11 - NKJV)

**AP:** That same advice is extended to us, today, too. All about us are those who claim to be possessors of the truth. We see them on Facebook and YouTube, and hear their teachings from church pulpits. **How are we to know the true teacher from the false?** The same way that John's audience did. We can **abide** in God by **examination of the Spirits**—by comparing their teachings to the teachings of the Apostles—to the Scripture.

**2TM 3.16-17 (NKJV)** ~ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

### **BD2: Abide by Esteeming the Saints (vs. 7-21)**

But John isn't complete. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* (1JN 4.7-8 - NKJV) A person could know and comprehend all the teachings of the apostles—have all the divine Spirit-given powers. But they would still not **abide** in God. Not if they didn't also **esteem the saints**—not if they didn't **love one another**. **But what does that love look like?** For the answer, John turns to the best example imaginable.

**1JN 4.9-11 (NKJV)** ~ *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

**EX:** This was the core trait that John wanted his audience to understand: that true love was made manifest—made real—by through the Father's willing sending of His one and only unique and special Son. **And why?** So that we could truly have life through Him. In truth, we don't measure love by our standard of love for Him, but by His standard of love for us. And if God loved us enough to give up His Son for us, how greatly should we love one another.

**AP** Brethren, I'm reminded of Paul's words to the Corinthian church: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.* (1CR 13.1-3 - NKJV) I can claim to know God—I can have all of scripture memorized from front to back. But if I don't love my fellow man—truly