

1 John 4:15 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 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God:

Greek - os ean homologese (3SAAS) hoti Iesous estin (3SPAI) o huios tou theou o theos en auto menei (3SPAI) kai autos en to theo

Amplified - Anyone who confesses (acknowledges, owns) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides (lives, makes His home) in him and he [abides, lives, makes his home] in God.

NLT - All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.

Wuest - Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God in him dwells and he himself in God.

- **confess**: 1Jn 4:2 5:1,5 Mt 10:32 Lu 12:8 Ro 10:9 Php 2:11 2Jn 1:7
- **God abides**: 1Jn 4:12 3:24
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE BELIEVER'S CONFESSION OF JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD

John had just described Jesus as "the Savior of the world" (1Jn 4:14**note**) and now explains how this truth become operative in an individual's life.

Whoever confesses - The NAS translation is a bit misleading as it suggests continual confession as might be suggested by the present tense. However the verb is in the aorist tense which signifies that at point in time one has made a confession, acknowledgment or profession of faith in the Son of God. [Hiebert](#) adds that "The aorist verb "**confess**" denotes a specific, and apparently public, confession born of an inner persuasion. It is a response to the apostolic testimony recorded in 1Jn 4:14."

Earlier John had written "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that**confesses** that Jesus Christ has **come in the flesh** is from God; and every spirit that does not **confess** Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world." (1Jn 4:2-3**note**) So in this passage John refers primarily to confession of the true humanity of Jesus (fully Man). But here in 1Jn 4:14 the confession has to do with His divinity, as the Son of God. The false prophets refused to confess either His Humanity or His Deity.

In 1Jn 2:23**note** makes a similar statement writing "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who**confesses** the Son has the Father also." As an aside, it is amazing that some commentators like Thomas Constable (whose commentary I highly respect) and Zane Hodges even raise the question of whether the first clause in 1Jn 2:23 refers to a person who "was unregenerate or a believer who had "departed" from the faith." (Hodges) This passage clearly refers to an unbeliever! Notice that **denies**" is a present participle indicating these individuals continually deny Christ, unlike Peter who denied Him three times but later boldly confessed Him. As Charles Ryrie says "To deny the Son makes it impossible to become part of God's family and have God as Father."

Vine adds that in 1Jn 4:2-3 "the confession served to differentiate those who are of God and those who are of the world, and who are influenced by the spirit of the Antichrist; here (1Jn 4:15) confession serves to differentiate between those who give evidence by their love that they are children of God and those who, however much they profess, do not manifest love, and are liars (1Jn 4:20). In each place the confession is shown to be produced by the Holy Spirit, and here it involves the same spirit of love as was manifested by Christ, and a life that bears testimony to His saving power."

John has made it clear in 1Jn 4:2**note** that it is only as the Spirit gives a natural man the desire and power is he able to make a "supernatural" confession of Christ.

Steven Cole - John's point here is that if you confess the apostolic testimony, that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who saves you from your sins, you didn't come up with that idea yourself. The Spirit of God opened your eyes to see it. Thus your confession of Jesus Christ sent from God as the Savior of the world is evidence that God abides in you and you abide in God. In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asked His disciples the most important question in the world. It is the most crucial question that you can answer personally: "**Who do you say that I am?**" Peter gave the great answer (Mt 16:16), "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' replied (Mt 16:17), "**Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**" That is John's point here: If, in your heart, you truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world and that He is your Savior, you didn't figure that out on your own. God revealed it to you by His Spirit. **Your confession is evidence that God abides in you, and you abide in God.** ([1 John 4:12-16 Assurance of Abiding](#))

John Piper on the relationship between confessing to believing - Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God is the same as believing in the name of the Son of God. But look at what 1Jn 5:13**note** says the issue is. It is not the issue of intimacy with the Father. It is the issue of eternal life. "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." 1Jn 3:15**note** says that if you confess Jesus as the Son of God, you have God abiding in you. 1Jn 5:13 says that if you believe on the name of the Son of God, you have eternal life. Therefore what John means when he speaks of abiding in God and God abiding in us is the possession of eternal life not the advanced stages of intimacy with God. If you abide in the vine, you have life and bear fruit. If you do not abide in the vine, you are gathered with the other withered branches and thrown into the fire. The issue is salvation, not maturity. (Compare also 1John 3:14**note** and John 5:24) ([1 John 4:13-16: God Abides in the One Who Loves -](#)

[This is an important sermon for evangelicals to read - click for the entire message](#))

John Stott - if anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, he thereby gives evidence of the fact that God lives in him and he in God. Again, the witness of the apostles must be supplemented by the witness of the Spirit. ([The Letters of John - Tyndale New Testament Commentary](#))

As **Findlay** stated "Any theory, whether of the ancient Gnostic or the modern Unitarian type, which makes Christ's nature less than Divine, makes God's love less than perfect in the same proportion."

Alford - And recognition of this fact (1Jn 4:14 that He is the Savior of the world) is a condition and proof of the life of God. [1 John 4 Commentary](#))

The **NET Bible** translation is accurate in presenting this as a conditional sentence - "**if** anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, (**Ed: then**) God resides in him and he in God."

Spurgeon - Let Christ be God to you, and you are saved. If, in every deed, and of a truth. You take him to be the Son of God, and consequently rest your eternal hopes on him, God dwells in you, and you dwell in God.

A T Robertson - This confession of the deity of Jesus Christ implies surrender and obedience also, not mere lip service (cf. 1Cor 12:3; Ro 10:6-12-note).

Confesses (acknowledges, professes) [\(3670\)](#)(**homologeō** from **homos** = one and the same or together with + **legō** = to say) literally means to say the same thing as another and so to agree in one's statements with, to acknowledge, to admit the truth of something. "The verb, which basically means "to say the same thing," denotes a personal acceptance of the reality being confessed. It is not merely a group's rote recital of a creedal confession. Brown observes, "The author is now talking about the (single) basic confession of faith that makes one a Christian." ([Hiebert](#))

Wuest explains that **confesses** "is in the **aoist tense**, making the act of confession a definite one, and the classification, constative aorist, speaking of the fact that that confession is a life-time confession, and represents the sustained attitude of the heart." ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

John Piper - the evidence of whether you abide in God and God in you is how you respond to John's testimony that the Father has sent the Son. If you respond with a hearty agreement, then God abides in you. It's the same thing he said in 1 Jn 4:6, "Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us." Therefore John can give his testimony in 1Jn 4:14 that the Father sent the Son and then in 1Jn 4:15 say that if you "listen" to this and confess it (i.e., heartily agree with it), then you are of God, you are indwelt by the Spirit of truth, God abides in you and you in God. Confessing Christ's sonship is the proof that God abides in you. ([Ibid](#))

John uses **homologeō** 5 times in this epistle and once more in his second epistle...

1 John 1:9-note If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 2:23-note Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who **confesses** the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:2-note By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that **confesses** that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

1 John 4:3-note and every spirit that does not **confess** Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

1John 4:15-note Whoever **confesses** that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

2 John 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not **acknowledge** Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Vincent explains the difference between *confessing* Jesus and *professing* Jesus - The fundamental idea of *confess* is that of saying the same thing as another; while *profess* (pro = forth, fateor = to say) is to declare openly. Hence, to **profess Christ** is to declare Him publicly as our Lord: to **confess Christ** is to declare agreement with all that He says. When Christ confesses His followers before the world, He makes a declaration in agreement with what is in His heart concerning them. Similarly, when He declares to the wicked "I never knew you" ("then will I profess" - Mt 7:23KJV-note), a similar agreement between His thought and His declaration is implied. The two ideas run into each other, and the Revised version is right in the few cases in which it retains *profess*, since *confess* would be ambiguous. See, for example, Titus 1:16-note.

Paul says "if you **confess** (aorist tense - at a point in time) with your mouth Jesus [as] Lord, and **believe** (aorist tense - at a point in time) in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes (present tense - keeps believing), resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses (present tense - keeps confessing), resulting in salvation." (Ro 10:9-10-note)

Jesus is the Son of God - The confession is that the Man Jesus is in fact the Son of God, God incarnate as Man.

Barclay - Jesus is the **Son of God**. Whatever that may mean, it certainly means that Jesus Christ is in a relationship to God in which no other person ever stood or ever will stand. He alone can show men what God is like; He alone can bring to men God's grace, love, forgiveness and strength. (1 John 4 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible)

Spurgeon asks "Is there anyone here who is full of anger, enmity, malice, and envy? If so, let him know that God dwells not in the heart that harbors such abominations. Until these base passions are expelled, and we feel love to all mankind for Christ's sake, God is not in us, for "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The old method, according to Jewish tradition, was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy;" but Christ's new rule is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." This is the point in which our likeness to God will be seen, for He loved us when we were His enemies, and He expects His children to love their enemies; may He graciously teach us that sacred art!"

God abides in him, and he in God - This reality of this reciprocal relationship between divinity and humanity is the result of confession of the Son of God.

Vine says "There could be no closer communion or relationship... Cp. also John 6:56; 14:20; 15:4, 5."

Abides (resides, dwells) ([3306](#))(**meno**) means that God lives in the one who makes a genuine confession that Jesus is the Son of God.

Hiebert explains that **meno** in the **present tense** "marks this twofold relationship as a present and progressive reality. In the two previous references to this mutual indwelling (1Jn 3:24 = "abides in Him, and He in him"; 1Jn 4:13 = "we abide in Him and He in us"), the believer's abiding in God is placed first; the reversal of the order here indicates that there is no set priority; the two aspects are mutually interrelated." ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#)) (See also related journal article - [1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

Westcott comments on the two aspects of abiding (**God in him and he in God**) - The two clauses mark two aspects of the Christian's life. The believer has a new and invincible power for the fulfilment of his work on earth: "God is in him." And again he realizes that his life is not on earth, that he belongs essentially to another order: "he is in God." The divine fellowship is complete and effective in each direction.

Meno is used 24 times in First John - 1 John 2:6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27-28; 3:6, 9, 14-15, 17, 24; 4:12-13, 15-16. (Note: four verses have more than one use)

Wiersbe writes that **abide** "is used six times in 1 John 4:12-16. It refers to our personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To abide in Christ means to remain in spiritual oneness with Him, so that no sin comes between us. Because we are "born of God," we have *union* with Christ; but it is only as we trust Him and obey His commandments that we have *communion* with Him. Much as a faithful husband and wife "abide in love" though they may be separated by miles, so a believer abides in God's love. This abiding is made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1John 4:13-note)." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))