

ARE YOU

CERTAIN?

A Study in the Book of 1 John

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEVEL 1	PAGE
1 John Study Guide	3
1 John Basic Background Information	4
Key Verses in 1 John	5
Themes in 1 John	6

LEVEL 2	
Color-Coding Your New Testament & Marking Key Words	1
Read & Interact	2-21

LEVEL 3	
In-Depth Background Information	1
Historical Setting	2
Spiritual Situation	2
Occasion	3
Heretical Influences	3-4
Historic Heresies	5-6
Extended Outline	7-11
1 John 1 Verse-By-Verse Study	13-22
Thoughts on Perfectionism	17
Great Thoughts on Confession	21
1 John 2 Verse-By-Verse Study	23-37
1 John 3 Verse-By-Verse Study	38-44
1 John 4 Verse-By-Verse Study	45-51
1 John 5 Verse-By-Verse Study	52-57

Bibliography

1 JOHN STUDY GUIDE

Based upon your time, experience studying the Word, and your goals, there are many ways to study a book of the Bible. Below are a couple options. You can do a basic overview (Level 1) or an in-depth, verse-by-verse study (Level 3). Therefore, each person or group should choose the option that works best for them. Choose your level and get started!

Level 1 - Read & Reflect

- Read through Basic Background, Information, and Outline.
- Read through the key verses and themes.
- Read through the text in the Study Guide. As you read, keep asking the question, "What is the point of the author?" Think through his purpose for each section.
- » Summarize each section on the blank line at the beginning of each section.
- » Answer the questions located in the text boxes found in the text.
- » After each section, summarize the passage and write down things that you can apply to your life in the space provided below each passage.

Level 2 - Read & Interact

- Do everything listed in Level 1, including going through the text doing section summaries.
- Go through the text again and color-code the passage as you read, using the instructions given.
- Mark key words as you go.

Level 3 - Read & Dissect

- Do everything listed in Levels 1 and 2. It might be best to go through Level 1 first and then go back and complete Level 2 as you go through 1 John the second time.
- Read through supplemental in-depth background information.
- Complete the discussion questions in the verse by verse study guide in the back.

1 JOHN BASIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Author:

John – One of the 12 disciples, the “beloved” apostle. The same author of the Gospel of John and Revelation.

Date:

Uncertain, but likely in the late 80s A.D.

Audience:

A church in Asia. Likely Ephesus.

Situation of the Church:

- There are false teachers trying to persuade them away from the true Gospel.
- Some of these false teachers have come from within the church (1 John 2:19).
- Paul told the Ephesian elders years before that this day was coming (Acts 20:25-31).

Major Themes:

- Battling against false teaching and identifying true believers.
- God’ love is to be demonstrated in our love for one another.
- Our fellowship with God and other Christians.

1 John Outline

- 1:1-4 – Intro
 - 1:5 – The holiness of God (dichotomy of darkness and light)
- 1:6-7 – How to have fellowship with this Holy God
- 1:8-10 – Confessing existing sin to God
 - 2:1-2 – Jesus our Advocate
 - 2:3-6 – How can we know that we are a child of God (ID of a Believer)
- 2:7-11 – A New Command – the true light shining
- 2:12-14 – Encouraging Words for children of God
- 2:15-17 – Do not Love the World
- 2:18-27 – Warning against False Teachers
- 2:28-3:3 – Purifying Hope in Him
 - 3:4-10 – Children of God and Children of the Devil (ID of a Believer)
- 3:11-24 – We should love one another
 - 4:1-6 – Testing the spirits
 - 4:7-21 – The Love of God
- 5:1-5 – Overcoming the World
- 5:6-15 – Testimony of Christ and Assurance of Salvation
- 5:16-21 – Closing Exhortations

KEY VERSES IN 1 JOHN

The following verses are considered key because they express why the author is writing to the recipients and therefore speaks to the purpose of the letter.

- 1:3 *What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*
- 1:4 *And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.*
- 2:1 *My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin.*
- 2:26 *These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.*
- 5:13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*

The following verses address issues and doctrines that are being distorted by the false teachers. John is making the fuzzy clear while identifying true believers versus the wolves.

- 1:19 *They [the false teachers] went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*
- 2:22-23 *Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.*
- 3:7-8 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
- 4:15 *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.*
- 5:1 *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.*
- 5:12 *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

THEMES IN 1 JOHN

Fellowship with God

Fellowship with Other Believers

Identifying True Believers vs. Unbelievers

- Descriptions of believers:
- Believers walk in the light / obedience
- The love of God is in him
- Live in Him
- Has the Holy Spirit
- How Christians live:
 - » Believers do not continue in sin
 - » Confess sin
 - » Love their brother
 - » Walk in the light
 - » Lives a life of love
 - » Overcomes the world

Identifying Antichrists

- Those who deny Christ
- Spirits who deny Christ

Sanctification

Preservation of the Saints

Confidence for those who are in Christ

The above themes give us insight into the issues that John's audience was facing:

- Identifying True Believers
- Confidence in persevering in the faith
- Antichrists were around

LEVEL 2


Color-Coding Your New Testament

- Blue** – General Comments, Teaching Notes, & Application
- Green** – What I learn about God and His promises
- Purple** – Context, Historical Markers, People, Outline, Structure
- Red** – Doctrines (Bible, Christ, Salvation, Sin, Holy Spirit, End Times...)
- Black** – Info on Ministry (Evangelism, Discipleship, Service...)
- Pencil** – Questions about the text

Use colors to underline, [bracket], and make notes—do whatever works for you to make the text as easy to reference, understand, and teach as possible.

Marking Key Words in 1 John

Pick a symbol to put over the word in the text throughout the book.

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Love | | 7. Antichrist |
| 2. Sin | example:  | 8. Command / Commandments |
| 3. Brother | | 9. Witness |
| 4. Know | | 10. Light |
| 5. World | | 11. Darkness |
| 6. Anointing | | 12. Fellowship |

Marking key words gives you the ability to quickly discern the major topics being discussed by the author in each paragraph and passage.

1 JOHN 2:1-2

(Title)

What has Jesus done for us?

1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

2 *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Summarize this section:

Things I can apply to my life:

1 JOHN 2:18-27

(Title)

What was happening in the church when they received this letter?

What do we learn about those trying to deceive the church?

Summarize this section:

Things I can apply to my life:

18 *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the anti-christ is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.*

19 *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

20 *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.*

21 *I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.*

22 *Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son.*

23 *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

24 *As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.*

25 *And this is what he promised us—eternal life.*

26 *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.*

27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

1 JOHN 3:4-10

(Title)

Does God expect perfection? _____

Describe: Children of God _____

Children of the Devil _____

Summarize this section: _____

Things I can apply to my life: _____

4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

1 JOHN 4:7-12

(Title)

Summarize this section: _____

Things I can apply to my life: _____

7 *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*

8 *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

9 *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*

10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

11 *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

12 *No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

1 JOHN 5:1-5

(Title)

Summarize this section: _____

Things I can apply to my life: _____

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.

3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

1 JOHN 5:6-12

(Title)

Summarize this section: _____

Things I can apply to my life: _____

6*This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*

7*For there are three that testify:*

8*the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.*

9*We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.*

10*Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.*

11*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

12*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

LEVEL 3 IN-DEPTH BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Setting

Spiritual Setting

Occasion

Heretical Influences

- Internal Evidence – Concerning Christ, Ethics, & the Holy Spirit
- Historical Heresies – Gnosticism, Cerinthianism, Docetism

Extended Outline

Historical Setting

Location, Government

The recipients of this letter lived in Asia Minor. “The Romans gave it the name Asia because it was the first territory on the continent of Asia to come under the direct control of the Roman state. For a century and a half before its incorporation in the Roman Empire, this territory had constituted the kingdom of Pergamum, whose rulers were friends and allies of Rome. When the last king of Pergamum died, in 133 B.C., he bequeathed his realm to the Roman senate and people” (Bruce, 13).

“If the book of Revelation, with its letters to the seven churches, also comes from this community, as it almost certainly does, then we can say that at the time the Johannine epistles were written the author and his readers lived in the Roman province

of Asia (modern Turkey). More specifically, early Christian tradition places them in and around the great Roman city of Ephesus (Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 3.1.1; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.1.2)” (Johnson, 4).

It was governed by a proconsul who was appointed by the senate.

Pergamum was the capital, but later it was moved to Ephesus. (Bruce,13)

“Asia was regarded as the wealthiest of the Roman provinces; its cities had been centers of Greek culture for many centuries” (Bruce, 13).

Spiritual Situation

Conversion, Continuation, Coming Wolves

In the middle of the first century Paul brought the Gospel to this province of Asia. Acts 19:10 tells us that all the residents of Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. There could have been individuals (Jews) who were converted at Pentecost and brought the message to this region. “The seven churches of Revelation, and other churches besides, were founded at that time, and the continuous history of Christianity in that territory can be traced from then until the Greco-Turkish exchange of populations in 1923” (Bruce, 13).

There was no current New Testament in circulation for people to hold on to and read. The canon was being written in their day. So new words based on principle truths were not uncommon. The issue for the church was distinguishing between correct and incorrect teaching. Some had come in who were re-stating the truth and were arrogantly adding to the truth. Paul knew these wolves were coming as he warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:30.

There are those who have gone out from the church who are not true believers, but rather deceivers (1 John 2:19). The whole church did not follow their

deception. There are many who have held to the teaching they first heard (1 John 2:27). John plays the role of a pastor and prophet by showing concern for his ‘children’ and clearly dividing between right and wrong. John does not leave them as converts without spiritual mentoring. John’s goal (as ours should be) is to take an active role in this church so that its people may continue being sanctified; “And now, dear children, continue in him,” (1 John 2:28).

Paul spent time with some of the Ephesian elders before he went to Jerusalem for the last time (Acts:20:17). He called them to watch after the flock because savage wolves are coming. They will not only come from without, but also from within the Body. His challenge: *So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears* (Acts 20:29-31). Paul also warned Timothy of such men in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 (speaking of the “last days”) and in 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

Paul prophesied the coming of the wolves and John was still alive to see it happen and play an active role in overseeing and protecting the flock.

Occasion

John's Purpose for the Book

John's Gospel was written with an evangelistic purpose. *But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* (John 20:31). In John's epistle he is writing to those who already believe. Much of the language is similar, but the purposes are very different.

John has a pastoral and polemic purpose for this book. He makes it clear that he loves these people and plays a spiritual father-like role in their church. This book is not a theological discourse like Romans, but it contains a tender heart along with stern warnings. It is similar to a letter you would expect to get from your parents while you are living in a dorm room at a secular college.

This letter is not written to the false teachers, but to the flock. "His first concern is not to confound the false teachers, whose activities form the background of the letters, but to protect his readers, his beloved children, and to establish them in their faith and life" (Stott, 44). His purpose for writing can be summed up in; joy, holiness, and assurance for his readers (1 John 1:4, 2:1, 5:13). These are pastoral concerns. Findlay calls John's first letter "a masterpiece in the art of edification."

Heretical Influences

Internal Evidence, Historical Heresies, Ethics

"The intellectual activity of the cities of Asia could not leave the gospel unaffected" (Bruce, 14). A new gospel was being preached from the mouths of wolves. A gospel that was attractive to the people of that age! An effective defection from truth.

Internal Evidence (*John's descriptions of the deceivers through direct statements about their teaching and positive emphasis*)

The internal evidence needs to be understood along with the heretical beliefs of the day so John's opponents can be identified. If commentators took a vote, pregnosticism would probably win, but there are strong arguments on every side. The conclusion is that there is no clear match between John's

Though this book is certainly pastoral, it plays a crucial role in presenting truths to protect the church in its present situation. *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray* (2:27). The wolves have come and are trying to feed on the flock. This was foreseen (see Spiritual Setting). And the heresies are both attractive and destructive (see discussion in Heresies).

These wolves are considered; false prophets, deceivers, and antichrists (4:1, 2 John 7, 2:18). John gives them a warning, but also gives them some tools. He gives them ways to distinguish between a true believer and a false believer. In Chapter four he teaches them how to test the spirits to know if they are from God or the antichrist. He makes it clear how we can know if we are a true believer (5:11-13). "John's argument is double-edged. If he seeks to bring believers to the knowledge that they have eternal life, he is equally at pains to show the unbelievers have not received life. His purpose is to destroy the false assurance of the counterfeit as well as to confirm the right assurance of the genuine" (Stott, 58).

words and the present heretics. Weiss throws in his opinion that John was not opposing a heretical system of belief as much as the Greek Philosophers of the day (Marshall, 20-22). John is not writing a discourse arguing against every thought of his opponent, he is giving us highlights. Therefore, we cannot expect a perfect match.

John is certainly fighting against an opponent, but this opponent has sat under the correct teaching of Christ for some time (2:19). There could be a real combination of false and accurate truth. The false teaching may not have been embraced as an entire system of thought, but only partially. Of course, they have followed the path of destruction, but John may be dealing with common misconceptions of the day

which do not equal a specific opponent adhering to a system of heretical belief.

Marshall has a good section discussing different opinions on who commentators believe John's opponents are and why on pages 16-22.

From internal evidence John seems to be focusing on three things; Christology, Ethics (love and obedience), and the Spirit.

Concerning Christ

- Denial that Jesus is the Christ (2:22)
- Denial that Jesus has come in the flesh (4:2)
 - » Many Jews (and other heretics) had rejected the Messiahship of Christ, but these individuals denied not the Deity of Christ, but the humanity of Christ.
 - » John fully develops his Christology in the sense that he makes it clear that Christ is both God and man, that He is true Deity and truly human. Heresies of the first century were found on both sides of this spectrum and most likely both had an influence in the lives of the recipients of this letter.
- Denial that Jesus has come from God (4:3)

Concerning Ethics and Fruit

- The **Three** Claims in Chapter 1: John may be showing us what the false teachers believe or claim by clarifying what is true. "It seems likely that the claims which John denies at the beginning of the Epistle represent those of the false teachers" (Marshall, 15).
 1. We do not have fellowship with Christ if we walk in the darkness (1:6)
 2. We are not perfect, but we are called to be repentant (1:8-9)
 3. We needed Christ's atoning sacrifice to cleanse us from our sin (1:10-2:2)
 - » Each of these are basic truths. They are probably truths which have been challenged by the deceivers.
 - » These claims may be the actual claims of the wolves they are presently dealing with. They may be claiming sinlessness both past and present and the ability to have fellowship with God while breaking His decrees.

» They are putting morals and ethics in a different category than spirituality. The opposite of the Biblical text (1:7).

- An Authentic believer loves (4:7)
- He who does what is right is righteous. (3:7)

Concerning the Holy Spirit

- 3:24 & 4:13 tells us that we (who believe in the Son 5:11-13) indeed have the Spirit in our lives.

Those who left tried to create a 2 class Christianity. They identified themselves as 1st class - the 'spiritual' who had true fellowship with God. John here makes two things clear. First, all true believers have the Spirit therefore there is no two-class Christianity, and second John always speaks of the Spirit God gave us - not referring to those who left the church. The only two classes are those who have the Spirit and those who don't, and those who left, don't!

Concerning Progressive Thinking

- John wants to get them back to that which was from the beginning (1:1).
- Jesus and the Father do not come in two separate packages (2:22-23).
 - » Evidently, some had begun to believe they could have the Father without the Son.
 - » This form of thought had progressed from the original teaching of John & Paul.
 - » Verse 1:1 may be a direct reference to the beginning of the Gospel for this reason.

These statements of John give us insight into the beliefs of the wolves, but the next section which goes more in-depth, looks at the heresies of the late first century.

*"From this internal evidence it emerges that, if we are to identify the heresy against which John writes, we must find a system which **denied that Jesus was the Son or the Christ come in the flesh** and which also **viewed righteousness and love as indifferent.**" (Stott, 48).*

Historic Heresies (Gnosticism, Cerinthianism, Docetism)

“It is hard to tell exactly what the false teachers opposed by what John positively believed and taught; it is easier to say what features of the orthodox faith they denied, since John directs his attention mainly to these” (Marshall,15).

Gnosticism

“These false teachers were forerunners of the heretics who were responsible for the developed Gnostic sects of the second century. The seeds of Gnosticism were already to be found in the New Testament period, although it is misleading to use the actual term ‘Gnosticism’ to describe the incipient Gnosticism or ‘pregnosticism’ of this period: (Marshall, 15).

Gnosticism – “Gnosticism is a broad term embracing various pagan, Jewish and semi-Christian systems, which did not come to full development until the second century. It was pagan in origin, combining elements of Western intellectualism and Eastern mysticism” (Stott, 49). Plummer sums its two main principles into:
The impurity of matter
The supremacy of knowledge (Stott, 49).

They viewed the Supreme being as an entity existing a few steps away from the wicked physical creation. They did not view him or it as immanent in any way. Jesus could not have been fully God and man at the same time, because spirit and matter cannot mix in this manner. The body could not be seen as the temple for the Holy Spirit, because it is made up of matter and therefore evil.

“They believed in salvation by enlightenment. This enlightenment could come by the imparting of an esoteric knowledge in some secret initiation ceremony. The initiated were the *pneumatikoi*, the truly ‘spiritual’ people, who despised the uninitiated as *psychikoi*, doomed to an animal life on earth” (Stott, 49). Therefore, there was a preoccupation with being delivered from the flesh, the soul’s prison.

Those who have reached this ‘spiritual’ state were no longer bound by rules or laws, they were above them - they had already attained ‘true righteousness’. This led to an increase in wickedness under the guise of spirituality.

This belief reached its height in the 2nd century, but it was beginning its existence in the first century. The internal evidence points to the possibility that this was the heresy that John was battling against.

Cerinthianism

Cerinthus – was a man who was considered John’s antithesis (or nemesis) of the day. He was an outspoken advocate for Docetism in the nineties of the first century.

“As in the legend about John’s leaving the public baths at Ephesus in precipitate haste when he heard on one occasion that Cerinthus had entered: “Let us flee, lest the baths fall in while Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within” (Related by Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3, as a story told by Polycarp). (Bruce 23, 9).

Irenaeus, in his work “Against Heresies,” says that Cerinthus represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation. He believed that ‘Christ’ descended on Jesus when the dove came down after his baptism and left him before Jesus suffered. “The essence of Cerinthus’ error, then, seems to have been this severance of the man Jesus from the divine Christ or Spirit” (Stott, 51).

“John’s arguments certainly make sense if they are understood as directed against Cerinthus and his disciples” (Stott, 51).

The false teaching is identified as a denial that *Jesus is the Christ* (2:22), not two separate entities. More precisely, it is a denial that *Jesus has come in the flesh* (4:2).

“An ancient reading of 4:3 renders the heretical position not as ‘denying’ but as ‘loosing’ Jesus Christ. Irenaeus evidently knew this variant, for he quotes 4:3 as ‘every spirit which separates Jesus Christ is not of God’. The Vulgate has *solvit*. Although the reading is not original, it bears witness to an early recognition that the Gnostic rejection of the incarnation was a sundering or ‘loosing’ of Jesus from Christ ” (Stott,51).

In 5:6 John makes it clear that Jesus is one person who came by or through water (baptism) and blood (suffering and death) not after and before.

Docetism

This was a popular belief system of the day. The name is derived from the Greek verb *dokein* (to seem), it describes the view that Jesus was not a man in substance but only in appearance. This was basically a dualistic view of the universe. Matter was evil and the spiritual was pure. Combining this belief system with Christianity obviously leads to many misconceptions about Christ and how one lives out the Christian life. "We know of this error from several patristic writers, who also used the letters of John to refute it. It was condemned, for instance, by Ignatius, Polycarp and Tertullian" (Stott, 48).

A summary of their beliefs:

- They viewed Christ's physical body as only a ghost-like substance. There was no union between flesh and spirit (unthinkable).
- No physical resurrection of Christ (or of Christians in the future).
- Christ's death was not a physical death.
- Example: "The Christianity with which Muhammad became acquainted in his early days appears to have been docetic in outlook; hence the statement in the Koran (4.157): 'they did not kill him and did not crucify him, but he was counterfeited for them' (i.e. it was an effigy or simulacrum of Jesus that was fastened to the cross)" (Bruce 23, 8).
- **Ethically**, if someone viewed themselves as spiritual they were above sin and evil because they were living out of their pure nature. This means they could place themselves in a class above morals.

As this heresy was being presented to the churches in Asia Minor John took the challenge of confronting this heresy.

EXTENDED OUTLINE Corresponds with verse-by-verse study

1:1-4 – John’s Authority	
1:1-2 – Eyewitnesses	Credibility Legitimacy Not hidden knowledge, but the Word made manifest to us
1:3 – John’s Ministry	Be an accurate witness Proclaim truth to this church
1:3-4 – Result of John’s ministry	Fellowship with this church (a common teaching and belief) Fellowship together with the Father & Son (a common Savior)
1:5-10 – Walking in the Light	
1:5 – God is light	John’s dichotomy between darkness and light Significance of God being Light – holy, pure, without blemish “in him is no darkness at all” How then do we explain this wicked world? What is God’s point of view on this wicked world? Walking in the Light – This is not walking in perfection, but living a contrite life of repentance with God.
1:6-7 – How to have fellowship with a Holy God	Background: false teachers are living as they please and claiming to have fellowship with God. John must correct this false view of ethics and uphold God’s holiness and the pursuit of holiness in the life of the Christian.
1:6 – 1st False Claim	If we say we have fellowship with God, but walk in the darkness... Define Fellowship Describe “walking in the darkness” We cannot have fellowship with a holy God while consistently choosing sin. Many Christians today claim fellowship with God yet live secret lives of sin. Motive – pride, non-Christian, to project a false self, to protect existing relationships
1:7 – True Fellowship	Walk in the light (leave some for 2:6) Does not mean perfection, but a general direction Results in fellowship with one another Opposite result than what they are experiencing from false teachers who are separating themselves – a higher class of Christianity Enjoy forgiveness from Christ Ultimately, people walking in the light have fellowship with God and one another while experiencing the blessings of the forgiveness of their sins.

<p>1:8-10 – Getting Right With God– Confession and Repentance 2nd False Claim - If we say that we have no sin...</p>	
<p>1:8 – If we claim that we have no present sin in our lives = self-deception</p>	<p>The false teachers were claiming perfection – self-deceived. Only Jesus is perfect. We will always struggle with sin. This is an ongoing war between the Spirit and our flesh. This truth will always keep us humble and full of grace towards others.</p>
<p>3rd False Claim – If we say we have not sinned...</p>	<p>1:10 – If we claim to have never sinned = we make God a liar Romans 3:10, 23 If we haven't sinned, Jesus died for nothing We must always (for all of eternity) be grateful for his incredible grace and forgiveness</p>
<p>Right Thinking 1:9 – We must recognize our existing sin and confess it to God</p>	<p>Conviction - The need for self-assessment, sober judgment, and soul searching Godly self-assessment – Meditating on God's Word, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, Prayer, deep searching conversations with spiritual brothers and sister, journaling & godly books. Confession – repenting of your sin before God Actually take the time to acknowledge your sin before God. Have a holy distaste and hatred towards your sin. Have a desire to rid this sin from your life. Pray for forgiveness. Conform to God's will Enjoy the faithful forgiveness of God through Jesus Recognize your forgiveness – you have no right to continue in personal guilt! Thank God for his grace and forgiveness Continue to ask God to reveal sin in your life and continue the cycle of conviction, confession, and conformity to God's will.</p>
<p>2:1-2 – Jesus Our Advocate</p>	<p>Purpose of writings – to not sin We should be motivated to walk in the light and have fellowship with God Forgiveness is available, but we are to hate sin and to run from it. Romans 6:1-11 (do not read the whole thing – too hard) Raised with Christ to walk in newness of life United with him in death & life to be dead to sin and alive to God But – Jesus is our great righteous Advocate Define advocate Why can Jesus be our advocate (righteous substitutionary atonement)</p>

	<p>Romans 8:34 – Jesus is at the Right hand of God interceding for us</p> <p>Jesus is our Propitiation</p> <p>There is no wrath left on our account</p> <p>His Name, His blood, and His sacrifice speak for us before the Father</p>
2:3-6 – How can we know that we are a child of God?	
2:4 – We are not: if we do not keep his commands	<p>It does not matter if we say we are a Christian or not.</p> <p>Our actions speak more clearly than our words.</p> <p>What did your actions communicate this last week?</p>
2:3, 5 – We are: if we will keep His commands	<p>We know God’s commands</p> <p>We keep those commands – even the hard ones</p> <p>God’s love is perfected in us – it has worked in and through us.</p> <p>We have confidence/we “know” that we are His</p>
2:6 – Our words and our actions must be consistent	<p>There is a plague of hypocrisy in American Christianity</p> <p>What does it look like to abide in Christ? We walk like Him. We talk like Him. We love like Him. Galatians 2:20</p>
2:7-14 – A New Command	
2:7 – The Old Command	<p>Leviticus 11:44 – “Be holy as I am holy” or “we should love one another” (3:11)</p>
2:8 – The New Command	<p>Same + Jesus: his life, his example, his presence in your life.</p> <p>Holiness (or loving one another) is more than a set of rules, it has now taken the form of a person whom we can follow, learn from, and model.</p> <p>Basically we are called again to live out 2:6.</p> <p>The glory and victory of the new command – “in you”</p> <p>A picture of our sanctification, “the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining”</p> <p>Can people see Jesus ‘the true light’ shining in you?</p> <p>Is the ‘light’ brighter and stronger than it was a month ago?</p>
2:9-11 – Living out the New Command	<p>Examples: The Hypocrite (2:9)</p> <p>The True Believer (2:10)</p> <p>The Unbeliever (2:11)</p>
2:12-14 – Great Encouraging words for those who are in the light (those living out 2:6)	<p>Read through and explain</p> <p>Write out a list of encouraging words for our congregation.</p>
2:15-17 – Do not Love the World	

2:18-27 – Warning against False Teachers	
2:18-19 – Description of Antichrists (1st)	The antichrist is coming Many antichrists have already come Last hour They went out from us Not one of us
2:20-21 – Description of Believers (1st)	Have an anointing They know the truth
2:22-23a – Description of Antichrists (2nd)	Liars Descriptions of Liars They deny the Son
2:23b-27 – Description of Believers (2nd)	Description Abiding in Christ Christ’s promise
2:28 – Exhortation to Believers	
2:29 – Conclusion	
2:28-3:3 – A Purifying Hope	
2:28 – Abide in Him	Result: Either confidence or shame What do you want to be doing when Jesus returns?
3:1-2 – We are His Children!	Beloved – His family, connected to us emotionally We represent Him He is our Provider, Sustainer, and Savior The world does not recognize us (3:1) It did not know Him Genesis Connection – 3:15 and 1 John 3:10 We will be like Him (3:2) Great Anticipation (3:2) We shall be like him (3:2) We shall see him as he is – must be made able to do so.
3:3 – The Purifying Power of Hope in Him	
3:4-10 – Children of God and Children of the Devil	

3:11-18 – Love as the Mark of the True Believer	
3:11-15 – Not like Cain	<p>Motivation – his brother’s deeds were righteous (Abel made him look bad)</p> <p>The World will hate you (you make the world look bad)</p> <p>1 John 5:4-5 – It may hate you, but you will overcome it.</p> <p>Love is an Identifying mark of a Believer</p> <p>Love = a sign that we know Christ No Love = No Christ</p> <p>The world being against you is not an excuse to not love.</p>
3:16-18 – Jesus’ Example	<p>We must lay down our lives</p> <p>We must lay down our possessions</p> <p>Love must be an action, shown by the sweat on your brow.</p>
3:19-24 – Assurance and Obedience	
4:1-6 – Testing the Spirits	
4:7-21 – God’s Love and Ours	
5:1-5 – Overcoming the World	
5:6-15 – The Testimony of Christ and Assurance of Salvation	
5:16-21 – Final Exhortations and Defenses Against the False Teachers	

1 John is a great letter for any church that wants to learn how to grow in their love for one another. John references Jesus as the ultimate example of love and convicts his audience to follow the Savior's example. May the words of 1 John convict us and build our character. True fellowship comes from a common faith and a common commitment to loving one another.

As we explore the idea of loving one another there are several things we need to keep in mind. The world's idea of love is very different from the Christian's view of love. Love includes words (Ephesians 4:29), deeds (1 John 3:18), intentions (Matthew 5-7), your heart (1 Peter 1:22), mind and strength (Mark 12:30-31). Christians will use words to encourage, to ask soul searching questions, and to open up and reveal themselves to others. Deeds may include acts of service (John 13:5), helping carry burdens (Galatians 6:2), and meeting the needs of others (1 John 3:17). If we are to love one another from the heart we must be willing to open up our hearts to one another and truly connect on a

deep level. Each person has different needs, hurts, and personalities which creates a great challenge for us to know how to best love another. True love will place great demands on our mind to learn, discern, and focus on how we can best love our brothers and sisters in the faith. Our strength to love and minister to others is the strength that God Himself provides (Colossians 1:29). Our personal histories, experiences, pains, weaknesses, and sins do not give us a reason or excuse not to continue to love. Jesus was mistreated, abused, deserted, and killed yet ended his life saying, "forgive them for they know not what they do." Therefore we do not love based upon how we are treated, but rather we love regardless of how we are treated just like Christ himself (Romans 5:8). He is our Lord, Savior, and model of what it looks like to love and we are commanded to hold to His standard (John 13:34).

Read each section and answer the verses below. Additional thoughts and quotes will be included to help bring clarity and increased understanding.

1 John 1:1-4 – John's Authority

Remember, John is writing to a group who are under attack by people who are trying to deceive them. The false teachers are suggesting that they themselves are the authority and therefore their teaching is superior to what they have heard from Paul and John. John must distinguish himself as the authority—the one truly sent and commissioned by Christ to preach and teach.

1:1-2 – In what ways does John assert his authority and connection to Christ?

What does John proclaim to his audience? Who is "the eternal life"?

1:3 – What is necessary for this congregation to have fellowship with John?

Why is fellowship with John and ultimately fellowship with God dependent upon the proclamation of what they have seen and heard?

1:4 – What is John’s desired result of his letter?

Even today, what is the basis for our fellowship with one another?

How has John clarified his authority and differentiated himself from the false teachers?

1 John 1:5-10 – Walking in the Light

1:5 – Where did this message originate?

What is the significance of God being described as light?

What do we learn about light and darkness from John 3:19-21?

How do people living in the darkness respond to the light?

Why do people avoid talking about Jesus and the Gospel?

What is John emphasizing by saying “in Him is no darkness at all?”

Does the world really believe God is holy and good? What are they really saying when they ask; “Why did God let that terrible thing happen?” or “If God is good, why is there so much evil in our world?”

What will be the result of a Christian growing closer and closer to our God who is light? How will we see ourselves?

“For my part I am persuaded the more light we have, the more we see our own sinfulness: the nearer we get to heaven, the more we are clothed with humility.” J. C. Ryle, Holiness, p. 11

1:6 – Three different claims are addressed by John in verses 6-10 all beginning with the phrase, “if we say...”. List the three claims:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Claim 1 – If we say we have fellowship with God, yet we walk in the darkness...

The Context: The false teachers have separated fellowship with God from their unethical behavior. They believed they had ascended above morality.

1:6 – Does a Christian ever get to a place where their personal holiness no longer matters?

How important is our fellowship with God?

Therefore, how important is our personal holiness?

Do you think we need perfection to have fellowship with God?

1:7 – “But” – communicates the antithesis or opposite of what was stated in the previous statement. Vs 6 = false fellowship with God. Vs 7 = true fellowship with God.

“walking in the light” – how would you describe what this looks like?

Why does this = fellowship with God (hint - 1:5)?

With whom else do we experience fellowship as a result of walking in the light?

Context: These false teachers have created a false two-tier Christianity. Those who have a special or secret spiritual knowledge who are closer to God and everyone else is left behind and distant from God. John is destroying this notion. The issue is personal holiness and not a non-existent secret knowledge.

Can you think of any examples of modern teachings that suggest a two-tier Christianity?

1:7 – How are we cleansed from our sin?

Why would John use a graphic word like “blood?”

How much did it cost Jesus to pay for your sin? Why is it important to think about this reality?

How should we respond to this kind of love and sacrifice?

Are there any areas of your life that you have not completely given over to this great Savior who loved you to the point of his own death?

Is there any sin that cannot be cleansed?

2nd Claim – If we say that we have no sin...

Context: The false teachers seemed to be teaching that they no longer sin. They have surpassed ethical standards and were above sin. John uses verse 8 to show them their error.

1:8 – John is speaking to Christians in the present tense which means that it is false for them to claim that they have no sin presently in their lives. What does this mean about you and me?

Indwelling Sin: Is everyone aware of all of their indwelling sin?

In many cases we avoid looking inside at the sin that still resides in our hearts, intentions, and actions. We often adopt the philosophy of the world we live in; “They do not care to be alone lest the thoughts of their sins should stare them in the face. They study diversions and pastimes and run into company lest their sins, like ghosts and devils, should haunt and lay hold of them. And when these are over they sleep away the rest of their time.” Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, p. 133.

It is so easy for us to fill our lives with activity and busyness to avoid slowing down and feeling the Lord’s

THOUGHTS ON PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism is the belief that the can and should reach perfect holiness in thought, word, and deed in this lifetime. All would agree that we strive for holiness, but the question is whether or not it is achievable and expected by God while we are still in the flesh?

The Perfectionist would use some of the following arguments:

- We are called and commanded to be perfect (Matthew 5:48, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 John 3:6)
- God would not give us a command that we could not accomplish in His strength.
- Paul wouldn't pray for something which he knows would not happen (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Arguments Against Perfectionism:

- The verses calling us to be holy are referring to every Christian and everyone born of God. Therefore every Christian should attain perfection. Yet we know of none who have.
- The assumption that a commandment given by God necessarily means it can be followed is a misunderstanding.
 - » For example, Israel was called to follow the law yet no one was able to follow the commandments given in the law. And the law functioned to show sin as utterly sinful.
 - » We will learn in 1 John 1:8 that sin will persist. Even though we are fully forgiven, we will continually need to depend upon Christ's strength, grace, and forgiveness everyday for growth in holiness. Even John recognizes ("we") in 1:8 that he has sin in the same way that Paul recognizes this reality in himself (1 Timothy 1:15). Everything points to the glory of Christ.
- Christ has called all to Repent and Believe, yet at the same time He says that only those who He draws unto himself will believe (John 6:44). In both these cases the original assumption is proved wrong.
- **Matthew 6:11-12** Jesus gives us a model in how to daily pray. This prayer includes a confession of the sins which we have committed, not before belief, but after.
- **Romans 6:12-14** We are told to not let sin reign in our lives or to obey it as our master. The commandment or assumption is not perfection, but a war against sin in which we are not to willfully and consistently give in to.
- **James 3:2** in context of taming the tongue; "We all stumble in many ways". Here this truth is taught very clearly.
- **Romans 7** Many, as do I, see this passage as an example of how Paul continues to struggle with sin even after salvation. This point could consist of pages of arguments.
- **1 John 1:8** itself seems to include everyone (including John himself). John is not talking to a group of new believers. This is near 90AD and the members of this church have probably been involved for quite some time.
- It seems consistently taught that we have a sinful nature (Galatians 5:16-26). In Romans 8, we are called to be controlled by the Spirit and need to walk in the Spirit. We are told not to follow the ways of sinful nature. What is the purpose of such a commandment if we no longer had a sinful nature or its influence in our life? Nowhere does it say that our sinful nature simple vanishes or disappears. Rather, we wage war and struggle. **Romans 7:24-26** *What a wretched man I am ! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

convicting work of the Spirit. What are some ways that you avoid considering your sin and dealing with it?

Sometimes we take sin lightly and do not recognize how heinous it truly is. "It is impossible to speak worse of sin than it really is, or even as badly of it as it really deserves, for it is hyperbolically sinful. There are not enough words; we need more, and stronger ones to speak of its vileness. And if we were to say that it is worse than death and the Devil, the very Hell of Hell, this would not be to rail at it, but tell it only the truth about itself. Sin is the quintessence of evil; it has made all the evils that there are and is itself worse than all the evils it has made." Venning, p. 172

Honestly, do we view sin this way?

Why do we not tend to take sin as seriously as we should?

Thomas Watson states, "It is becoming fashionable nowadays to go to hell." (Doctrine of Repentance, p 70). What does he mean by this statement? What does it say about the world's view of sin?

One of the first realities that we must take to heart is that we all still have indwelling sin. If you have not been convicted and burdened by your sin lately then you may not be walking in the light that shines into every dark corner of your heart. I encourage you to take some time to seriously look at yourself. Ask God to work through his Holy Spirit to assess your thoughts, actions, and intentions of the day. Journal as you look inward. When will you take the time to think, pray, and journal?

Jeremiah 17:9 – "Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is blinded that it cannot be depended on as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Ghost." Ryle, 4. What scares you the most about this reality?

1:8 – If we say we have no sin, then what are we doing to ourselves?

What makes sin so deceptive and misleading?

Ryle rightly states, "one point only remains to be considered on the subject of sin, which I dare not pass over. That point is its DECEITFULNESS. It is a point of most serious importance, and I venture to think it does not receive the attention which it deserves. You may see this deceitfulness in the wonderful proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God; and in their readiness to extenuate it,

make excuses for it, and minimize its guilt. 'It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One cannot be so particular! Where is the harm? We only do as others!'" (page 8). How has the world impacted our view of sin?

What does it say of our view of God when we minimize sin?

Identifying Our Sins

Sometimes we commit ourselves to the pursuit of knowledge rather than the pursuit of God. "What doth it profit thee to enter into deep discussion concerning the Holy Trinity, if thou lack humility, and be thus displeasing to the Trinity? For verily it is not deep words that make a man holy and upright; it is a good life which maketh a man dear to God. I had rather feel contrition than be skillful in the definition thereof." Thomas Kempis, *Imitation of Christ* in *The Treasury of Christian Spiritual Classics*, p 443.

Does the holiness of your life reflect your knowledge of how to live holy? Do you ever find yourself pursuing knowledge without pursuing life change?

There are many great godly people who can challenge our hearts on a deep level. How true is the following quote of your perspective of yourself? "That is the highest and most profitable lesson, when a man truly knoweth and judgeth lowly of himself. To account nothing of one's self, and to think always kindly and highly of others, this is great and perfect wisdom." Kempis, 444. How does this standard reveal sin in your life?

What are some additional ways that your brothers and sisters in Christ can help you identify sin in your life? What is the role of the church in this process (Matthew 18:15-20)?

What would happen to a Christian if they became content with their level of holiness?

1:9 – What must we do with our sin? What happens to our sin?

Why can we be confident of forgiveness?

Will we ever stop confessing sin found in our lives?

How can we begin to make confession a normal part of Christianity?

Repentance is a turning from sin – a turning that results from an acknowledgment of sin, a sorrow for sin, and a hatred for sin. How is repentance related to confession? Is confession simply a heartless acknowledgment of wrongs done against God and man?

Can you think of any biblical examples of people repenting to God because of their sin (Job 42:1-6; Luke 7:36-50; Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 12:13-24)? How would you describe their attitudes and emotions?

Should repentance and confession be a normal part of the Christian life? How?

“Repentance is a continuous act. The issue of godly sorrow must not be quite stopped till death.” Watson, 69

When was the last time you actually cried about your sin?

Our indwelling sin is like an unending pit and we have only begun to plumb its depths. Does the reality of the state of your soul affect you on a consistent basis?

What does it say of us if we are emotionless about our sin?

To mortify means to kill. In the Christian life we are to mortify sin in our lives. Sin is only mortified by confession and true repentance by the power of the Holy Spirit. “How came it to pass that many of the saints were so perfect, so contemplative of Divine things? Because they steadfastly sought to mortify themselves from all worldly desires, and so were enabled to cling with their whole heart to God, and be free and at leisure for the thought of Him.” Kempis, 449. What are the great benefits of mortifying sin?

List some sins that you know need to be mortified in your life:

Thoughts on Repentance from Thomas Watson

- “Oh, but my sins are out of measure sinful! Do not make them greater by not repenting. Repentance unravels sin and makes it as if it had never been.” (79)
- “Never do the flowers of grace grow more than after a shower of repentant tears.” (79)
- “Repentance inflames love.” (80)
- “Repentance makes joy in heaven (Luke 15:10).” (81)

GREAT THOUGHTS ON CONFESSION

Taken from *Repentance* by Richard Owen Roberts

1. Confession of sin must be without ulterior motive. Confession was not ordained by God as a means of heading off the consequences of sin or of gaining some selfish end.
2. Confession of sin must be freely made, being prompted by the Spirit of God and the desire of the heart to be right with both God and man. Confession that is coerced by others or driven by external pressures has no validity.
3. Confession of sin demands a willingness to assume appropriate levels of blame for the evil done; it must not be invalidated by blaming others for your own personal sin.
4. Confession of sin must be definite and must not degenerate to vagaries such as, "If I have done anything wrong, please forgive me." You have done wrong! Candidly admit that wrong.
5. Confession of sin must be particular. Sins are committed one by one and must be confessed the same way.
6. Confession of sin must be full and complete. The all-seeing eye of God has noted every one of your sins. Do not offend Him by confessing only a portion of them.
7. Confession of sin must include acknowledgment of all the aggravations that have worsened your sins. Sins can be made more heinous by the circumstances under which they occur.
8. Confession of sin must expose the roots, not merely clip the branches.
9. Confession of sin must be without excuses, self-justification, or explanations.
10. Confession of sin must be accompanied by feelings appropriate to the circumstance: shame, remorse, or tears, for instance.
11. Confession of sin must include a determination to turn completely and forever from that sin and not to keep appearing in confession as a repeat offender.
12. Confession of sin must be made by the sinner himself. None of us has the power to confess other people's sins in their place.

3rd Claim — If we claim that we have not sinned...

1:10 – John is now referring to past sin. There may have been some who claimed that they had never sinned. How does this make God a liar?

List several verses that teach that we have all sinned:

Does the world believe in this truth?

Do most individuals believe that they are evil enough to deserve eternity in hell?

What causes a man to believe that he deserves heaven without the forgiveness of Christ?

How can we communicate the reality of sin and its consequences to a non-Christian? Write out an example:

If someone does not believe in the reality and significance of sin will they perceive a need for a Savior?

Which of these 3 claims do you still see at work today in our culture?

Do you feel prepared to respond to these false views of sin and fellowship with God?

Christ our Advocate and Propitiation – 1 John 2:1-2

2:1 – How does John address these people?

my dear children

“here alone John adds the possessive adjective my dear children” (Stott, 85).

Teknia – child – “Jesus uses it in John 13:33 when speaking to His disciples in the upper room; Paul uses it in a tender passage in Galatians 4:19” (Bruce, 48).

Why did John write these things?

Is knowing that we will be forgiven (1:9) an excuse to take sin lightly?

If we study 1 John and really take to heart what he has written, how will it affect our view of sin?

“While insisting, against the false teachers, that it is wrong to say either that ‘we have no sin’ or that ‘we have not sinned’, John does not wish to give his readers the idea that sin may be regarded as a normal phenomenon in the Christian life. Far from it: the main purpose of his touching the subject at all is to put them on their guard against committing sin” (Bruce, 48).

we have an Advocate with the Father

Advocate - *Parakletos* – “is passive not active. It does not literally mean ‘comforter’ but, ‘called alongside’ and describes anybody summoned to the assistance of another (mediator, intercessor, helper)” (Stott, 85). This Greek word is often used to describe the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7), though here it refers to Christ. And in these verses the word has been translated Helper, Comforter, and Counselor.

As our advocate His presence alone is sufficient for He stands not as a by-standard, but as the atoning sacrifice, the propitiatory lamb, and there is no wrath left to bear on those who are Sons of God. The blood of Jesus proclaims to the Father – “this one has been forgiven and washed clean by my righteous blood.”

How does this truth increase your love and appreciation for your Savior?

2:1, 2 – When we do sin, what is the work of Jesus our advocate on our behalf?

2:2 – As the propitiation for our sins, Jesus bore the wrath of God that we deserved. Jesus had the wrath of the Father against sin poured out upon Himself and therefore satisfied the Father’s need for judgment, penalty, and death for sin. Who has received the blessing of this sacrifice?

the Whole World

Based upon this verse, who all benefit from the propitiatory work of Christ?

An important question is, “Does the world always mean every person in the world?”

- **Option 1: “World” only refers to those who believe.**

John 6:33 *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.* – If “world” stands for all people then Jesus will give life to every person regardless of belief or unbelief.

Read **John 3:16-18** – Verse 17 says *in order that the world might be saved through Him*. In this context, would it be right to say that every person in the world will be saved through Jesus regardless of faith or unbelief?

We must read on - **Verse 18** states, *Whoever believes in him will not be condemned*. In this context “world” seems to refer specifically to those who believe.

Romans 11:12 “Now if their [the Jews] trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!”

Romans 11:15 “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” – This verse refers to the time period (now) when the Jews have rejected their Savior and the Gentiles are receiving the Gospel. The whole world and every person in it have not and will not be reconciled to God. Only those who place their faith in Christ will be saved (Ephesians 2:8-9). ‘World’ therefore must refer to those in the world who will be saved. This use of the word ‘world’ is different than we use in our everyday conversations, but we need to use the Bible to interpret difficult biblical passages.

Based upon a look at other verses defining the ‘whole world’ as those who have and will believe in Christ this position is reasonable and consistent grammatically and theologically with John’s and Paul’s other teachings and use of the word.

All this being said, why would John then use the term ‘whole world’? Can you connect it in any way to Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 24:14, and Revelation 5:9-10?

- **Option 2: The word “world” refers to everyone, but the application of Christ’s propitiation is only given to those who believe.**

“These kinds of statements, however, need some kind of qualification. Universal provisions not to be equated with universal application. “ Dan Akin, 1,2,3 John, in *The New American Commentary*, p. 84.

“John affirms that Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Since universal salvation is not an option, this propitiation does not itself guarantee the actual salvation for the whole world. The

provision for all has been accomplished. The reception and application of that provision is appropriated by faith.” Akin, 85.

In the 2nd option the word ‘world’ maintains its most natural sense and the teachings from other passages are used to determine the best interpretation of this difficult text as a whole. In the 1st option other texts are used to determine John’s precise meaning of the word ‘world’. In both cases a small interpretive jump must take place.

Which option makes the most sense to you and why?

Identifying Marks of a True Believer - 1 John 2:3-6

- A. Statement of Identifying Truth (2:3)
 - 1. Example in the Negative (2:4)
 - 2. Example in the Positive (2:5)
- B. Exhortation to Obedience (2:6)

A. Statement of Identifying Truth

2:3 – What identifying mark of the believer are we taught in this verse?

How does this compliment what we learned in the first 12 verses?

What is the significance of John using the term “know” in *we have come to know Him*?

Is John suggesting that we need to be perfect to be a believer?

that we have come to know Him

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:14-15

We see that knowledge of God implies a relationship with Him just as ‘know’ points to the existence of the relationship between the Father and the Son. The word seems to represent a completed action, a relationship not attained through good works only represented by them.

This phrase, ***have come to know Him***, sounds very different than “I accepted Christ.” One is not centered on our own action and the second phrase seems to take credit for the start of our relationship. This phrase continues to show us the ever God-centered gospel we preach.

1. Example in the Negative

2:4 – How is John’s form of teaching here similar to what we studied in the first chapter?

What three elements are found in this example?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In other words what is the claim that is being made?

What “truth” is not found in this man?

2. Example in the Positive

2:5 – Keeps or obeys – Is in the Present Active which means it is a continuous action that is repeated.

John 14:15; 21; 23 – What does Jesus teach us in these verses?

How strong is your love for Jesus right now? How can you tell?

What does “in him the love of God has truly been perfected” mean?

B. Exhortation

2:6 – The Christian Must or Ought

How important is our obedience?

How much time do you spend memorizing God’s commandments? Which ones are you working on right now?

Has anyone ever accused you of being 'like Christ'? What area of your life needs work in this area?

What happens if we have all of the right 'feelings of love', but are lacking actual obedience to his commands?

In the context of John's audience, why is it so important that they 'know' that they are in Christ?

What are the false teachers trying to persuade this congregation?

The New Commandment – 1 John 2:7-11

2:7 – What is this “old commandment” that John is talking about? If we can know when ‘the beginning’ represents then we would have a better shot at knowing what commandment John is talking about.

Here are some possibilities:

- From the Old Testament
- From time that John had spent with this church earlier
- Teaching that was presented when they first believed along with the Gospel

There is one command that sits as primary in the Old Testament because it summarizes the whole Law.

Summarize Deuteronomy 6:4, 5

Jesus basically references Deuteronomy 6:4-5 in Mark 12:30-31

Next, we need to identify the “new command” that John is referring to that is true in Him and true in the believer.

The first example that came to my mind (and this is the same verse that all of the commentators point to) is the words of Christ in John 13:34.

Write out John 13:34

Thoughts from Commentators:

“Stott points out that the new command was and remains new in emphasis (the whole Torah hangs on it; Matthew 22:40), in quality, as measured by Christ's love for them (John 13:34), in extent, including enemies (Matthew 5:44), and by our continued, fresh, daily application of it to new circumstances. (Stott, 98)” (Johnson, 43).

“The newness of the commandment lies in the fact that it rests on the example of God’s supreme love seen in Jesus himself and that it offers the possibility of a new kind of life. It does not mean that Jesus was the first to tell men to love one another (Lev.19:18). He was, however, the first to reveal fully the self-giving love of God which constitutes the pattern for his disciples to follow” (Marshall, 129, fn. 26).

“The newness of the commandment lies in the fact that it is being fulfilled in a way that had not happened previously” (Marshall, 30).

“And it was new because by His own fulfillment of it He was giving it a depth of meaning which it had not possessed before” (Bruce, 54).

“The idea of love in general was not new, but Jesus Christ invested it in several ways with a richer and deeper meaning” (Stott, 98).

2:8 – Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, *because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.*

Any ideas on what the second part of this verse may mean?

I think we can group the answers to this question into two major categories; sanctification of the individual believer or the overall growth and influence of the church on society (the darkness). “This is how John expresses the thought of the two overlapping eras of the old and new creations” (Marshall, 130).

“The true light, which is already shining, is Jesus Christ with whom light came into the world” (Stott, 98).

“But as long as the new age is inaugurated but not yet consummated (as it will be by the parousia of Christ), that old age is still in being. Believers who belong spiritually to ‘that age’ live temporally in ‘this age’. Although ‘the true light’ is already shining, the darkness had passed completely away; it is in the process of ‘passing away’. ” (Bruce, 55).

2:9, 10 – In the previous section the identifying mark of the believer is keeping God’s commandments. What is the focus in this verse?

This love (*agape*) is the same love that God the Father showed us in Christ (John 3:16), that Jesus showed us (John 13:34), and that we are to show our brothers.

John 3:16 and Romans 5:8 – What do we learn about love from the Father’s example?

Looking at John 13:34, Jesus’ life and death – What do we learn about Christ’s love for us?

How are we doing at reflecting this same love to other Christians?

In what ways is your love lacking?

Would others say that you are as loving as you think you are? Who in your life feels most loved? Least loved?

Who are two Christians that you can focus on loving more this week? How will you show your love to them?

Have your words been loving this week? Have people been blessed and given grace by your words?

2:11 – What does it say about us if we are not loving our brother or sister?

Encouraging words to the Congregation – 1 John 2:12-14

It is hard for us to imagine what this congregation is going through and what it feels like to be in their shoes. A church under persecution is difficult, but the result of persecution is usually increased dedication and unity. This church has false teachers in their midst deceiving, dividing, and destroying the faith of many. Think of how disheartening and discouraging this would be for any church. John is cutting away the chaff by helping them distinguish true and false believers. But this is a painful process and John determines to encourage the true believers in this congregation!

2:12 – How are the little children encouraged?

2:13, 14 – How are the young men encouraged?

2:14 – How are the fathers encouraged?

sins forgiven; you know Him; you have overcome the evil one; you know the Father; and the word of God abides in you are all statements that identify them as true believers. Fathers, young men, and children who are loved by God, beneficiaries of Christ's forgiving power, and people who have fellowship with God, John, and one another. The Gospel that has been covered in mud is being made clear again and the people should take great joy and hope that they have access to and union with God through Jesus Christ.

It is important to remember that in churches that are struggling and faltering (even in the area of doctrine)

there are probably true believers in those congregations in need of our prayers and encouragement.

Do not Love the World - 1 John 2:15-17

In 1 John 2:9-11, we are taught what to love – our brothers. In this section we are taught what not to love – the world.

Matthew 6:24 *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

How does this passage relate to not loving the world?

“The command not to love the world is grounded on two arguments; first, the incompatibility of love for the world and love for the Father (15-16) and secondly, the transience of the world as contrasted with the eternity of those who do God’s will” (Stott, 103).

2:15 – What are some of the things in the world that we tend to love other than God?

- “To love the world, in John’s sense, is to love what is opposed to God by definition” (Marshall, 143).
- James 4:4 – “Friendship with the world is hatred toward God,”
- “The one effective antidote to worldliness is to have one’s heart so filled with the Father’s love that it has no room for any love that is incompatible with that “ (Bruce, 62).

2:16 – **the desires of the flesh** – What all would this include?

Flesh by itself is not seen as evil, but “for Paul in particular ‘flesh’ designates ‘the outlook orientated towards the self, that which pursues its own ends in self-sufficient independence of God” (Marshall, 145 quoting A. C. Thiselton).

Everyone still struggles with “the flesh.” What do you sense your flesh desiring?

The desires of the flesh are evil and self-centered. They seek gratification at the expense of others and the breaking of God’s commands.

Examples:

Indulgence

Malice

Slander

Sexual immorality

Impurity

Drunkenness

Perversion

Faithlessness

Arrogance

Murder

Jealousy

Division

Dissention

Deceit

Greed

Envy

Gossip

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred. Discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
(Galatians 5:19-21)

the desires of the eyes – Why do companies spend billions of dollars on commercials? What do they believe about the influence of what we see?

Are you letting your eyes look at anything that would cause temptation – temptation to lust, temptation to pursue excess, or temptation to place your hope in this world?

How can you be more careful with controlling the desires of your flesh and tendencies of your eyes?

the pride in possessions – What new possessions are you seeking to gain?

Which of your possessions do you love showing to other people?

How can those things potentially rob you of your joy in God?

Luke 18:18-27 – What do we learn from Jesus?

2:17 – Why is it foolish to love the world?

Why is it so difficult to remember this reality?

What can you do to remember the hope of eternity and the temporary nature of the world?

“Clearly all people need possessions, and therefore it cannot be wrong to want and take pleasure in and what God has provided for our needs. But when I begin to desire more than other people, to covet whatever I see, to boast of what I have, and to claim that I am self-sufficient, then my desires have become perverse and sinful, and I stand condemned. John’s teaching stands as a timeless warning against materialism” (Marshall, 146).

And the world is passing away, and also its lusts...

We are given two main reasons why we should not love the world. First, it means that the love of the Father is not in us. Secondly, the world is passing away, this is like loving a ghost, a vapor, or a movie more than the real world. This is similar to 2:8: *the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining*.

Cars rust and fall apart, houses are destroyed, beauty fades, and our own bodies are moving towards impending death. Everything in front of us are things we can touch and see, but they will all fade. We depend so much on our senses to determine what is real. If we could learn to see past the physical to the invisible hand of the Creator, our perspective on life may significantly change.

The things of the world which tempt us and make us stumble along with the lust described above will all pass away. The flesh and its desires will one day die.

Instead of lusting after gold and silver, we will only use gold as cobblestone to walk on from place to place. We will have glorified bodies and will see Jesus in all his glory!

but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

To you, what is most exciting about the above reality?

Warning Concerning Antichrists – 1 John 2:18-25

“After his two brief digressions, John reverts to his principal thesis, namely discrimination between the true and the false by means of tests. To the moral and social tests which he has already expounded (3-11), he now adds his doctrinal test. He first draws a clear distinction between the heretics and the genuine Christians (18-21); then defines the nature and effect of the heresy (22-23); and finally describes the two safeguards against heresy which his readers already have (24-27)” (Stott, 108).

Topical Outline of this Section

- **Description of Antichrists 1 (2:18, 19)**
 - » The antichrist is coming
 - » Many antichrists have already come
 - » Last hour
 - » They went out from us

- » Not one of us
- **Description of the Believer 1 (2:20, 21)**
 - » Have an anointing
 - » They know the truth
- **Description of Antichrists 2 (2:22, 23a)**
 - » Liars
 - » Descriptions of Liars
 - » They deny the Son
- **Description of Believers 2 (2:23b-27)**
 - » Description
 - » Abiding in Christ
 - » Christ's promise
- **Exhortation to Believers (2:28)**
- **Conclusion (2:29)**

2:18 – How did John know it is the last hour? Is it still the last hour?

What is the difference between antichrists and the Antichrist?

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 – What does this teach about the coming man of lawlessness / the Antichrist?

2:19 – What had happened to this congregation?

What would it have felt like to have been in this situation?

Where would they find hope?

What will happen to those who left?

“Light is shed by this verse upon two important doctrines; the perseverance of the saints and the nature of the church... This is stated as a principle. Those who belong to us stay with us. Future and final perseverance is the ultimate test of a past participation in Christ (Heb. 3:14). Those who fall away, on the other hand, ‘have never been thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of Christ but only had a slight and passing taste of it’ (Calvin)” (Stott, 111).

2:20 – What knowledge do they have (look at verses 21-22)?

Context: The false teachers are teaching that they have a secret knowledge. John informs the congregation that they have all they need - the knowledge of the Gospel.

2:22, 23 – How do we identify an antichrist?

There are groups, cults, and individuals all around us who teach the message of the antichrist. Name some of them:

Can you have a relationship with God and not fully believe in Jesus?

Parts of our society consider themselves very spiritual, but they do not place Jesus at the center of their faith. What would you say about these people?

2:24 – What had John taught them from the beginning (remember his introduction)?

If the Gospel abides in you, what is the result?

2:25 – What is the promise made to all who believe?

What is the promise made to all who disbelieve?

Abiding in the Gospel = Abiding in the Son and in the Father

2:26 – Why is John writing these specific things?

How do John's writings help us identify the false teachers' beliefs?

2:27 – What do you think the *anointing* refers to?

What else abides in the believer (vs 24)?

"The majority agree that the anointing is referring to the Spirit, but there are some who believe that it is referring to the Word of God" (Dodd).

Their thoughts:

- Anointing refers to the hearing and believing the Word of God. In context it makes sense that this is what they need.
- 1 John 2:14 *the Word of God lives in you* So the Word both in function and in the context of the chapter can play the role of 'the anointing'. From Marshall, 154
- "Nevertheless, it remains difficult to think of the Word of God handed down and preached in the church, as being described under the metaphor of anointing" (Marshall, 155).
- "The anointing is indeed God's word, not as it is preached externally in the community, but as it is received by faith into the men's hearts and remains active, thanks to the work of the Spirit" (I de la Potterie) This gives a satisfying view of the passage. The antidote to false teaching is the inward reception of the Word of God, administered and confirmed by the work of the Spirit" (Marshall, 155).

I tend to lean towards this understanding of anointing:

The anointing = the Gospel (received by the power of
the Holy Spirit = the foundational teachings to abide in God)

The believer is not lacking in anything necessary to abide fully in God. They have heard the Gospel through the testimony of John and the word 'anointing' seems to be synonymous with Gospel. Anointing does not refer to some extra experience that the Christian receives after salvation; in fact John is specifically arguing against this point in the letter contrary to the false teachers.

So why is there no need for anyone to teach them?

How has this section protected the Gospel and this congregation from the false teachers?

Children of God – 1 John 2:28-3:3

2:28 – Why would abiding in Him give you confidence at his coming (2:10; 2:24-25)?

Who will be ashamed (2:11; 1:6)?

2:1 – How is Jesus described?

2:29 – How can we identify a true believer?

How is this similar to 2:6?

3:1 – How is God's love displayed in this verse?

How has it impacted your life to know that God has chosen to be your Father?

What is the significance of us now being a part of God's family?

Where should we go to be emotionally connected and fulfilled?

Who will ultimately protect us and take care of us?

How does the world respond to your family connection?

3:2 – What does John say is true of us right now?

What is to come when Jesus returns?

What will Jesus look like? How will this affect us?

How will we better be able to see our family resemblance through eternity?

3:3 – How should hope in ‘this day’ affect us?

Why is purity a result of this hope?

When will this reality ultimately be experienced?

Children of God & Children of the Devil - 3:4-17

3:4 – Why would sin be considered lawlessness?

When we openly and intentionally break the law, what does that tell us about our view of God?

How is the antichrist described in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12?

What would this say about people who are lawless?

3:5 – Why did Jesus come?

Luke 19:10 – Why did Jesus come?

1 John 1:5 – How does this description match the description of Jesus in 3:5? Why is this such a strong emphasis in 1 John (remember context)?

3:6 – Why is someone who continues in sin described as not having a relationship with Christ in verse 5?

When we sin, what should be our response (1:9)?

What does it say about us if we do not repent and confess our sins to God?

To “keep on” sinning is to make sin an intended way of life – a chosen path – walking in the darkness.

How is the person described in verse 6 the opposite of the person living out 3:3?

At first this verse can almost feel like a contradiction to what we studied earlier. We have already learned that everyone presently has sin in their life (1:8) and have sinned throughout their life (1:10). How then can we be expected to not continue in sin? This section brings us back to the truths taught in the first chapter. To walk in the light (in communion with Christ and one another) we live a life of repentance. Sin is never taken out of our daily equation, but our response is to walk in repentance with Jesus. We are fully forgiven children of God who continually seek deeper communion with our Savior through repentance and faith (not for salvation, but for intimacy and communion).

Walking in the Darkness = walking in sin without repentance

Walking in the Light = recognizing sin and responding with confession and repentance

3:7 – Why would John say, *let no one deceive you*?

3:8-10 – How do we know who are the children of the devil and who are the children of God?

3:8 – Why did the Son of God appear?

What exactly is the 'work of the devil'? How do you know?

3:9 – If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian but openly and happily lives a life of sin, what is true of that individual?

Can someone say they have committed their life to Christ, know the Bible, and still not be a Christian?

3:10 – Why do they need evidence?

What is the family resemblance between the devil and his children?

Love as the Mark of the True Believer - 3:11-18

How is this section an example of 2:10-11?

3:11 – How many times has John already proclaimed this message in 1 John?

If this is such a basic and simple message, why does John have to continue to repeat it?

Why is this command so hard to live out on a daily basis?

3:12 – Whose child was Cain?

What motivated Cain to murder Abel?

Why did Abel's righteousness inflame Cain's anger?

How should we expect a world full of men and women of lawlessness (faithful to their father the devil) to treat us?

3:13 – By looking at Cain's example, how much will the world hate you?

“The world at present lies in the grip of the ‘evil one’ (1 John 5:19) and is therefore orientated against God; accordingly, when He who is the Word and the Light came into the world, the world failed to recognize Him (John 1:10, 1 John 3:1) and similarly it does not recognize His followers (1 John 3:1); indeed, it hates them (John 15:18, 17:14, 1 John 3:13), just as it hated Him (John 7:7, 15, 18, 23)” (Bruce, 60).

3:14 – Who did you love today with your words?

Who did you love today with your deeds?

Tomorrow, how can you display Christ's love to the people with whom you interact?

Who in your life really needs some extra time with you?

3:15 – Do you have to physically kill someone to be guilty of murder? This past year, have you lived more like Cain or like Abel?

3:16 – What is our greatest demonstration of love?

What were some of the things that Jesus had to deal with on a daily basis for our sake?

How do we see Christ's love in his incarnation?

In His ministry?

With his disciples?

In the garden of Gethsemane?

On the Cross?

How about in your life? How did you demonstrate love yesterday?

When was the last time you sacrificed something important to you for someone else?

Are you willing to suffer for your church, brothers, and sisters in the faith?

“His statement is a way of saying that love must be prepared to meet the needs of others whatever the cost in self-sacrifice” & “The need of the world is not for heroic acts of martyrdom, but for heroic acts of material sacrifice” (Marshall, 194).

“When John speaks of love, it is no sentimental emotion that he has in mind, but something intensely practical” (Bruce, 96).

3:17 – This is the true test of 1 John 3:15-17. How do you view your possessions? Are they a gift from God to give to others in need, or are they simply your possessions for you?

2:16 – we are warned about having ‘pride in possessions’. How is living out verse 3:17 a way to kill the sin of ‘pride in possessions’?

Who around you is in need right now?

What can you do to help them?

Is there any physical possession in your life that you love more than your brothers and sisters in Christ?

“Hatred characterizes the world, whose prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil, issues in murder and is evidence of spiritual death. Love characterizes the church, whose prototype is Christ. It originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice, and is evidence of eternal life” (Stott, 148).

List 3 of your Christian friends in your church:

3:18 – How have you expressed your love to them lately?

What are 2 ways you can demonstrate love in deed and truth to each one of them this week?

How does this verse relate to the 3 claims in 1:6-10?

Assurance and Obedience – 3:19-24

“This passage can be regarded as the conclusion to the preceding part of the letter and also as a bridge to the remaining part. Its main purpose is to give assurance to the readers, on the basis of which they may have confidence to approach God in prayer” (Marshall, 196).

3:19, 20 – Should we trust the feelings that arise out of hearts concerning our salvation or should we trust the identifying marks that we are given in 1 John?

Based upon the context, why might these people be questioning their salvation?

When our feelings do not match up with truth, what should we do according to the end of verse 19?

3:20 – Who/what should we trust?

“It may happen that when a person engages in this self-examination he is alarmed by the result. He considers his life and can only conclude that he falls short of the divine standard. He does not love his brothers as fully as he should. He cannot claim that freedom from sin of which John spoke earlier. How can he possibly belong to the truth when he feels that his actions belie it? John says that we can set our hearts at rest whenever they condemn us” (Marshall, 197).

3:21, 22 – What kind of requests will a Christian walking in the light make of God?

This passage is almost parallel to 5:11-15, confidence leads to petition.

“Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer” (Stott, 152).

Cross-References

- 1 John 5:14
- Psalm 37:4; 66:18
- John 15:7; 16:23-24
- James 1:5-6; 4:2-3; 5:16
- Matthew 21:22

These references continue to show that God does not answer any kind of request, but only those that come from obedient children who know His will, and can be assumed that they are asking according to His will.

3:23 – The command to believe in Christ is linked to what command?

Why must these two things go together?

3:24 – What role does the Holy Spirit play in our salvation?

3:9 – What or who do you think is the 'seed' referred to in this verse?

3:24 – What does it mean that He abides in us?

How should it affect our relationship with God knowing that He lives in us?

How will it affect your view of sinning knowing that God is living in you?

How is your prayer life? Do you sense how close God is to you at all times?

How can meditating on the reality of God's presence in your life develop a stronger prayer life?

In what ways does the Holy Spirit help sanctify us and make us more holy?

Testing the Spirit – 4:1-6

4:1 – Do you have any examples of how people are susceptible to believe almost anything that they hear?

What do we learn about this reality from 2 Timothy 4:3-4?

What does John mean by “the spirits”?

Why is it so important to test “the spirits”?

Are there still false prophets in the world? Give some present day examples?

4:2, 3 – What is the key test?

What are some important questions to ask a ‘teacher’ in a new church or a teacher in a denomination you do not know very much about?

How are these false teachers described?

How can the *spirit of the antichrist* already be in the world and yet also still be coming?

How could this make the church feel knowing that there are so many out to deceive them and the antichrist himself is on his way?

4:4 – What is John’s purpose in writing this verse?

Why is this verse so encouraging? Can we enjoy this same encouragement from this verse?

2:14 – What does John connect to overcoming the world?

4:5 – What do we learn about the ‘world’ from this verse?

How does this affect your understanding of 2:15-17?

If we love the world, we will also love its teaching. How dangerous can it be to run to the world for answers instead of to God? What can result from this wrong choice?

4:6 – What is John saying about those who disagree with his teaching? And about those who are trying to deceive this church?

What does this verse tell us about those who accept some teachings of the Bible and then reject other teachings of the Bible?

How is the Holy Spirit linked to God’s Word in this verse? Why is this so significant?

How can we explain this connection to a young Christian? To a non-Christian?

God’s Love and Ours - 4:7-12

“In Tyndale’s words, ‘John singeth his old song again.’ For it is the third time in the letter that he takes up and applies the supreme test of love (2:7-11 & 3:11-18). Each time the test is more searching. In this third treatment John is concerned to relate the love which should be in us not to the true light which is already shining (1:8; 10), nor to the eternal life of which it is the evidence (3:14-15) but to God’s very nature of love and to his loving activity in Christ and in us. ‘Here the Epistle rises to the summit of all revelation’ (Law).” (Stott, 162).

4:7 – What is the identifying mark of a Christian in this verse?

Does anyone truly love others before they know and experience God's love?

How is the love of a Christian different from the love that we experience in the world?

What is the right motive behind loving another? What are some wrong motives?

4:8 – What is the identifying mark of a believer in this verse?

Why does John keep hammering this point?

How are God and his nature described?

4:9 – How has God displayed his love?

What does Romans 5:6-11 teach us about God's love?

How has God displayed his love through sacrifice and personal pain?

Are you ready to follow his model of love? If not, what is holding you back?

When John uses love as an identifying mark of the believer he is expecting this love to be the kind of love that reflects God's example of love. The love that God has shown is not merely a love towards his mom, dad, spouse, or children – it is a love shown towards everyone, even those who rejected him! As you think about this last week, could you have been identified as a Christian by this identifying mark?

Why does John keep repeating this point?

4:9 – Why did God send his only Son?

What would a Christian look like who is “living through him?”

What if you looked at life through Jesus’ eyes and lived your life purely for his mission and purpose – how would your life change?

What keeps you from “living through him?”

4:10 – Who loved whom first?

If God took the first step towards us and He is the one who bore our guilt and wrath, is there any room in the Christian life for pride?

How does a proper understanding of God’s initiative and sacrificial love kill pride in the heart of the Christian?

How then is meditation on the Gospel and the work of the Cross a humbling and necessary contemplation of the Christian?

How does this understanding connect to the Lord’s Supper?

4:11 – In addition to humility, what is another proper response to understanding and experiencing God’s love?

4:12 – *No one has ever seen God* – Who, then, did Moses see in the book of Exodus (burning bush chapter 3, and in the cleft of the rock chapter 33-34)?

What do we learn from John 1:18 and Hebrews 1:3?

Who has made the Father known? Who was interacting with Moses in the book of Exodus?

4:13 – What is the identifying mark of a believer in this verse?

4:14 – How does this remind you of John's introduction?

4:15 – The believer must mimic John by confessing and testifying about who Jesus is and what He has done. How are you doing at testifying about who Jesus is and what He has done for you to those in your life who do not know the Lord?

What does it say about us if we are afraid or unwilling to share this message with others?

2:23, 4:3, and 4:15 – are all pushing the same point. What is that point?

Why is John so focused on this point? Why do these believers still need to hear this message right now?

4:16a – In what way does the first part of this verse summarize the Gospel?

Why is it so hard for many Christians to understand how much God loves them?

What happens to our faith, hope, and love toward others when we forget how much God loves us?

How is experiencing God's love connected to faith?

4:16b – How does John connect God – his love – our love?

4:17 – How is love perfected?

4:17, 18 - "perfected in love;" "love perfected;" "love is perfected" found in verses 12, 17, 18 are all a part of this section of 1 John. What does it mean that love is being perfected in us?

How can we tell that love is being perfected?

4:17, 18 – What are the results of perfected love?

Can you think of any Christians who are experiencing *perfected love*?

4:12 – How is 'perfected love' connected to abiding in God and His Spirit abiding in us?

2:5 – What is connected to 'the love of God is perfected' in this verse?

What is John continuing to emphasize about the Holy Spirit and the Word of God?

According to the book of 1 John how are the Holy Spirit and the Word of God connected to fellowship with God? Overcoming the world? Walking in the light? Having assurance of salvation?

4:19 – Where does our love originate? Where does it continue to come from (2:9)?

“Love to God and love to one’s neighbor are two sides of one coin” (Bruce, 114).

4:20-21 – What is the identifying mark of a believer?

Loving your brother is more than a suggestion, it is a C_____.

So if we are not following this commandment we are in sin. What should our response to sin be?

What do we learn about sin from 3:9 and 5:18?

Do you recognize the ways you have not loved your brothers and sisters lately? Does it grieve you? Are you ready and willing to repent of your sin and confess it to God?

1 JOHN 5 Verse-By-Verse Study

John Stott summarizes how John has consistently used three tests (belief, obedience, and love) throughout the letter. "The real link between the three tests is seen to be the new birth. Faith, love, and obedience are all then natural growth which follows a birth from above" (Stott, 174).

5:1 – *born of God* – "Here, however, John is not trying to show how a person experiences the new birth; his aim is rather to indicate the evidence which shows that a person stands in the continuing relationship of a child to God his Father: that evidence is that he holds to the true faith about Jesus " (Marshall, 227).

5:1 – What are the identifying marks of a believer?

How do we see John being both theological and practical at the same time?

Why should properly understood theology always lead to life change and application?

Who must be loved in this verse? What happens if we try to separate these two?

"It is surely self-evident that everybody who loves a parent also loves his child" (Marshall, 227).

5:1 – Loving God will mean we love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

5:2 – The converse is also true – Loving the Brothers will mean loving the Father.

There is no getting around this reality. Why does John bind these truths so closely together?

5:2 – Those who love the brothers will love God and _____.

Verses 4:7; 4:2; and 5:1 all push this same truth! John is clearly trying to make a point. Are we hearing what he is emphasizing?

"Love for God is not an emotional experience so much as a moral commitment. Indeed, whether shown to God or human beings, agape is always practical and active" (Stott, 176).

5:3 – Another statement of truth repeated. Loving God will mean obeying his commands. Why is love connected to obedience?

Do you feel that God's commands are "burdensome?"

What does it say about us if we feel burdened trying to follow God's commands?

5:4 – What is the identifying mark of a true believer?

What does it mean to overcome the world? How is it connected to 2:15-17?

"He does so to emphasize not 'the victorious person' but 'the victorious power'. It is not the man, but his birth from God, which conquers" (Stott, 176).

5:4, 5 – In what must we place our faith?

What does it mean for someone not to believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

This reality and faith in Jesus is absolutely central to the Gospel and salvation. Without understanding, defending, and believing this truth the church will die and fade away. Where else do we see John repeating the importance of this truth?

Repetition is an important tool in the hand of a teacher. 1 John 2:23; 4:3; 4:15; 5:1; 5:5 and 5:12 all teach what?

As you share the Gospel with someone, is the nature and person of Christ central in your message?

5:6, 7 – Is a sub-point explaining the personhood of Jesus. John uses language and imagery that we no longer use which makes this a difficult passage to understand. There is not a consistent opinion on how to interpret these verses.

John clearly is emphasizing the person of Christ. John may be left asking, "What if they do not think that John's testimony is enough? Is there more evidence I can share with them?"

Water typically refers to birth (possibly baptism) and blood refers to the reality that Jesus was human (flesh and blood). According to Gnostic and doetic teaching (possible false teachings that the congregation was hearing), Jesus was not an actual person. He looked like a person but was actually an angelic (ghost-like)

being without a true body of flesh and blood. These false teachers believed that flesh and material things were evil by nature and therefore it was impossible for Jesus to have taken on true human form.

5:6 – False teachers may have pushed that Jesus may have been born (water), but surely he did not take on a human body (blood). John makes it clear that Jesus was truly born of a woman (water) and did take on a human body (blood). Who ultimately testifies to this truth?

How does the Spirit testify?

In the Gospels (Matthew 3:16-17) we see the Father verbalize that Jesus was his Son and the Spirit of God also gave testimony to those watching that Jesus was the Son of God.

In 1 John 2:18-27 we see that the Spirit and the Word of God (John's words and testimony) work together so that we might abide in Christ. The Spirit is truth (5:6) and his words, given through John, are an authoritative testimony concerning the nature of Christ.

5:7-8 – Jesus' birth, His body (which they saw and touched), and the Spirit all testified to the truth of this testimony that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

How does Paul handle this same subject in Romans 1:1-4?

5:10 – What is the testimony that dwells in the believer?

What is now true of the believer that points to the work of Christ?

What is the result of not believing in God's testimony about His Son?

Those who receive the testimony, have the Holy Spirit and are obedient, love their brothers, and overcome the world! All these realities in the life of the believer demonstrate the veracity of the testimony of Scripture. Does your life point to the risen Son of God?

5:10-13 – What is true of those who believe?

What is true of those who do not believe?

Can we know if we have eternal life? How?

What is the sin that cause someone to not receive eternal life?

“The unbeliever, on the other hand, who ‘has not believed’ (RSV, the perfect tense indicating a past ‘crisis of choice’ – Westcott), forfeits the possibility of receiving any further testimony from God because he has rejected the first and in so doing has make him out to be a liar” (Stott, 185).

5:13-20 – How many times does John use the word *know*?

What is he trying to emphasize? Why is this so important in this context?

“Putting together the purposes of the Gospel and the letter, John’s purpose is in four stages, namely that his readers may hear, hearing may believe, believing may live, and living may know’ (Stott, 187).

5:14-15 – (Similar to 3:21, 22) What kind of requests will God answer?

What if the request is not according to God’s will?

How can we know if a request is according to God’s will?

What kind of responses can God give to those who pray according to his will?

Final Exhortations and Defenses Against the False Teachers – 5:16-21

5:16 – If we see a Christian brother or sister sinning, what should be our response?

According to the last section (specifically 5:10), what sin leads to eternal death?

In context, who are the ones denying that Jesus is the Son of God?

Like Cain (3:11-12), what is their chief goal?

Who does John's audience not have to pray for?

Unbelief leads to death yet we see Paul pray for unbelieving Jews in Romans 10:1 (as we ought Colossians 4:2-6), how then do we make sense of John's teaching? Remember that in this context those who have rejected Christ are mounting an attack against the church and are trying to deceive them. Therefore, John may not be speaking of unbelievers in general, but of wolves (Acts 20:29) who are attacking the flock—open and aggressive enemies of the Gospel, antichrists. John does not require them to pray for these individuals as Jesus does not require his disciples to give the Gospel of the Kingdom (the pearl) to vicious dogs and pigs who will trample it under their feet and attack (Matthew 7:6) (Carson, Matthew, in Expositor's Bible Commentary, page 185).

Other Thoughts on this Subject:

- Stott – “Probably not sin which leads to punishment by physical death” (189).
- Plummer – “a state or habit of sin willfully chosen and persisted in”
- Tertullian – one of a list of grosser sins
- Brook, Law, and Dodd – Apostasy, not backsliding, but total apostasy, the denial of Christ and the renunciation of faith (example – false teachers) Hebrews 6:4-6. 10:26, 12:16-17. “It seems clear, unless John's theology is divided against itself, that he who sins unto death is not a Christian” (Stott, 191)
- Stott – Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28, Mark 3:29)
- Marshall – The audience would have been familiar with the different kind of sins seen in the Old Testament. There were those sins that were unconscious sins and deliberate sins. Each has a different type of ceremony for cleansing. Marshall would say that sins that John may be referring to are those that go directly against the identifying marks of a believer such as not loving your brother, denial that Jesus is the Son of God, refusing to obey God's commands, and friendship with the world. “This would lead us to the conclusion that by sin that leads to death John means the sins that are incompatible with being a child of God” (Marshall, 247). (Luke 22:23 – After Peter's denial of Christ).

5:17, 18 – 1:8, 10 – How are we supposed to respond to the sin in our lives?

1:9 – Where is our hope found?

2:1 – The ability to confess our sins and find forgiveness should motivate us to do what according to John?

5:18 – Instead of continuing in sin, what does God do for the believer?

5:19 – How does this verse shed light on 1 John 2:15-17?

5:18 – What joyous news comes from this verse? Will the enemy or his dominions ever have power over us?

5:20 – What do we learn about Christ from this verse?

Who gives us the understanding to believe?

How is Jesus described at the end of this verse? Why is this such an appropriate way to end this section?

5:21 – What is the sin that leads to death?

How is idolatry a temptation towards unbelief?

Can an idolater truly believe that only Jesus is God's Son and that life is found in Him alone?

Why do you suppose John makes this his final emphasis? How will this command help protect the flock?

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