**1 John - Introduction**

*“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (3:1-3).*

**Book in a Nutshell**

John’s desire was that his readers enjoy fellowship with God. To that end, he explains how such fellowship may be joined and maintained, based on the imperative of love. Love for God, and love for brethren.

**Discussion Questions**

1. How can we be certain that John is the author of this epistle?

2. Name an important event in the apostle John’s life or ministry.

3. Did John enjoy a special closeness to the Lord? If so, how do we know?

4. For whom did John write his epistle? Explain how letters written 2,000 years ago are relevant to Christians today.

5. The epistle calls for Christians to reject the world (cf. 2:15-17). Why was this admonition necessary at the time of John’s writing?

**Authorship**

* The author is not named in the text, but the evidence supporting the apostle John as the author is very strong
* Two students of John, (earliest of “church fathers”) Polycarp and Papias, quote from the epistle and attribute it to the pen of John (within 20 years or so of its writing).
* The extrabiblical witnesses are in almost total agreement, and we can then be confident that he is the genuine author of the letter.

**John the Apostle**

* Together with James, sons of Zebedee (Mark 1:20)
* One of the best known of the disciples, and often mentioned with Peter (Acts 4:13; 8:14-25)
* Wrote the gospel of John, 1, 2 & 3 John, and the book of Revelation (about 20% of the New Testament)

**Date of Writing: (90 A.D.)**

* Most conservative scholars believe that the book was among the last written. Perhaps about 90 A.D., just a few years before the persecution started by Domitian in A.D. 94
* The fact that it lacks the calls to fortitude in the face of persecution tends to indicate this was a time of peace for Christians (following the early Jewish persecution, and preceding the aforementioned Roman one).

**Persons Addressed**

* There is no mention of any individual or group to which the epistle is written. Also, the message contained is general and timeless in nature. It can be called a “general” epistle for this reason
* It is an epistle that has a direct and broad application to God’s children in any age.
* The frequent calls to avoid sin and worldliness may be a response to the Gnostic heresy that was addressed by Peter in his second epistle, and by Jude in his letter.

**1 John - 1**

*“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (7)*

**Chapter in a Nutshell**

God sent His Son Jesus to earth, to enable us to have fellowship with Him. We are saved by grace. Grace is not earned, but our enjoyment of it is conditioned upon our emulating Him by walking in the light.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What (or who) was it that had been heard, seen and touched by John and his companions?

2. How were the apostles able to bear witness of the reality and accessibility of eternal life?

3. What does it mean when the scripture says that there is no darkness in God?

4. Is there any darkness in us? If not, how do we reach the point of being cleansed of all darkness?

5. Explain the danger of self deception.

*(Please put answers on back of page or another sheet of paper)*

**Heard Seen and Touched (1-4)**

* John begins his epistle by immediately getting to the point.
* He, and others, were eyewitnesses to the Christ (heard Him, saw Him, gazed upon Him, touched Him (1)
* The apostle was an eyewitness of the resurrection Christ, and thus could with confidence bear witness to the reality of eternal life (2) (cf. 1 Corinthians 15)
* The Apostle shared with others what he had seen. Why? So that they would have fellowship (joint participation) with him in that faith – and, with that fellowship enjoy fellowship with God and Jesus (3)
* It is with the knowledge of this fellowship that the Christian has reason to rejoice! (4)

**The Basis of Fellowship with God (5-10)**

* The message of Christ, shared by John: God is light! (5)
* “Light” represents goodness and righteousness
* In Him there is “no darkness” (5)
* “Darkness” represents sin and evil
* It is a contradiction to say that we are in fellowship with light if we ourselves walk in darkness (6) Those who do so are liars
* Our fellowship with God is conditional. We must walk in the light. If we do, the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us of our sins. (7)
* Sin is a reality for all men (cf. Romans 3:23). As such we must acknowledge it. (Note: if we don’t acknowledge it, we can’t deal with it!)
* We deal with the problem of sin by confessing our sin to God. When we do so, he ALWAYS forgives us of our sins. (9)
* Forgiveness brings cleansing, and we must be clean to stand before Him justified (9)
* Do not lie by denying that you have sinned! (10)

**1 John - 2**

*“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” (4-5).*

**Chapter in a Nutshell**

Obedience to God is the “litmus test” of being in a relationship with Him. Of all the commandments, the greatest is to love. Love for God and man, but not for the world.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why can’t a disobedient person correctly claim to know God?

2. What is the greatest commandment? Why is it the greatest commandment?

3. Explain the folly of loving the things of the world.

4. Who is the antichrist? Can he be identified?

5. What is it that allows us to be confident in the presence of Jesus Christ at His second coming?

*(Please put answers on back of page or another sheet of paper)*

**Do we know God? (1-11)**

* Jesus Christ, our advocate (1-2)
* Keep God’s commandments (3-6)
* The greatest commandment - Love (7-11)

**John’s purpose in writing (12-14)**

* John refers to them as inclusive of little children, fathers, and young men.
* Because your sins are forgiven (12); Because you have known the eternal One (13, 14); Because you have overcome Satan (13, 14); Because you have known the Father (13); Because you are strong (14).

**Do not love the world! (15-17)**

* Love of the world and love of the father is antithetical. Both can not exist in a single heart! (15)
* Lust (of the flesh and eyes), and pride has its origin in the world (16)
* The world will be destroyed, but the righteous will endure for eternity (17)

**Many antichrists have come (18-23)**

* Definition – antichrist: anti (opposite) – an opponent of the Messiah.
* Many antichrists have come into the world. They are common. There is not a single individual as is commonly entertained by premillinialists. (18-19)
* Anyone who denies Jesus is the Christ is antichrist, and separates himself from God. (Example: the national Jew who denied Jesus). (22-23)

**The Benefit of Abiding Truth (24-27)**

* Truth leads to eternal life, and can be received by all who are taught it.

**Children of God (28-29)**

* We must abide in Him, that we not be ashamed when He comes again. (28)
* How do we “abide”? “Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.” (29)

**1 John - 3**

*“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (9).*

**Chapter in a Nutshell**

John emphasizes two things that impact our relationship with God. First, whether we obey. (Sin can not be a common thing for a Christian) Second, whether we love. Love is, and always has been, an imperative.

**Discussion Questions**

1. When Christ comes, and eternity begins, what will we be like?

2. How can we determine if we “abide in the Lord” or are “of the devil?” Is this an objective or subjective standard?

3. Explain why exhibiting a love of God might bring about the anger and hatred of the world?

4. What did Jesus Christ do to be our example in the area of love, and what can we do to emulate it?

5. What is required for us to abide in Christ?

*(Please put answers on back of page or another sheet of paper)*

**Children of God (1-3)**

* As Children of God, though we are not sure what we will be made into at Christ’s coming, we know that we will be remade in His image. (1-2)
* It is this hope that causes us to strive to be pure like him as we live this life. (3)

**A Christian’s relationship to Sin (4-9)**

* Sin is lawlessness. Christ, our sacrifice for sin, did not sin while He was on earth. (4-5)
* To abide in Christ, we must not sin! A righteous life is required. (6-7)
* Sin is characteristic of those who are in the devil’s realm. The Christian, because of his relationship with the Christ (born again), can not sin! (8-9)

**The Necessity of Love (10-15)**

* The Christian practices righteousness. One can’t rightly claim the relationship without doing so. (10)
* Love is a part of a righteous life. It is a timeless message (from the beginning), contrasted with the hate of Cain. (11-12)
* Love for God will bring the enmity of man. But, it is what separates us from spiritual death. (13-15)

**Christ’s Example of Love (16-23)**

* Christ, by what He did is the great example of love for us to follow. (16-18)
* We can have the assurance of life after death by practicing that love for God and man. (19)
* God is the basis for our assurance. (20-21)
* John states in general terms the commandments of God, upon which we have hope. Believe in Him, and practice love. (22-23)

**Abiding in Christ (24)**

* Obedience is the aspect of our possible standing with God over which we have control. “He who keeps His commandments abides in Him.” It is by this obedience that we can **know** He abides in us. (24)

**1 John - 4**

*“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (7-8).*

**Chapter in a Nutshell**

John continues his discussion of love, begun in the previous chapter. Love is of God, is God, should be present among those who are like God, and is in fact commanded by Him of those who are His.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What determines whether we have the spirit of truth or the spirit of error?

2. What is the greatest example of love ever demonstrated?

3. Since God can’t be seen, how do we know when He “abides in us”?

4. Can we have confidence in the Day of Judgment? Is that confidence in ourselves, or in God? Why?

5. What is John’s characterization of the one who hates his brother? Why is it accurate?

*(Please put answers on back of page or another sheet of paper)*

**Spirit of truth and spirit of error (1-6)**

* We are not to be overly credulous. We are to test those who claim to be speaking for God, to ensure what they say is true (1)
* One error prevalent during John’s time was a denial of the humanity of Jesus Christ (2-3)
* A way to determine whether one is of God or not is if he heeds and obeys the apostles’ doctrine (4-6)

**Love is of God (7-11)**

* We are to love one another because love has its origin with God (7)
* God is love (8,16), so if we don’t love, we can’t know God.
* God proved His love for us by sending His Son to die, and so we should follow His example (9-11)

**God is love (12-16)**

* Love for one another is an indicator that we are of God, and abiding in Him (12)
* As an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, John was able to testify as to the reality of God’s expression of love in sending Jesus to the world to save it (13-14)
* Confession that Jesus is the Son of God is an indicator that we abide in God, and He in us (15)
* If we abide in love, we abide in God. God is love (16)

**Why we love God (17-19)**

* Because of God’s love in sending His son, we can approach judgment with confidence (17)
* Perfect love casts out fear (18)
* God loved us first. We must reciprocate (19)

**Love as a commandment (20-21)**

* Love for God must be demonstrated first by loving our brother in Christ (20)
* It is a command of God. If we love God, we must love our brother as well (21)

**1 John - 5**

*“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (9).*

**Chapter in a Nutshell**

Faith and love brings hope. We can be sure of our standing with God because of the witness we receive. God’s testimony is sure. Prayer, asked in faith, is answered. We must keep ourselves faithful to the One who secures for us eternal life.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What does it mean in verse 3 that His commandments are not burdensome?

2. How can it be said that Jesus “came by water and blood”?

3. What are the three witnesses in heaven? on earth?

4. Explain the difference between the sin that leads to death, and the sin that does not lead to death.

5. How can the phrase, “whoever is born of God does not sin” be reconciled with (1:8)?

*(Please put answers on back of page or another sheet of paper)*

**Overcome the World by Faith (1-5)**

* Both faith and love are necessary to be born of God. (1)
* If we love God, we must also love His Son (1)
* God defines love. Love for God is shown in keeping his commandments (2-3)
* This faith (bringing the new birth) results in victory over the world (4-5)

**The Three that Bear Witness (6-13)**

* Jesus Christ came both by water, and by blood (6)
* The Holy Spirit bears witness. He is truth (6)
* Three that bear witness in Heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit (7)
* Three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water and the blood (8)
* God’s witness is greater than the witness of man. It is through that witness that we have the hope of life (9-12)
* John’s writings on the matter were designed to elicit faith in Jesus, resulting in eternal life (13)

**Confidence & Compassion through Prayer (14-17)**

* God hears the petitions we make in faith (14)
* We can have confidence our prayers will be answered (15)
* Petitions we make for forgiveness (especially on behalf of another) will be granted (16)
* All unrighteousness is sin (17)

**We may know Him who is true (18-21)**

* The Christian does not sin. He keeps himself, and is untouched by the wicked one. (18)
* The righteous belong to God. The world belongs to Satan (19)
* We are “in Him who is true” when we are Christians. Therefore, we are to remain faithful (20-21)