

1 JOHN



MVA CHURCH

1 JOHN BIBLE STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN

There is no clear indication in 1 John as to who wrote the letter. But we do know that he was an eyewitness to Jesus Christ and the language he uses is very similar to John's gospel. The early church ascribes the authorship of 1 John to the apostle John who was one of Jesus original followers.

There is no designation as to whom the letter is addressed. It is probably a circular letter written to a number of churches in the same area familiar to John. They were encountering false teachers that had originally come from John's church. John shows great affection for the people in these churches and he wants to protect them from the deception of the false teachers and assure them of their salvation in Jesus Christ.

The style of John's writing is very different to what we are used to today. He is using a style of writing called rhetoric. Rhetoric functions in a circular fashion by repeating ideas with different words and reason so as to reinforce them. His goal is to bolster the truths that define them as a Christian church.

Studying 1 John is a rich and rewarding exercise that will deepen our knowledge of God's love for us, strengthen our bonds of love with each other, and also protect us against the false teaching that continues today. The more energy that you give to these studies in your groups the greater God's blessing will be upon yourself and the whole church community.

STUDY 1: WALKING IN THE LIGHT 1:1-2:2

WE TESTIFY TO THE WORD OF LIFE 1:1-4

In the first verse John reflects upon his experience of travelling with Jesus Christ the Word of life. What would it have been like to have heard Jesus with your own ears, to have seen him with your own eyes, and to have touched him with your own hands?

Why does John begin his letter with this description of his experience? What does this experience reveal about the message he is about to declare in his letter?

In verse 3 what is John's purpose in declaring this message about the Word of life? What is the fellowship that John describes?

WALKING IN THE LIGHT 1:5-2:2

In verse 5 when John declares that God is light he is referring to the divinity and character of God. How would you describe the character of God?

For a person who claims to have fellowship with God how does the character of God shape and inform their behaviour?

In verse 6 how does the behaviour of a person reveal whether or not they have fellowship with God?

In verse 8 what is the deception that a person can fall into and what are the consequences?

What does sin mean? Are you willing to confess your sins?

What are the consequences for a person who confesses their sins to God?

In 2:2 what does it mean for Jesus Christ to speak on our behalf? How does he atone for our sins?

Is it possible for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to forgive anyone? Why?

STUDY 2: KEEPING JESUS COMMANDS 2:3-17

Have there ever been moments in your life when you have questioned if you are a Christian or not?

KEEPING JESUS COMMANDS 2:3-11

In verses 3 and 4 John invites us to make judgments about ourselves and about others. In verse 3 how can we be sure that we are a Christian? In verse 4 how can we be sure that a person is not a Christian?

In verse 6 John uses the image of a person walking just like Jesus as they go through life. How did Jesus carry himself through his life?

In verses 7 and 8 John explains the command that a person is to follow if they are to know whether or not they are a Christian. He tells us that it is an old command but then seems to contradict himself by saying that it is a new command. Jn 13:34 helps us to solve this dilemma. What is the new and old command?

In verses 9 to 11 John explains how this command will work itself out in the church community. Obedience to this command does not lead to a person's salvation but reveals something about their salvation. What does it reveal?

Can you give some examples of Christians who have loved their brother or sister and of non-Christians who have hated their brother or sister?

THE BELIEVERS AND THE WORLD 2:12-17

In verses 12 to 14 John is addressing different groups of people. When he addresses 'children' it is actually a reference to everyone in the church (see 2:1). But then he goes on to address fathers and young men. What does he say to each of them? Why does he repeat his words? What encouragement does this give you?

In verse 15 love for the world is opposed to love for the Father. How is the world defined in verse 16? Can you give any examples of love for the world on the Northern Beaches?

How will a person who loves the Father look different while living on the Northern Beaches? In verse 17 what is their future?

STUDY 3: WARNING AGAINST ANTICHRIST'S 2:18-27

How does the battle between truth and lies show itself today?

THE ANTICHRIST DENIES JESUS 2:18-19

In verse 18 John tells us that it is the last hour. In the Bible the last hour is the time between the resurrection of Jesus and his return in judgment. What will happen in the last hour?

What are antichrists (See Matt 24:24, Mark 13:22)?

John is facing a situation where antichrists are trying to deceive and lead astray the people that he is writing to (see 2:26). From verse 19 where did these antichrists come from?

REMAIN IN THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS 2:20-27

When the Christians that John is writing to were faced with the teaching of these antichrists on what basis could they have confidence to respond (see verses 20-21, 27)?

In verse 22 what were the antichrists teaching? (Hint: Christ = God's promised king who would save his people) Why is this a problem?

What is it that Christians are to 'remain in' to avoid the deception of antichrists?

What is the prize for the Christian that perseveres?

During the Reformation many of the reformers declared the papacy and the pope to be the antichrist. Here is a quote from Martin Luther "We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist...personally I declare that I owe the Pope no other obedience than that to Antichrist." (Aug. 18, 1520) Taken from The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, Vol. 2., pg. 121 by Froom.

Do we face any other antichrists today? Who are they? What do they teach? What lessons can we learn from 1 John about how we can respond?

How does the prize of eternal life motivate you?

STUDY 4: WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN 2:28-3:10

How have you heard the phrase 'born again' used? Is it helpful or unhelpful?

THE HOPE OF GOD'S CHILDREN 2:28-3:3

In verse 29 John teaches that everyone who does what is right has been born of God. What is he referring to? How might a person know if they have been born of God?

Why is it a loving action of the Father to call us his children?

How does this shape our identity as people?

In 3:1 how does the world respond to God's children? What can we expect in our own lives?

What will happen to us when Jesus returns?

EVERYONE IN JESUS DOES NOT SIN 3:4-10

Why does John describe sin as lawlessness?

In verse 5 why did Jesus come?

In verses 6 to 9 John teaches that everyone who has been born of God does not sin. What does he mean by this, especially in light of 1:8-10? Is he talking about a sinless perfection?

The immediate context suggests that the sin John is talking about here is different to the sin he is talking about in chapter 1. The sin he is talking about here is the same as the type of sin practiced by the antichrists – a rejection of Jesus.

Therefore, in these verses John is teaching that it is impossible for anyone who claims to be a Christian, a child born of God, to reject Jesus. They must continue to believe in Jesus otherwise they do not know God. It is this sin that is impossible for the true Christian to commit.

Therefore, in verses 8 to 10 what distinguishes God’s children from the devil’s children?

How does it make you feel to know after reading this that if you believe in the good news about Jesus then you are one of God’s children?

STUDY 5: LOVING OTHERS IN TRUTH AND ACTION 3:11-24

What is the greatest example of love that you have ever seen?

LOVE ONE ANOTHER 3:11-15

What is the basic message that we have heard from the beginning of the Christian faith?

How does Cain's treatment of his brother Abel provide a contrasting example of this message?

If Cain treated Abel this way how can we expect the world to treat us? Can you think of any examples of where the world has persecuted Christians for loving others?

In verse 15 how does John describe the person who hates their brother? Why does he use such strong language?

LOVE IN TRUTH AND ACTION 3:16-22

In verse 16 what is the source of all Christian love? How should this love manifest itself in our lives?

How should a Christian respond when they see another Christian in need? We are often faced with situations where Christians are in need. Where should we draw the line?

In verse 18 why does John draw the distinction between loving someone in speech and loving someone in action? What are some ways in which you can love others within the church community?

In verses 19 to 22 how does our obedience to this command give us assurance of our salvation? What does this mean for our prayer life?

THE COMMAND OF GOD 3:23-24

In verses 23 to 24 how is our belief in Jesus displayed by our obedience to his commands?

Reflect upon your own life. Where are you obedient to the commands of God? Does this give you assurance of your belief in Jesus and therefore your salvation?

STUDY 6: TEST THE SPIRITS OF TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD 4:1-6

John warns the people he writing to not to believe every spirit. The spirits are people who claim to be indwelt by God, to have received his Spirit and to speak in his name. John is warning the people in the church not to believe every person who claims to speak in the name of God. Why might he be warning them about this?

In verses 2 and 3 what is the criteria that John gives so that the Christian will know if the message is from the Spirit of God or from the spirit of the antichrist?

The criterion that John gives is the part of the Christian message that was under attack when he wrote this letter. The false teachers attacking the church were trying to deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. The false teaching we face today will be different. What are some of the different forms of false teaching that we face today? What is the criterion that we can use to determine if the message is from the Spirit of God or from the spirit of the antichrist?

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine if a person is a false teacher or not. John Calvin made a helpful distinction between those parts of the Christian message that are essential for a Christian to believe and those parts of the Christian message that are not essential for a Christian to believe. If a person teaches something contrary to the essential parts of the Christian message then they are a false teacher. Make a list of those things that are an essential part of the Christian message and those things which are a non-essential part of the Christian message.

In verse 5 what is the source of the false teacher and their words? Why is this the case?

In verse 6 John speak about his own teaching. We have access to John's teaching and the teaching of all the apostles in the Bible. What does a person's response to John's teaching and the rest of the apostle's reveal about them?

Let's look at one example of false teaching. Joyce Meyer is recognised by many as one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She is a New York Times bestselling author. Yet a number of areas in her teaching are not consistent with what we read in the Bible. Read the quote from Joyce Meyer below and see if you can identify any problems.

"I'm going to tell you something folks, I didn't stop sinning until I finally got it through my thick head I wasn't a sinner anymore. And the religious world thinks that's heresy and they want to hang you for it. But the Bible says that I'm righteous and I can't be righteous and be a sinner at the same time ... All I was ever taught to say was, 'I'm a poor, miserable sinner.' I am not poor, I am not miserable and I am not a sinner. That is a lie from the pit of hell. That is what I was and if I still am then Jesus died in vain. Amen?"

"What Happened from the Cross to The Throne?" an audio by Joyce Meyer.

STUDY 7: GOD'S LOVE AND OUR LOVE 4:7-5:4

A Harvard study of adult development discovered that children who grew up in a loving home were more likely to earn more, achieve a higher status, and live longer than children who grew up in a loveless home. What place does love have in the development of a person?

LOVE ONE ANOTHER 4:7-12

In verses 7 to 8 what place does love have in the Christian life?

How has God revealed his love to us? What did it cost him?

LOVE GOD 4:13-21

In verse 13 what role does the Spirit have in the Christian life?

What confession does the Christian make through the power of the Spirit?

In verses 16 and 17 how does this confession lead us to experience God's love for us?

How much of your life have you been conscious of God's love for you? What difference has this made to your development?

Fear is a powerful force in every person's life. It leads to stress, anxiety, anger and insecurity. Why does perfect love drive our fear?

How does our experience of God's love for us translate into how we treat our Christian brothers and sisters?

LOVE FOR GOD IS OBEDIENCE 5:1-4

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what exactly it looks like to love another. People have a whole range of different definitions about what it means to love. Looking at 5:1-4 what makes the Christian love different from the love of a non-Christian?

What are the commands of God and how do they shape the way in which we love others?

What are some of the things that we can do to ensure that we love others by obeying the commands of God?

STUDY 8: BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST 5:5-21

Can we describe belief in Jesus as a leap of faith?

THE TESTIMONY TO JESUS CHRIST 5:5-13

In verse 5 John speaks about conquering the world. This may seem like a strange idea considering the size of the world but in 1 John the world is humanity in opposition to God. How does believing in Jesus allow a person to share in his victory over the world? (Hint: He defeated the world on the cross)

In verses 6 and 7 John gives us the evidence for believing in Jesus as the Son of God. He refers to the Spirit. The Spirit works inside a person to convict them about the truth regarding Jesus. He refers to the water which is probably a reference to the baptising Jesus carried out. Finally, he refers to the blood which is a reference to the cross and the atonement he accomplished. How do these 3 testimonies work together to assure a person of their belief in Jesus?

These 3 pieces of evidence form the testimony of God. What happens to the person who rejects this testimony? What happens to the person who receives this testimony?

What are your thoughts about God's testimony? Are you confident of receiving eternal life?

PRAYER AND EXHORTATION 5:14-21

How can we have confidence in our prayers?

How can we know that we are praying according to God's will and not our own will?

In verses 16 to 18 John describes 2 different types of sin – those that bring death and those that don't. The death that is being talked about is spiritual death. The sin that leads to spiritual death is the same type of sin that is talked about in chapter 3. It is a rejection of Jesus that an unbeliever makes which means that there is no possibility for the forgiveness of their sins. Therefore, they do not receive the gift of eternal life and their sins lead to spiritual death. Sometimes this can create some anxiety about our own salvation. What assurance does John give in verse 18?

In verse 19 to 21 John finishes by affirming that we are in Jesus Christ. This is what it means to believe in Jesus Christ. How does this give you the confidence to know that you belong to God?