



# JOY

## COMPLETE

A Five Week Study Through  
The First Epistle of John







# HOW TO:

The guide is not intended to tell you what each week's passage means. Rather, it is a collection of notes and quotes intended to help you think deeper about the passage and guide your walk in the word. Prepare before weekly class by reading the passage repeatedly and reading through that week's notes and quotes. We want you to live First John for five weeks.

May you find... joy complete.

BY:  
BRANDON  
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FOR  
SOUTH SIDE  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH









#### PRIOR TO CLASS

**Read through all of First John at one time. It takes about half an hour.**

#### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

**Monday - Read the Text**

**Tuesday - Pray the Text**

**Wednesday - Read the Notes**

**Thursday - Rest Day**

**Friday - Journal the Text**

**Saturday - Walk the Text**

**Sunday - Bible Class**

#### SCHEDULE

**Week 1 - 1 John 1**

**Week 2 - 1 John 2**

**Week 3 - 1 John 3**

**Week 4 - 1 John 4**

**Week 5 - 1 John 5**









## Listen Slow

I think we read scripture to fast. We read it to historically quick because we can easily flip from page to page in our Bibles. It takes but a few turns of the finger to scroll from 586 BC (the destruction of the Temple) to AD 46 (the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15). This means we squish five hundred years of history into a five minute reading. In doing so we can often misunderstand the amount of time the authors of Scripture had to ponder, think, pray, and discern what to write and how to write it. Just as the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is often slow and methodical, so it can be with the inspiration of scripture as well. This is important in reading John's writings. Most scholars regard his writings to be some of the last writings in the NT, written toward the end of the first century AD. John was an apostle of Jesus. He was there beside Jesus for his ministry, death, and resurrection. Yet, there could be well over thirty years between John's first hand experience of Jesus and his writings. He has time to ponder, to wonder, to tell and to retell the story. Most of all, he has time to learn how to communicate to other people the absurd truth that he witnessed. With this in mind, read John slowly. Let his Spirit-breathed words fill you in a long, deep breath. John has something amazing to share and he has spent a long time thinking about how to share it with you.

## Overview and Summary

What is First John? Though we often regard it as a letter, there is actually no customary address to open it. Similarly, though the church historically has affirmed the apostle John as the author, he does not name himself in the letter. Still it reads like a letter and sounds like John. So why was it written? It seems best to understand this is a circular letter to a multitude of churches all in communication with one another. We might even think of it as a modern day "open letter." John says he has two reasons for writing. First, he writes "to make your joy complete." Second, he writes "to you so that you will not sin." Colin Kruse explains this well, "This letter, written to urge the readers not to be led astray by those who had seceded from the Christian community and to reassure them that they are in the truth, seeks to achieve its purpose by strengthening the readers' commitment to what they already know, that is, the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ which they heard from the beginning." John uses specific, important language to start the letter. John has not received the gospel of Jesus second hand. He hits nearly all the senses, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched" (1:1). The last phrase is literally that which we have grasped and grappled. For John, Jesus wasn't a concept or ethereal reality, he was a tangible, physical human being. John knew Jesus's touch, look, sound, and, even probably, smell. What John proclaims and testifies to us today is his first hand relationship with Jesus.

# FIRST JOHN 1

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete."  
*1 John 1:3-4*

Week 1

## NOTE & QUOTES



# JOHN & 1 JOHN

## CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PROLOGUES

"That which was from the beginning:" John 1:1 - 1 John 1:1  
 "Word" (Gk. *Logos*): John 1:1, 14 - 1 John 1:1  
 "Seen" (Gk. *Orao*): John 1:18 - 1 John 1:1, 2, 3  
 "Life" (Gk. *Zoe*): John 1:4 - 1 John 1:1, 2  
 "Witnessed" (Gk. *Martureo*): John 1:7, 8, 15 - 1 John 1:2  
 "With:" John 1:1, 2 "with God" - 1 John 1:2 "the Father"  
 "Light" (Gk. *phos*): John 1:4, 5, 7, 8, 9 - 1 John 1:5, 7  
 "Darkness" (Gk. *skotia*) - John 1:5 - 1 John 1:5

To understand First John is to understand the Gospel of John. They speak to and from one another. The Gospel gives John's account of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. The letter gives the values of Jesus lived out in community. The prologue (beginning) of 1 John intentionally mimics the prologue of John. Take some time to read John 1:1-18 and 1 John 1:1-5 together. What do you these two passages say to one another and to you today?

## Themes

The first chapter of First John lays out multiple themes that will be returned to and expounded upon throughout the rest of the letter. Within this chapter, John introduces two of the most prominent themes. First, God is light. This specific description of God is actually found nowhere else in Scripture. In the OT God is the giver of light who makes "his light shine on us" (Ps 118:27), and in the day of prophetic expectation "the Lord will be your everlasting light" (Is. 60:19) The fight between light as good and darkness as evil is prevalent throughout many religions and John uses this known imagery to describe God as more than just the bringer or teacher of light. Instead, God is the light itself. Second, John introduces life as a primary theme that he references thirteen times in the letter. John connects life with the Word (Gk. *Logos*). Life is preexistent and transcendent in God (1:2). John argues that life has been made known to us in Jesus. John has touched and felt life itself.

## Background

There is a close relationship between the Dead Sea Scrolls and John's writings. The DSS are a collection of Jewish writings from the Essene sect of Judaism that were discovered in a cave in Palestine in 1947. Besides a large collection of invaluable OT texts, the DSS also include writings from the community itself written between 50 BC- AD 100. These scrolls give helpful insight into the way Jewish contemporaries of Jesus thought about God and their religion. The Essenes were an independent sect of zealous followers focused on community purity, fellowship, and faithfulness. John appears to have been influenced in his writing and understanding of Jesus' teaching through the language of the Essene community. This can be seen in the many common themes between the Dead Sea Scrolls and John's writings including light, darkness, water, truth, God's way, love, Spirit, and the confession of sins.

## DEAD SEA SCROLLS

QUOTES FROM THE ESSENE MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE

"Anyone who refuses to enter the (ideal) society of God and persists in *walking in the stubbornness of his heart* shall not be admitted to this community of God's truth... *On paths of light he see but darkness...* For it is only through the spiritual apprehension of *God's truth* that man's was can be properly directed. Only thus can all his iniquities be shriven so that he can gaze upon the *true light of life*. Only through the *Holy Spirit* can he achieve union with God's truth and be purged of all his iniquities... And only thus can he really direct his steps to walk blamelessly... in the manner which *He has commanded*, without turning either to the right or to the left and without overstepping any of God's word."

T. H. GASTER,  
THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS IN  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION, 49-50

## QUOTABLE

Christian community is like the Christian's sanctification. It is a gift of God which we cannot claim. Only God knows the real state of our fellowship, of our sanctification. What may appear weak and trifling to us may be great and glorious to God. Just as the Christian should not be constantly feeling his spiritual pulse, so, too, the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be constantly taking its temperature. The more thankfully we daily receive what is given to us, the more surely and steadily will fellowship increase and grow from day to day as God pleases."

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER,  
LIFE TOGETHER.

## Key Words

1:3, 6, 7 - "fellowship" (Gk. *Koinonia*). Of the roughly twenty or uses of this word in the NT, four of them occur in the opening chapter of 1 John. It is a word that means the active participation of community or fellowship. There is a sense of active involvement with this word. In 1 John fellowship with God directly relates to fellowship with one another.

1:4 - "our" (Gk. *Emeis*). The different manuscripts of 1 John differ slightly on what word occurs here. Some manuscripts have "your" rather than "our." The quality of manuscripts on both sides are nearly equal. What seems to push towards "your" is that this might be a direct quote from John 16:24, which clearly reads that "your joy will be complete."

1:6, 8 - "truth" (Gk. *Alethia*). Truth is a prevalent theme in all of John's writings. In fact, Jesus declares himself as truth in John 14:6 and describes the Spirit's affiliation with truth many times (John 14:17; 15:26).



# Questions for Discussion or Reflection

# JOY

## COMPLETE

A Study Through the First Epistle of John

## Read First John 1:1-10

# TABLE TALK

Discussion  
Questions for  
Small Groups  
or the Dinner  
Table

**WHAT SIMILARITIES DO YOU SEE BETWEEN FIRST JOHN 1 & JOHN 1? WHAT DOES THE GOSPEL OF JOHN TEACH US ABOUT 1 JOHN?**

**WHY DO YOU THINK JOHN ACCENTUATES HIS FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE WITH JESUS TO START THIS LETTER?**

**HOW DOES JOHN DESCRIBE THE CIRCULAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIGHT, DARKNESS, FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, AND FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER?**

## Walking in the Light

John spent a long time learning and thinking about how to share the Gospel of Jesus. Have you done the same? Take some time to think about how you would describe the Good News of Jesus to someone else? What modern language and metaphors would you use? What key themes or ideas would you use?



JOY  
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## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.





## Overview and Summary

There were originally no chapters and verse numbers in First John. Chapter two continues the same flow of thought from the first chapter. In the previous chapter, John laid out life in the light defined by godliness. He continues to clarify that our status with God is dependent not upon our moral perfection but upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus (2:2). John starts his next thought with the phrase “my children” (2:3) and begins to clarify our union with Christ. He refers to this union as “knowing” God. How do we know that we know God? John says, “by keeping his commandments.” It seems likely that John is pointing back to his account of the Gospel where Jesus in his final meal with his disciples says, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another” (John 13:34). John will return to love, but first he wants to clarify what it means to know God. In section 2:3-11, John lays out three claims to knowledge of God. Each starts with the phrase “whoever says, ‘I know him’” (2:4, 6, 9). John moves into the next section by affirming each group of people within the community (2:12-14) and offering a warning against loving the world (2:15-17). His next thought begins again with the phrase “children” (2:18). In this section, he directly addresses his primary reason for writing, “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray” (2:26). These he refers to as the anti-Christ or liars. To remain in God means remaining in the teaching that was from the beginning. He closes this argument again referring to “children” and urging them to continue in God (2:28).

## Ways of the World

After encouraging the church to continue knowing God and applauding them for remaining, John moves into a very brief section on not loving the world (2:15-16). In different times throughout church history this text has often been used to promote a no frills and no fun version of Christianity. By attaching this text to a dualistic view of “the world” the church can easily fall into asceticism, which is a practice of severe self-discipline that avoids all pleasures in pursuit of spiritual goals. In the early church this often looked like maiming the physical body in pursuit of some spiritual high. In the church today, this often looks like the self-righteous creation of certain acceptable and unacceptable behaviors determined not by God’s holiness revealed in Christ but by church norms. I’ll give an example. A few years ago a young woman came to me wanting to marry another young Christian man but was afraid to because that young man caused “lust of the flesh/eyes” in her. She chose not to marry him for fear that she would lust after her spouse. Yet, God made the world and the young man she loved. To desire our spouse is Godly and biblical. Indeed, John uses the phrase “the world” in 1 John 2:15-16 to describe the dark, unquenchable forces that wage war against the light within us and try to keep us from doing God’s will not the good desires of the world he created and loves.

# FIRST JOHN 2

“Now, dear children  
 continue in him, so that  
 when he appears we  
 may be confident and  
 unashamed before him  
 at this coming. If you  
 know that he is  
 righteous, you know  
 that everyone who does  
 what is right has been  
 born of him.”  
 1 John 2:28-29

Week 2

NOTE &  
QUOTES



# KNOWING GOD

JOHN'S LANGUAGE FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

## DWELL WITH JESUS

Gk. *meno* - "Abide," "Remain"  
1 John 2:6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27, 28;  
3:6, 9, 14, 15, 17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16.  
"Remain in me, as I also remain in you,"  
Jesus speaking in John 14:4.

## KNOW GOD

### BELIEVE IN JESUS

Gk. *pisteuo* - "have faith,"  
1 John 3:23; 5:1, 5, 10, 13,  
"Blessed are those who have  
not seen and yet have believed"  
John 20:29.

### LOVE LIKE JESUS

Gk. *agape* - "love"  
1 John 2:5, 15; 3:1, 16-17 4:7-18,  
"A new commandment I give to  
you, 'love one another as I have  
love you'" John 13:34.

## The Anti-Christ

Much ink and many words have been spilled concerning the "antichrists," and often these opinions have far exceeded the actual biblical teaching. Staying within the boundaries of the John's letters, the only place this title exists, we can determine four things. First, the word "antichrist" is the transliteration of the Greek word "antichristos." We must remember that Christ was not Jesus's last name, but his title. It means "anointed one." Jesus is the king anointed by God. In their Greek Vocabulary, Moulton and Milligan have shown that adding "anti" to a title can either be to claim to be that person or to be opposed to that person. The antichrist is simply the one opposed to God's anointed. Second, there appears to be two related concepts of the antichrist. There is the antichrist that is coming in the final hour and the many antichrists that have already appeared. John is primarily focused on the later. Third, these antichrists have left the community of the believers in which the apostle John remains. These appear to be John's opponents and the very reason that he is writing this letter. Fourth, an antichrist is a person who claims to know God, but "denies that Jesus is the Christ" (2:22-23). These people are intentionally trying to lead the scattered Christian communities astray by teaching that Jesus was not in fact the Christ. Fifth, these antichrists have no power or coercion that can overcome the anointing that has been received by those who remain in God. In fact John makes this very clear, "you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth" (2:20).

## THE LAST HOUR

"In calling it 'the last hour' rather than 'the last day,' he may wish to connect the present and crucial moment of Community life with the hour of Jesus' victory. This hour is the final manifestation of the victory won in that hour."

Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 332.

## Themes: "Knowing God"

John uses the phrase "to know" (Gk. *ginosko*) twenty-five times in his letter. This is more than any other NT letter despite the fact that First John is significantly shorter than many of the other letters. In just chapter two, John uses the word nine times. At the foundational level of fellowship with God is the knowledge of God. This is more than just head knowledge. This is relational knowledge. This is the same word used often in the NT to describe sexual intimacy (Lk 1:34) or the knowledge given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2). It might be helpful to think of "knowing" in John's writing much like "faith" in Paul's writing. Just as faith in God for Paul is primary to Christian life, so knowing God is primary to Christian life for John. In both cases, Jesus is the ultimate human who completes fully both faith in God and knowing God. Jesus reveals perfect faith and the knowledge of God. Indeed, John points out "this is how we *know* we are in him:" we "live as Jesus did" (2:5-6).

## QUOTABLE

### Who are the "Anti-Christ's?"

"The word for 'anointing' [christ] is, in the Greek, the same root word as 'Messiah'. 'The Messiah', after all, is the anointed one, God's anointed king, his one and only son. We should, therefore, perhaps think of it like this. Here are the 'Anti Messiah people (the 'anti-anointed-one' people); but you have been 'Messiah-ed', you have been 'anointed', so you must not be deceived by their denials. They are not only denying that Jesus is the Messiah; they are denying everything that makes you, now, who you truly are. This is the lie that will, if given its head, eat its way like rust into the imagination and heart of a Christian, or a church."

N.T. WRIGHT, *THE EARLY CHRISTIAN LETTERS FOR EVERYONE*, 140.

## Key Words

2:1, 12, 29- "little children" (Gk. *teknion*). Of the nine occurrences of this precise word in the NT, seven of them occur in 1 John and another is used by Jesus in John 13. It is a word closely related to the word for child in the NT. This word of endearment is used to describe not only the audience, but the relationship between the author and recipients. He thinks of them as his loved children in the faith. See also 1 John 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21.

2:18 - "last hour" (Gk. *eskate ora*). This is one of John's favorite phrases that occurs throughout the Gospel. Jesus continually waits for his "hour" until it is finally revealed in the crucifixion and resurrection. This word refers to a specific period of time that contains a larger meaning. In this case it is the "last hour," a phrase used only here in all of Scripture. Scholars differ in their understanding of this passage, but it seems best to understand that John believes something immanent is happening. He believes he is living in the final times.



# Questions for Discussion or Reflection

# JOY

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A Study Through the First Epistle of John

## Read First John 2:1-29

# TABLE TALK

Discussion  
Questions for  
Small Groups  
or the Dinner  
Table

**WHY ARE LOVE AND HATE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE ACCORDING TO JOHN? HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT THEN WHAT THE "WORLD" TEACHES?**

**WHAT ARE THE DEFINING QUALITIES OF WORLDLINESS AND HOW DO THESE DIFFER FROM THE QUALITIES OF GOD'S WILL?**

**WHO ARE THE "ANTI-CHRISTS?" WHAT ROLE DOES "ANOINTING" HAVE IN OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE? WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS ANOINTING?**

## Walking in the Light

John lays out three broad categories of people to whom he is specifically writing in 1 John 1:12-14. Read again through that section of the passage. Notice how encouraging and uplifting his affirmation for each of them is. Practice this same task this week. Write three notes of encouragement and affirmation. First, write to a "dear child," which probably refers to any believer. Then to a young person in the faith. Finally, write to one of the more mature believers in the church.



JOY  
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## Love Does

One of my all time favorite quotes comes from Forest Gump. Forest struggles with learning disabilities that cause him to be routinely bullied. In response his mother teaches him the simple proverb "stupid is as stupid does" to respond to those being mean to him. What this phrase means is that a person's virtue is not determined by their innate intelligence but is reflected in their actions. As a father this phrase has quickly become one of my favorite parenting tools. We never use it on others. It is only self-descriptive but I'm hoping to teach my children that their actions reflect their virtue. As I've been reading through 1 John, I've noticed this same language everywhere but with a different quality attached. 1 John 3:18 teaches, "we do not love in word or tongue but in action and truth." Rather than "stupid is as stupid does" John teaches "love is as love does." I think this is an important teaching for our day. Out of genuine concern of being accepting and kind to each person, the world around us has divorced a person's virtue from their action's. Thus, a person who routinely acts unkind and harmful can still be a "good guy deep down." Yet, scripture routinely teaches that virtue is displayed in action. In fact the greatest display of the greatest virtue of all time was displayed by Jesus. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (3:16). Love is as love does.

## Overview and Summary

John does a wonderful job of transitioning from thought to thought seamlessly throughout this work. This is seen both entering and exiting chapter three. Entering chapter three in 2:28-3:1 John transitions from the plight of sin in chapter two into the blessings of God's family in chapter three by acknowledging the confidence we have before God. We have this confidence because we have been born of God as his children. John then spends the next few paragraphs talking about the defining qualities of God's children:

1. God's children will be like the resurrected Jesus (3:2-3).
2. God's children are righteous because of Jesus (3:4-10).
3. God's children love like Jesus (3:11-18).
4. God's children keep God's commands and live in God with Jesus (3:19-24).

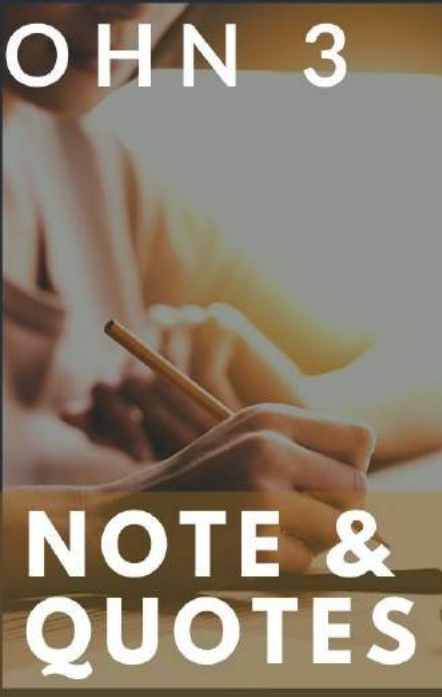
Finally, John exits the chapter by once again pointing to the confidence that believers have in their identity in God. "This is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us." John will continue in chapter four with the important role of the Spirit. The triune nature of John's witness is evident in these two chapters. In chapter three, all of the Christian's being and nature is found in the resurrected ontology of Jesus. In the same way in chapter four, the Spirit of Truth ushers and aids the Christian to live out of their redefined nature. John summarizes the whole of this Godly life with two commands: "believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us" (3:23).

# FIRST JOHN 3

"This is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them."  
1 John 3:23-24

**NOTE & QUOTES**

Week 3





THIS IS HOW WE KNOW WHAT LOVE IS: JESUS CHRIST LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US."

"Love" Gk. *Agape* (noun):

- 2:5, 15
- 3:1, 16, 17
- 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16 (3), 17, 18 (3)
- 5:3

"To Love" Gk. *Agapeo* (verb):

- 2:10; 15 (2)
- 3:10, 11, 14 (2), 18; 23
- 4:7 (2), 8, 10 (2), 11 (2), 12, 19 (2) 20 (3), 21 (2)
- 5:1 (2), 2 (2)



# LOVE IN 1 JOHN

## Anomia & Amartia

John uses two different words for "sin" in 1 John 3:4. The two words are *amartia*, which is the standard word for "sin" and *anomia*, which literally means "breaking the law." The word *anomia* developed in Jewish writings and by the NT has end time, apocalyptic connotations affiliated with the final supreme rebellion (see 2 Thess 2:3-7). In fact, the scholar Collin Kruse points out that nowhere in the NT does *anomia* actually refer to breaking the law. Thus, John is making a theological point when he writes in 3:4, "Everyone who sins (*amartia*) commits ultimate rebellion (*anomia*); in fact, sin (*amartia*) is ultimate rebellion (*anomia*)." The point though, as John continues, is that Jesus "appeared so that he might take away our sins (*amartia*). And in him is no sin (*amartia*). No one who lives in him keeps on sinning (*amartia*)." Though all *amartia* is *anomia*, Jesus has taken away all sin, whether *amartia* or *anomia* for those who remain in Christ.

## Themes: "Love"

1 John 3:1 begins, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God." This beautiful passage, that every Christian should have memorized, reveals John's heart, and, more deeply, God's heart. Love is a primary theme in all of John's writings. As will be discussed further in next weeks notes, it is important to allow God rather than our culture to define love. For the time being, three points on love in 1 John 3 are worth exploring. First, in this passage, John is actually describing love. "What great" is better translated "what kind." John is pointing out that God not only lavishes love upon us, but, in doing so, he describe what true love is. Second, this love is demonstrated in the familial relationships of parents and children. Being called a child of God is an act of God's fatherly love. Third, in 3:18, John teaches that real love isn't about lofty language or blustery word, but about truth and action. Love is active and full of integrity. Love is sincere, and, at times, costly.

## SIN & THE SEED

"All this suggests that when the author of 1 John says, "sin is *anomia* (3:4) he does not mean sin is the violation of the Mosaic law (the word *nomos* does not even appear in 1 John). Rather he is saying that human sin is *anomia* when it involves opposition to and rebellion against God, and so is similar to the opposition and rebellion of Satan. If this is the case, then is the author really saying that those who claim to have seen God and know God, yet persist in sin, certainly do not know God, and are in fact in league with Satan. If we recognise the connection between sin and *anomia* (rebellion) in 3:4-10, we can say that the sin which distinguishes the children of the devil is sin which has its roots in *anomia*, i.e., rebellion against God. It is this sin that believers cannot commit because God's "seed" remains in them. The children of God do sometimes commit sins (2:1), but the one thing they do not do is commit *anomia*, the sin of rebellion, the sin of the devil."

COLLIN KRUSE  
"SIN AND PERFECTION IN 1 JOHN"  
AUSTRALIAN BIBLICAL REVIEW 51 (2003): 70

## "WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS"

BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCE

THIS PHRASE IS FOUND NO WHERE ELSE IN THE BIBLE. HERE ARE A FEW RELATED PASSAGES FROM SCRIPTURE AND OTHER JEWISH SOURCES:

REVELATION 22:4 - "THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE."

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12 - "THEN WE SHALL SEE FACE TO FACE,"  
2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 - "WE ALL, WHO WITH UNVEILED FACES REFLECT THE LORD'S GLORY."

ON ABRAHAM (PHILO, C. 1ST CENT.) "THE SIGHT OF THE SOUL WHICH IS EXERCISED, THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF ITS DOMINANT PART EXCEL ALL OTHER POWERS OF THE SOUL, AS MUCH AS THE POWERS OF THE SOUL EXCEL ALL OTHER POWERS; AND THIS IS PRUDENCE, WHICH IS THE SIGHT OF THE MIND."

MIDRASH ON PSALM 149, "WHEN THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SEE GOD IN THE WORLD-TO-COME, THEY WILL BECOME SAINTS"

## Key Words

3:3- "hope" (Gk. *elpida*). Interestingly enough, this is the only usage of the word "hope" in all of John's writings. John uses this term here as he reflects upon the Christians new life awaiting them in Christ, which is similar to the way Peter (1 Pet 1:3, 21), Paul (Eph 1:18) and the author of Hebrews (3:16) all use this term.

3:17 - "material possessions" (Gk. *Boiv tou kosmou*). Literally, this phrase means "goods of the world." The connection with "world" here and in 3:13, 2:15-17, 4:1-9, and 5:4-5 should not be overlooked.

3:17 - "no pity" (Gk. *kleise ta splanchna*). Literally, "shut up his bowels of compassion." The word for compassion is the same that is used for bowels (same word in Acts 1:18). The phrase here carries the idea of a person shutting off their ability to feel compassion or pity for another person.



# Questions for Discussion or Reflection

# JOY COMPLETE

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## Read First John 3:1-24

# TABLE TALK

Discussion  
Questions for  
Small Groups  
or the Dinner  
Table

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD?  
HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE WHOLE STORY  
OF SCRIPTURE? WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT OUR  
STATUS BEFORE GOD?**

**WHAT IS SIN AND WHY IS IT SO DESTRUCTIVE?**

**WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR  
NATURE AS CHRISTIANS AND THE RESURRECTED  
JESUS? WHY IS KNOWING JESUS SO IMPORTANT  
FOR KNOWING OURSELVES?**

## Walking in the Light

This week's walk involves simplicity. So often we overly complicate the Christian life. John says that we have confidence before God to receive what we ask if we keep his commands and do what pleases him. He continues to explain that his command is simply to believe in the name of Jesus, God's son and to love one another. Simplify your walk this week by practicing these three things: Pray. Believe. Love. What is one thing you can do to express each of these?



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## Security Questions

Cyber security has become crucial. I was reminded of that this week when I was setting our car payment up on automatic withdrawal payments. Before I could set it up I had to open my online account with the loan company. I filled out the username and, after five attempts, the password was finally acceptable to the robots. I thought it was smooth sailing from there but the next page became even more difficult. They asked me to answer three verifying questions from a list of about twenty. The questions ranged from "what was your high school Mascot?" to "what was the middle name of the officiant at your grandparents wedding?" I'm being facetious of course but anyone who has gone through the process knows what I mean! They wanted specific questions that only I could answer to verify whether I was who I said I was. First John four starts with a similar idea. False prophets have gone out claiming to have the Holy Spirit. John warns the church to verify if these prophets are really from God. He offers two verifying questions: 1. Do the teachers profess that Jesus is the Messiah, God made flesh? 2. Do they love one another in the way God loves us? That's it. What verifies a person's faith? John provides a simple verification process. My brothers and sisters are those who declare Jesus is the Son of God who came in the flesh and those who love one another like God loves us. In word and deed.

## Overview and Summary

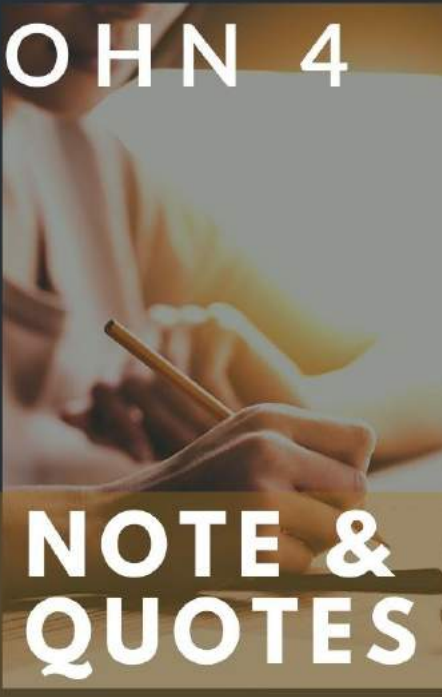
It would be easy in the midst of this incredible description of the Christian faith found in 1 John 4, to forget that John is writing to specifically address and counter the false teachers that are spreading a false Gospel. Thus, chapter four begins with an imperative to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (4:1). The character of the Spirit of God is in anyone who declares that Jesus has come in the flesh. In countering these false teachers, we might expect harsh and convicting language, and surely some is found in 1 John 4. Yet, for the most part John adopts a different approach. As the old saying goes, "you catch more flies with honey than vinegar." Instead, John invites his readers into the divine community saturated in self-giving love as purely expressed in God giving over his only Son on behalf of the world. This is a community where "perfect love drives out fear" and the fear of punishment has long since been forgotten (4:18). This is a community in which a person is invited to not only know about God but to know God himself. "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (4:7). This is a community where the invitation is not to weekly attendance at a building but to Spirit enabled eternal life in God. Hate has no place in this community. Instead, the love that God has initiated brims over and soaks every relationship, conversation, and interaction. No human spirit or effort could ever establish and hold together such a community, but "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God." (4:18).

# FIRST JOHN 4

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and GOD in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement: In this world we are like Jesus."  
1 John 4:16-17

**NOTE & QUOTES**

Week 4





# QUOTABLE

"Abruptly First John returns to the theme of love for one another. 'God is love,' he tells us, i.e., love characterizes his dealings with us. (The God of the OT and of the NT is a God who has made himself known by *acting* in history. If we ask what this God is, the answer comes back in terms of what he does.) With love he has sent his Son, not a love corresponding to love on our part, but an entirely gratuitous love - a love for sinners. This concept of God's love, embodied in Jesus' self-giving, is the unique possession of Christianity, the greatest proof of its truth. The only requirement attached to this gift of love is that of sharing it with others. The love for others brings us as close as we can come on earth to union with the God we cannot see."

RAYMOND E. BROWN,  
THE GOSPEL AND EPISTLES OF JOHN, 118.

## Judging Love and Truth

John teaches clearly in 4:1, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." The word used here for "test" is *dokimazo*. It means to critically examine or put to the test. A core task of the Christian is to determine right from wrong. In this case it is in determining false prophets from real prophets. The OT gives a procedure for testing whether a prophet was from God in Deut 13:2-6 and 18:15-22. The two tests laid out are whether what the prophet predicted came true and whether they advocated idolatry. A prophet might make accurate predictions or perform signs, but if they advocate idolatry they are still a false prophet. Likewise, Paul teaches in 1 Cor 12:3 to test a charismatic gift not by expression of the gift but by profession of Jesus as Lord. For John, the test is profession of Christ as Lord *and actively loving one another*. As John Stott says, "Neither Christian believing nor Christian loving is to be indiscriminate." <sup>156</sup>

## IN CHURCH HISTORY

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

The first major controversy in Church history was over the divinity of Christ, an issue already seen in 1 John. Many different heretical positions would come forward over the next centuries denying the reality of the incarnation of Jesus before the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 formalized the standard teaching of Jesus as the fully human and divine son of God. Some of the heretical opinions included:

- Arianism, led by Arius (c. 256-336) - This was the primary position opposed to the orthodox position and it proposed that Christ was not "eternally begotten" but came to exist in the his birth of Mary.
- Docetism, from the Gk. word *dokein*, meaning "to see" (c. 2nd-3rd cent.) - This position argued that Jesus only appeared to be human, but that this human form was only an illusion.
- Adoptionism (c. 2nd cent.) - This position argues that Jesus was a righteous and wise man filled with the Holy Spirit who was then adopted as God's son either at his birth, baptism, or resurrection.
- Nestorianism, led by Nestorius (c. 386-450) - This position held that Jesus was actually two natures (divine and human) held together.

**"If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God."**

## Themes: "Love"

Tom Wright describes the importance of love in 1 John 4 well, "The word 'love,' or some form of it, occurs no fewer than twenty-seven times in these fifteen verses. No need to ask, then what the subject-matter is here. In fact, we seem to be at the very heart of the letter. This is what John most wants to say. Everything that has gone before leads up to this; everything that follows, in the final chapter, solidifies it and rounds it off." <sup>158</sup>. Indeed, the way John seeks to counter the false-teachers is not with a battle of wits but a demonstration of action. He clearly teaches at least five things about love in these verses. First, love is initiated by God (4:7, 10, 18). Second, true love is defined in the activity of God giving over his son as an atoning sacrifice (4:9, 10). Third, love is active and demonstrative (4:9, 20-21). Fourth, love is mature in confidence and fearlessness before God and in the world (4:13-18). Fifth, to live in God is to love. They are inseparable because God is love (4:16b).

## PERFECT IN 1 JOHN

THE WORD GROUP BUILT OFF OF GK. *TELEI* IS ONE OF THE MOST WONDERFUL IN SCRIPTURE. THOUGH OFTEN TRANSLATED "PERFECT" IT DOESN'T MEAN FLAWLESS BUT WHOLE OR MATURE.

"To Perfect, Complete, Finish, or Mature,"

Gk. *Teleiow* (verb):

- 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17, 18.
- See also 2 Cor. 12:9; Heb 2:10; 5:9, 10:1; 12:23

"Perfect, Complete, Mature,"

Gk. *teleios* (verb):

- 1 John 4:18, "Perfect love"
- See also Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6; 13:10; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; Heb. 5:14

**"THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE. BUT MATURE LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR."**

## Key Words

4:9 - "one and only" (Gk. *monogens*). Scholars argue whether this word means simple "only begotten" or "one and only." Kruse argues well that if you look at all the uses in the NT of this word it always refers to the only child. He concludes, "the stress is not on the fact that the person was begotten... but on the fact that the father or mother had only one child, and that child was the one who was so sadly affect." <sup>Kindle Edition, 3022.</sup>

4:10 - "atoning sacrifice" (Gk. *ilasmos*). Literally, "propitiation." This word, only used here and 2:2 in all the NT, has traditionally been translated with the useful and accurate word "propitiation." Yet, propitiation is such an uncommon and widely unknown word, that many modern translations have switched to something like "atoning sacrifice."

4:17 - "confidence" (Gk. *parresia*). An underappreciated theme in 1 John is the confidence that a Christian has before God as found here and in 2:28; 3:21; and 5:14.



## Read First John 4:1-21

# TABLE TALK

Discussion  
Questions for  
Small Groups  
or the Dinner  
Table

**ACCORDING TO THIS CHAPTER, HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN VERIFY IF A PROPHET OR TEACHER HAS THE SPIRIT OF GOD? WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR US AS CHRISTIANS TODAY?**

**ACCORDING TO FIRST JOHN, WHAT IS LOVE?**  
"BABY DON'T HURT ME, DON'T HURT ME, NO MORE."

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT "PERFECT LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR?" WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOVE AND FEAR IN OUR SPIRITUAL FORMATION?**

## Walking in the Light

Love is the activity of the Kingdom of God. In fact, God is love. To walk with God is to walk in love. In contrast, "whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sisters, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen" (4:20). This week's practice is for reconciliation. Who in your life is a brother or sister in Christ that you need to reconcile with or to apologize too? Hate and love cannot co-exist for the Godly. If you have a bitter, spite filled heart towards someone this week, work to heal that in whatever way possible.



JOY  
COMPLETE

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## Love Does

In many years of ministry and having spent an entire lifetime in the church as a PK prior to ministry, there is one foundational flaw I routinely see in our churches across this country. We do not genuinely believe that God is at work and will be at work in this world. Now don't get me wrong, we say we do. We attribute good things to the cause of God. We believe he redeemed the world and sometimes we profess that he put a few nice coincidences into a specific order so that something good would happen to us. Yet, foundationally for many of us, petitioning God's active work is a last ditch effort or something we do to transition from song to sermon in our services. Even in our teaching and preaching, we spend little time dwelling in passages like 1 John 5:14-15. Take a moment now to really reflect on the world altering magnitude of what this passage says. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him." According to his will does not refer to asking only for what God has already decided he was going to do. Why would prayer matter in that case? Rather, it means asking in accordance with the nature of God. God cannot disown himself. We are reassured, "whatever we ask." Do we believe that? What do you we to ask?

## Overview and Summary

Again in the final chapter, John uses the purpose statement, "I write these things to you" (5:13). This is the final time John describes his purpose for writing with this specific wording. In concluding this study through John it is helpful to reflect a final time on all of John's purpose statements:

1:4 - *"We write this to make our joy complete."*

2:1 - *"I write this to you so that you will not sin."*

2:7-8 - *"I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you..."*

2:12-14 - *"I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."*

2:21 - *"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."*

2:26 - *"I write these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray."*

5:13 - *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."*

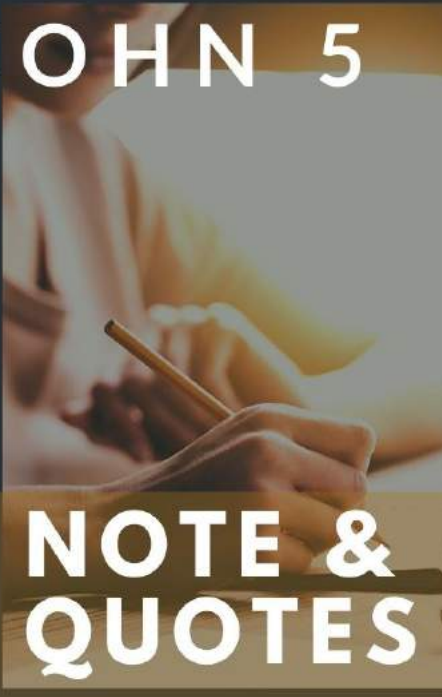
John's purpose seems evident just in reflecting on these passages. John's writes so that his joy may be complete when children in the faith stay away from the sin of denying of Jesus, love one another, and have confidence in their eternal life with God.

# FIRST JOHN 5

*"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."*  
*1 John 5:10*

Week 5

## NOTE & QUOTES





# JOHN & 1 JOHN

## THEMES IN CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO

To understand First John is to understand the Gospel of John. They speak to and from one another. The Gospel gives John's account of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. The letter gives the values of Jesus lived out in community. Notice the connections just in 1 John 5.

**Life in the Son** - 1 Jn 5:11-12; Jn 1:1-4; 3:36; 6:27-68; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:1-3; 20:31

**Overcome the World** - 1 Jn 5:3-5; Jn 16:31-33

**Testify/Witness** - 1 Jn 5:6-11; Jn 1:7; 3:11, 31-33; 5:32-36; 8:13-17; 19:35; 21:24

**Believe in the Son** - 1 Jn 5:1, 5, 10-12; Jn 3:15-18; 6:29-69; 14:1; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29-31

**Confidence** - 1 Jn 5:14; Jn 7:4, 13, 26; 10:24, 11:54; 16:25-29; 18:20

**Born of God** - 1 Jn 5:1, 4, 18; Jn 1:13; 3:1-8;

## Themes: Eternal Life

First John begins and ends with the theme "eternal life." He writes in 1:2, "We proclaim to you the eternal life," and, in 5:20, "This is the true God and eternal life." Three major things can be learned about eternal life through John's writings. First, eternal life is derived from God. 1 John 5:11 reads, "God has given us eternal life." It should be of no surprise to the Christian that God is the source of all life, but it is helpful reminder that God also designed life as eternal based upon his own eternal being. Second, Jesus is eternal life as God is eternal life. John demonstrates this both in the prologue of his Gospel (1:1-18) and in the prologue of First John (1:1-4). Third, it is vital to know that Jesus is not only eternal, but that also he is eternal life revealed and bestowed to us through being born of God. In his incarnation and resurrection, he brings humanity into eternal life allowing us a place as well. "This life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life" (5:12).

## Water & Blood

John writes in affirmation of Jesus, "This is the one who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood." The key to understanding this appears to be with the phrase "he did not come by water only." As Kruse writes, "This text indicates two things: What was not in dispute (Jesus came 'by water'), and what was in dispute (Jesus came 'by water and blood')." <sup>Kruse, 3273</sup>. The phrase "by water" is used in John's Gospel only in reference to the activity of John the Baptist (John 1:26, 31, 33). These passages appear to be linguistically tied as John the Baptist specifically refers to himself as the one only baptizing with water so that the one coming to "take away the sins of the world" (1:29) would be revealed. Thus, in the same way that Jesus came baptizing "by water," he also came to baptize by blood in his own crucifixion. The Spirit then appears both in 1 John 5 as the third witness and in John 1:32-34.

## CAN I GET A WITNESS?

THERE ARE THREE THAT TESTIFY:



### THE SPIRIT

Gk. *pneuma*

1 John 4:1-6, 13; 5:6-8  
John 1:32-33; 3:5-8;  
14:17; 15:26; 16:13;  
19:30; 20:22



### THE WATER

Gk. *udor*

1 John 5:6-8  
John 1:26-31; 3:5; 4:7-15;  
5:4-7; 7:38; 13:5;  
19:34



### THE BLOOD

Gk. *aima*

1 John 1:7; 5:6-8  
John 1:13; 6:53-56;  
19:34

## QUOTABLE

"Ultimately, each individual must bear his or her own burden (individual responsibility; Gal 6:5). Each must confess sin, repent, and believe the gospel for himself or herself (cf. 1 John 1:5-2:2). Yet, Christians who acknowledge John's authority would do well to heed his call to intercession. We can be confident that it is God's will that we intercede for a brother or sister who falls into sin and that our intercessions will avail. If our intercessions do not ultimately avail, we will know after the fact that this person has committed sin that leads to eternal death (1 John 5:16b) and that he or she was never really part of the true Christian community (1 John 2:19)."

RANDAL J. K. TAN

"SHOULD WE PRAY FOR STRAYING BRETHREN?"  
JOHN'S CONFIDENCE IN 1 JOHN 5:16-17"  
JETS, 45 NO 4 (DEC 2002), 608-9.

## Key Words

5:4 - "faith" (Gk. *pistis*). Interestingly enough, this is the only occurrence of the noun form of faith in all of John's writings. John primarily uses the verbal form of this word, *pisteuo*, which is often translated "believe." In doing so, he drives an active and engaged faith. Yet, in this verse he points to faith as something possessed by those who have been born of God and overcome the world.

5:7 - "there are three that testify." The KJV includes the phrase "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This phrase does not exist in a single reliable manuscript before the fourth century. Thus, it is excluded by all modern translations. It was most likely a scribal addition of commentary added and the recopied through the ages.

5:20 - "understanding" (Gk. *dianoia*). Literally, "through the mind." This is a word that refers not to emotion but to cognitive thinking and imagination. Same word used in Eph 1:19; 2:3; 1 Pet 1:13; et al.



## Read First John 5:1-21

# TABLE TALK

Discussion  
Questions for  
Small Groups  
or the Dinner  
Table

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD?  
HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE WHOLE STORY  
OF SCRIPTURE? WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT OUR  
STATUS BEFORE GOD?**

**WHAT IS SIN AND WHY IS IT SO DESTRUCTIVE?**

**WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR  
NATURE AS CHRISTIANS AND THE RESURRECTED  
JESUS? WHY IS KNOWING JESUS SO IMPORTANT  
FOR KNOWING OURSELVES?**

## Walking in the Light

John ends with one of my all time favorite endings of any book of the Bible. There is no farewell or closing thoughts. Just a poignant left hook, “Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.” This is the only time John even uses the word “idols” in the entire work, but it seems to be a hard farewell. It reverberates to us today. Keep away from idols. An idol is anything that a person worships in place of God. What are the idols in your life that need to be reassessed? Maybe it’s been sports? Or money? Or safety? Or, even, your spouse or children? Confront these idols in your life this week.



JOY  
COMPLETE

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