

Lesson 25

The Books of 1, 2, 3, John

Key Verse 1 John 2:8 “Yet I am writing you a new command what is true in Him, and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.”

Introduction

John’s first letter addresses a setting in which some people in the local church had departed the fellowship because their doctrine, ethics, devotion or some combination of these conflicted with those of the church. First John maps out the three main components of saving knowledge of God: (1) faith in Jesus Christ, (2) obedient response to God’s command, and (3) love for God and for others from the heart.

Being loved is the most powerful motivation in the world! We usually love others as we have been loved. John expressed his relationship to the Son of God by calling himself “the disciple Jesus loved” (John 21:20). Jesus knew John fully and loved him fully. He gave John and his brother, James the nickname “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17), perhaps from an occasion when the brothers asked Jesus for permission to call down “fire from heaven” on a village that had refused to welcome Jesus and his disciples (Luke 9:54). In John’s Gospel and letters we see the great God of love, while the thunder of God’s justice bursts from the pages of Revelation. Jesus confronts each of us, as He confronted John. We cannot know the depth of Jesus’ love until we are ready to face the fact that He knows us completely. Otherwise we are fooled into believing He must love the people we pretend to be, not the sinners we actually are. His love is not given in exchange for our efforts: His love frees us to really live. Have you accepted that love?

Who is this Jesus? “A good man...yes...perhaps one of the best who ever lived...but just a man”, say many. Others disagree, claiming he suffered from delusions of grandeur – a “Messiah complex”. And the argument rages over the true identity of this man called Jesus. Suggestions have ranged from “simple teacher” to “egomaniac” and “misguided fool”. Whoever He was, all would agree that Jesus left his mark on history. Hearing these discussions, even Christians can begin to wonder and doubt. Is Jesus really God? Did He come to save sinners like us? Does God care about me?

First John was written to dispel doubts by presenting a clear picture of Christ. “That you may know”, did you count how many times that phrase was used? Entering history, Jesus was and is God in the flesh and God in focus - seen, heard and touched by the author of this letter, John the Apostle. John walked and talked with Jesus, saw Him heal, heard Him teach, watched Him die, met Him arisen, and saw Him ascend into heaven. John knew God because he had lived with Him and seen Him work. And John enjoyed fellowship with Him all the days of his life.

I John is a book of contrasts. One of the distinct features of John’s writing style was his habit of noting both sides of a conflict. He wrote to show the difference between real Christianity and anything else. Finish the contrast in the table below:

<u>Light and</u>	<u>John I:5</u>
<u>The new commandment and</u>	<u>I John 2:7-8</u>
<u>Loving the Father and</u>	<u>I John 2:15-16</u>
<u>Christ and</u>	<u>I John 2: 18,22</u>
<u>Truth and</u>	<u>I John 2:20-21</u>
<u>Children of God and</u>	<u>I John 3: 1-10</u>

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Eternal life and	1 John 3:14
Love and	1 John 3:15-16
True Prophecy and	1 John 4:1-3
Love and	1 John 4:18-19
Having life and	1 John 5:11-12

DAY ONE: READ 1 JOHN 1: 1-10

PRAYER FOCUS: Pray that God will reveal His light, His love and His truth so that you may know the source of your joy in Him.

1. John 1:1. John affirmed that Jesus was from the beginning. How did John give us an eye witness account?

- a. What we have _____
- b. What we have _____ with our eyes
- c. What we have _____
- d. And have _____ with our hands

2. The Son, the second person of the Trinity has always existed alongside the Father.

1 John 1:2, Matthew 16:17. Who revealed Jesus Christ? _____

3. 1 John 1:3, Philippians 3:10, Matthew 11:27. John was faithful to pass on to his readers what he as an Apostle had received. What was the reason for passing this on?

4. 1 John 1:4, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Philippians 1:4. How can your joy be complete?

5. 1 John 1:5, Gospel of John 12:46. What message does John say he has heard and is declaring? What does John say God is and what God is not?

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6. I John 1:6, John 8:12. Why can we not have fellowship with Him if we walk in darkness? _____ What is your definition of darkness? _____
What is God’s definition of darkness? _____

Since God is Light and there is no darkness in Him (vs 5) to claim to be without sin is to claim to be on par with God. Isaiah 45:18 “For this is what God says-----God is the creator of the heavens. He formed the earth and made it. He established it. He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited – I am God and there is no other”. If His word is not in us, the saving message of Christ has not taken root. There may be head knowledge of Christ, but the heart has not been transformed. Has your heart been transformed by the blood of Christ?

DAY TWO: Read 1 John 2

PRAYER FOCUS: Father, we praise you for the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ and for making Him our mediator at Your right hand. Amen!

7. 1 John 2:1. Why does John say he is writing to his “dear children”? _____

8. I John 2:2, I John 4:10. PROPITIATION is a big word. What does it mean? _____

Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is our defense attorney. He can stand before God as our mediator because his death satisfied the wrath of God against sin and paid the death penalty for our sin. Christ both satisfies God’s requirement and removes our sin. In Him, we are forgiven and purified.

9. I John 2:12-14. John is writing to three different age groups. What are those age groups? What reason does he give to each group? _____
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

10. I John 2:15-17 says we are not to love this world. Worldliness is both external and internal. It begins in the heart and is characterized by what three attitudes? _____
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

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In I John 2: 18-29 John warns about Anti- Christ. In Greek “anti” can mean “against” and “instead of”. During the end times he will be against Christ and want to be worshiped instead of Christ.

11. What was an Anti-Christ in John’s writings? _____

12. Who is the Anti-Christ of Revelations 13:19-20, 20:10? _____

The visible proof of being a Christian is right behavior. Many people do good deeds but don’t have faith in Jesus Christ, while others claim to have faith but rarely produce good deeds. A deficit in either faith or right behavior will be cause for shame when Christ returns. True faith always results in good deeds. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us good deeds cannot produce salvation, but according to James 2:14-17, they are necessary proof that true faith is actually present.

DAY THREE: READ 1 JOHN 3-4

PRAYER FOCUS: Father, we praise You because of Your faithfulness. We thank You for providing a way for our sins to be forgiven through Jesus Christ. Amen!

As believers, our worth is based on the fact that God loves us and calls us His children. We are His children now – not just sometime in the distant future. Knowing we are His children should motivate us to live as Jesus lived. For further proof that you are part of the family of God see Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26-27; Galatians 4:6-7.

There is a difference between committing a sin and continuing to sin. Even the most faithful believers commit sins, but they do not cherish a particular sin or continually choose to commit it. A believer who commits a sin can repent, confess it and find forgiveness. By contrast a person who continues to sin is not sorry for doing so. This person never confesses and never receives forgiveness. Such a person is in opposition to God.

13. Under the Old Testament sacrificial system, a lamb without blemish was offered as a sacrifice for sin. According to John 1:29, what takes away the sins of the world?

Because Jesus lived a perfect life and sacrificed himself for our sins, we can be completely forgiven (1 John 2:2). We can look back to his death for us and know that we need never suffer eternal death (1 Peter 1:18-20)

14. As “Dear Children” of God, what does it show when you do what is right?

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We all have areas where temptation is strong and habits are hard to conquer. These weaknesses give the devil a foothold. John is not talking about people whose victories are incomplete; he is talking about people who make a practice of sinning and look for ways to justify it. There are three steps necessary to find victory over sin: (1) Seek the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word; (2) Stay away from tempting situations; (3) Seek the help of the body of Christ – be open to their willingness to pray for you.

15. John tells us in vs 9-10 how we can tell whose children we are. How do we know for certain who we belong to and who we do not belong to?

We are “born into God’s family” when the Holy Spirit lives in us and gives us Jesus’ new life. Being born again is more than a fresh start. It is a rebirth, receiving a new family name. When God forgives us, He totally accepts us. The Holy Spirit gives us a new mind and heart, lives in us and begins to change us to be more like Christ. We have a mind that is being renewed day by day by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24)

1 John 3:11-24 Love One Another.

16. Why did Cain kill his brother Abel? (Genesis 4:1-16)_____

17. How does John classify you if you hate another brother or sister?

John echoes Jesus’ teaching that whoever hates another person is a murderer at heart. (Matthew 5:21-22). Christianity is a religion of the heart. Outward compliance alone is not enough. Bitterness against someone who has wronged you is an evil cancer and will destroy you. Don’t let a “poisonous root of bitterness” (Hebrews 12:15) grow in you or your church.

DAY FOUR: READ 2 JOHN 1:1-13

Key verse: 2 John 2:5. “I am writing to remind you dear friends, that we should love one another. This is not a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning”.

PRAYER FOCUS: Pray that as you read 2 John that you will be like the apostle John and will have been with Jesus so that you know Truth and Love first hand.

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The apostle John had seen Truth and Love first hand – he had been with Jesus. So affected was this disciple that all of his writings from the Gospel of John to the book of Revelation are filled with this theme. Truth and love are vital to the Christian and are inseparable in the Christian life. John tells us to live in truth and obey (2 John 1:4), to watch out for deceivers (2 John 1:7) and to love God and each other (2 John 1:6).

Second John will take just a few minutes to read, but its message should last a lifetime. As you meditate on these few paragraphs penned by the wise and aged follower of Christ, recommit yourself to being a person of truth, of love, and of obedience.

John’s second letter seems to be written to a local church, referred to as a “chosen lady” and her children. John warns about false teachers among the churches at that time. False teachers were a dangerous problem for this church. His warning against showing hospitality to false teachers may sound harsh and unloving to us today, yet these people were teaching heresies that could seriously harm many others for all eternity.

2 John 1:1-3 Greeting.

18. What three things come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ – the Son of the Father? _____

2 John 1:4-11 Live in Truth.

19. What truth is John referring to? _____

John refers to truth five times in the first four verses of this brief letter. John declared the existence of an Absolute. God is true. His words and ways are true, and whatever or whoever contradicts or opposes him is false, deceptive and dangerous. Make an intentional choice to teach those under your care how to distinguish between truth and error.

20. What commandment have we had from the beginning? (Leviticus 19:18, 2 John 1:5) And who gave this commandment? (Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John 2:7-8)

We can show love in many ways; by avoiding prejudice and discrimination; by accepting people; by listening, helping, giving, serving and refusing to judge. Knowing God’s command is not enough. We must put it into practice.

21. How does John describe a deceiver and what name does he call them? _____

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In John’s day, many false teachers (deceivers) taught that spirit was good and matter was evil; therefore, they reasoned Jesus Christ could not have been both God and man. In strong terms, John warns against this kind of teaching. Many false teachers today still promote an understanding of Jesus that is not biblical. These teachers are dangerous because they distort the truth and undermine the foundations of the Christian faith. They may use the right words, but change the meanings.

22. How are you to treat people who fail to teach the truth about Christ? _____

23. What is the danger? _____

False teaching is serious business and we dare not overlook it. It is so serious; John wrote this letter to warn against it. Because our world has so many false teachings we might be tempted to take many of them lightly. We need to realize the dangers they pose and actively refuse to give heresies any foothold.

DAY 5: READ 3 JOHN 1:1-15

PRAYER FOCUS: Pray that God will reveal to you the gift of hospitality and use you as he uses Gaius in 3 John.

By special invitation or with a surprise knock, company arrives and with them comes the promise of soiled floors, extra laundry, dirty dishes, altered schedules, personal expense and inconvenience. From sharing a meal to providing a bed, hospitality costs...in time energy and money. But how we treat others reflects our true values – what is really important to us. Do we see people as objects or inconveniences, or as unique creations of a loving God? And which is more important to God, a person or a carpet?

For Gaius, hospitality was a habit and his reputation for friendship and generosity, especially to traveling teachers and missionaries had spread. John wrote this personal note to affirm and thank Gaius for his Christian lifestyle and to encourage him in his faith. In this brief letter, John discusses three individuals (1) Gaius, follows Christ and loves others; (2) Diotrephes, self-proclaimed church leader; and (3) Demetrius who follows the truth.

Although this is a personal letter, we can look over the shoulder of Gaius and apply its lessons to our life. As you read 3 John, with which man do you identify? Are you a Gaius, generously giving to others? Demetrius, loving the truth? Or a Diotrephes, looking out for yourself and your things? Determine to reflect Christ’s values in your relationships, opening your home and touching others with His love.

24. Who does John address and what does he commend him for? _____

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We have no further information about Gaius, but he is someone whom John loved dearly. Perhaps Gaius had shared his home and hospitality with John at some time during John’s travels.

25. Who was to support the traveling missionaries? _____

The traveling missionaries neither asked for, nor accepted anything from nonbelievers. It is the responsibility of the churches and Christians to support those that are called by God to full time ministry. God’s true preachers do not preach to make money, but to fulfill their calling and express their love for God.

26. How does John describe Diotrephes and what was he guilty of doing? _____

All we know about Diotrephes is that he wanted to control the church. John denounced (1) his refusal to have anything to do with other spiritual leaders, (2) his slander of the leaders, (3) his bad example in refusing to welcome any teachers, and (4) his attempts to excommunicate those who opposed his leadership. Sins such as pride, jealousy and slander are still present in churches today. We must confront sin in church. A true Christian leader is a servant, not an autocrat.

27. John mentions Demetrius in vs 12. There is a different Demetrius mentioned in Acts 19:24. Who did that Demetrius oppose? _____

We know nothing about this Demetrius except that he may have carried this letter from John to Gaius. In contrast to the corrupt Diotrephes, Demetrius had a high regard for truth. John personified truth as a witness to Demetrius’s character and teaching. In other words, if truth could speak, it would speak on Demetrius’s behalf.

Whereas 2 John emphasizes the need to refuse hospitality to false teachers, 3 John urges continued hospitality to those who teach the truth. Hospitality is a strong sign of support for people and their work. It means giving of your resources to them so their stay will be comfortable and their work and travel easier. Actively look for creative ways to show hospitality to God’s workers. It may be in the form of a note of encouragement, a gift, financial support, an open hope or by prayer.