

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

A STUDY IN 1 JOHN

INTRODUCTION

Although 1 John does not explicitly state the identity of the author, it has long been identified with the Apostle John. There are many reasons for this. First, the style of the letter is very similar to the unique style of the gospel of John with many of the same phrases being used. Second, the mention of eye witness testimony (1:1-4) harmonizes with the fact that John was a follower of Christ from the earliest days of his ministry. Finally, the witness of the church ties it closely with the Apostle. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria both make very early use of this letter.

We believe that the letter was written when John was very old, toward the end of the first century A.D., probably sometime between 85-95. John was a fisherman who spoke Aramaic, so the excellence of the Greek is surprising. Church tradition has suggested that students of John worked with him to compose his writings. It is unclear who the letter was originally intended for. Certainly it was meant to be read by the churches of Asia Minor, but it appears to be intended for Christians everywhere.

The letter was written to encourage early Christians to hold fast to the faith and not be taken in by new teachings (heresies). Certainly, John speaks against the false teachers propagating this new “gospel, but primarily this letter is written to reaffirm the basics of the faith and to urge believers to hold fast to the gospel. To hold fast to the gospel does not mean to just stay where we are. Remaining in Christ requires that we grow in the faith.

Many have questioned whether this is really a letter. It does not have many of the characteristics we normally associate with that genre. There is no opening greeting and no closing. It appears to be more of a sermon or short treatise, but tradition requires that we refer to it as a letter along with the other letters of John

The big thing that shines through 1 John is the love of Christ for us. This is reflected in the love and concern the Apostle has for the church and the love he wants us to show one another. There are wonderful teachings throughout this letter on light, truth, love and the way in which we are to walk with Christ as His disciples.

I pray this study will be an opportunity for you to grow in your faith and to be drawn closer to our Lord. Faithful study of this book should draw you into the very heart of God.

God Bless,
Pastor John

LESSON ONE

WALK IN THE LIGHT

(1 JOHN 1:1-2:6)

INTRODUCTION

1 John does not begin as a letter. Instead it begins more like a sermon or a treatise. With strong echoes of the gospel of John, the author reminds us of the essential character of God, namely that God is light. We are challenged to consider all that means. Of course, we must consider the corollary of that statement too. If God is light and we want to be in fellowship with Him then we must walk in the light. This first lesson causes us to reflect on what that means for us as believers and followers of Jesus Christ.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

1) When does 1 John begin?

2) What words does John use to describe Jesus in the first four verses?

3) Verse five gives us an absolute statement about the person and character of God, What is it?

4) What must we do if we want to be in fellowship with God and others?

5) What must we admit if we want to be in the truth?

6) True knowledge of God is connected with what behavior in the first part of chapter two?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) The first four verses of chapter one should strongly remind the reader of what two other Bible passages?

2) Why do you think that life, light and truth are all connected in the early part of this chapter?

3) What does it mean for the believer to walk in the light?

4) Why is it essential for the believer to acknowledge he is a sinner?

5) How can we walk in the light and yet be sinners?

6) Why is obedience such an important characteristic of a believer?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

1) Do you feel that this letter (or sermon) is addressed to you?

2) Do you feel like you try to walk in the light?

3) How well do you think that you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner? Are you equally good at admitting this to yourself? To others? To God?

4) How deeply have you as a believer committed yourself to being truthful?

5) Is obedience a big part of your walk with God? What does obedience to God mean to you?

6) Do you find that obedience to God helps you to grow in love?

PRAYER

Father, let me live like Jesus did – keeping every commandment. I long to know You deeply, personally and passionately. I also desire to demonstrate the evidence that I know You, and that evidence is obedience. By Your grace, I will demonstrate obedience. Complete and perfect is my love for You. Give me a burning love that produces a passionate surrender to Your Lordship. I pray this in the name of Jesus, the surrendered One.

From royalperspectives.com

6) What does John warn us about loving in 2:15-17?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) How can a command be both old and new? How old is the command?

2) Why is it impossible to hate and yet walk in the light and vice versa?

3) Do you think that John is referring to actual age or levels of spiritual maturity in 2:12-14? Why do you think that John wrote using this way of referring to his audience?

4) Why are we warned not to love the world? How do you reconcile this passage with John 3:16?

5) Is the world really in opposition to the love of the Father?

6) How strongly are lies and truth in opposition to each other?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) What does the word antichrist mean? Does that explain how there can be one and yet many antichrists?

2) Who do you think the antichrists are? Why would they be referred to in this way?

3) What is the significance of the lies which liars tell?

4) How does remaining in what we have heard tie us to the Father and the Son?

5) What does it mean to John to be anointed by God?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

1) What do you make of the idea that we are living in the last hour?

2) Do you think much about the existence or coming of the Antichrist? Of antichrists?

3) How dangerous do you think heresies and false teachings are today?

4) How important is it to you to remain in the truth? What are you doing to do so?

5) How does the anointing of God keep you in the truth?

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm coming to you today because my faith needs strengthening. Thank you for always being faithful to me even when I am unfaithful. I know that faithfulness is the belief in something without proof. To be honest, I feel as though at times I have had the faith of the mustard seed and the mountain never moved. I don't know how to reconcile my faith with my unanswered prayers. I don't know how to remain faithful when the thing I've prayed for never came. Teach me what it means to have an unwavering faith. Show me how to reconcile my faith with the prayers that have never come to fruition. Help increase my faith. I don't even know what that means or how it looks, but I know you do. Whatever it is I need to have bigger faith please help me receive. Touch my heart. Forgive my mind. Lead me to a place of faithfulness.

In Jesus Name, Amen

By Charlene Dior

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) We are told to continue in Christ. Does that mean that we could choose not to?

2) We are sinners, yet we are told that what we do will reveal if we are right with God or not. Do you agree?

3) What does it mean to be a “child of God”?

4) What do you make of the verse that tells us that, “no one who lives in him keeps on sinning”?

5) How does what we do reveal who we belong to?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

1) What does it mean to you to be known as a child of God?

2) Do you think sin is lawlessness? How would you define sin?

3) How do you reconcile the tension in which we live? That we are called to live righteously, and yet still sin?

4) Do you look at the world in black and white terms? God versus the devil?

5) What do you think we shall be like in God's presence?

PRAYER

Father God,
thank You for loving me and accepting me just the way I am. It is my heart's desire to know You and to be known by You. Help me to live the life You've called me to and be faithful to You always.
In Jesus' name. Amen

- 3) Do you feel that you have the sacrificial love of Christ within you?
- 4) Do you trust your conscience? Do you think it is a gift from God?
- 5) What difference does the presence of the Holy Spirit make in your life?

Prayer For Brotherly Love Towards Others

Dear Heavenly Father,
thank You for Your deep love towards me and thank You for sending Your only begotten Son, my Savior Jesus Christ to suffer on the cross for my sake, so that my sins could be forgiven and that I may live with You forever in heaven. Lord, I know that I do not warrant Your love and yet You have showered unconditional love and grace towards me through Christ, for which I praise and thank You.

But Lord, You desire all Your children to love others as Christ loved us, but my love is poor and weak and is far removed for all that You desire of me. Fill me I pray, with the love of Christ that I may love others in the same way that You have loved me, so that as Your love pours into my soul, may I be used as a conduit for Christ's love to stream out to others with whom I come into contact.

Help me to demonstrate Your love, not only to those that are lovable, but also to those who lash out at me through pain or anger, disappointment or loss. May the love of Jesus be manifested in me, and may the love of Jesus be distributed, by grace through faith, to all with whom I come in contact. In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Love>

LESSON SIX
TEST THE SPIRITS
1 JOHN 4:1-6

INTRODUCTION

Much of 1 John deals with false teachers and false doctrine. But how are we to tell what is true and what is false? John offers advice on how to do so. He urges us to stay true to the doctrines we have been taught and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In today's lesson he tells us to test the spirits and offers counsel on how to do so. Discernment is of course one of the most important gifts we can receive and develop. Look closely at the advice John has to offer.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

- 1) Are we to accept every spirit as being from God?

- 2) How can we tell if a spirit genuinely is from God?

- 3) What spirit motivates those who do not speak the truth?

- 4) What hope do we have in telling what is true from what is false?

- 5) Who does the world listen to?

3) When you test the spirits does it make you feel as though you are being cynical, or judgmental?

4) John tends to portray things in very strong, black and white terms. Something is either right or wrong, from God or from the Antichrist. How comfortable are you with that kind of dichotomy?

5) Is the presence of God through the Holy Spirit the ultimate key to help us discern the truth?

Prayer to Be Guided Into All Truth

Heavenly Father, I come to You in poverty of spirit, to seek Your face during a time when the truth of Your Word seems to be being attacked on every side, and few seem to know or understand about the truth of Scripture.

Father, it is sometimes hard to know what is true in a world when everything to do with God is being attacked, not only in the secular arena but in many Christian ministries as well.

You promised that Your Holy Spirit would guide Your children into all truth, especially those that seek You with their whole hearts. I want to seek You and know You more and more, but I do not want to be influenced by wrong doctrine or false teaching.

Keep me I pray, and guide me in my life as I read Your Word and study the scriptures. Prevent me Lord, from being swept into the many false doctrines that are sweeping through Christendom today. Give me a discerning heart I pray, and help me to find a teacher that will teach me the whole council of Your Word of Truth so that I may grow in grace and in a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You Father, in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

By Aizel Dolom

3) How does acknowledgment of Jesus as the Son of God, bring God's life into ours?

4) Does the love of God give you confidence when you think of God as your judge?

5) Several times in this passage it mentions that we have not seen God. Why do you think that is emphasized?

PRAYER

Father, please flourish my heart with genuine **love** that will benefit other people and me. Also, let the demonstrations of my **love** result to the glorification of your name. Let my **love** be selfless, impartial, truthful, and fruitful! For in the name of Jesus Christ I **pray**.

From chainprayers.com

3) Do you feel that obedience to God is a burden or a blessing?

4) Do you feel victorious (like you have overcome the world)?

5) What testimonies to Jesus are important to you?

PRAYER

Abba Father, it is so comforting to know that you are not far away — that I live in you and you live in me. Help me see others with your eyes and respond to their needs with your heart so that your love may be complete in me. In the name of Jesus, the Servant and Savior of all, I pray. Amen.

3) How do you feel about John's statement that there is a sin which leads to death?
Would you pray for the sinner anyway

4) Do you think that the world is under the control of the evil one?

5) What connection do you make between the true God we are told to worship in 5:20 and John's warning not to commit idolatry in 5:21?

PRAYER

God in heaven, I know that you are faithful. I have confidence that you hear and answer all my prayers. I will try to do your will, serving and loving others. I ask that you be with me and give me the opportunities to share with others the confidence I have in you. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.