

S T U D Y G U I D E

LIFE IN THE SON

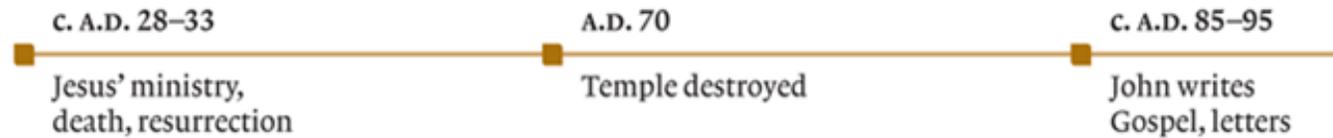
A STUDY THROUGH 1 JOHN



eastside CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

1 John — Introduction

TIMELINE



AUTHOR, AUDIENCE, CONTEXT

This book of the Bible is the longest of the three letters written by John, the apostle of Jesus, who also wrote the Gospel of John. While the Gospel of John gives an account of the history of what happened with Jesus – his life, death and resurrection- this letter addresses the questions: “What is it all about? Why did it happen? What does it mean to us today?” Written most likely from Ephesus prior to being exiled to the Isle of Patmos or possibly right after arriving on Patmos, John, who is now older in years seems filled with well-aged wisdom pointing his reader to the fact that what is truly important is knowing God through an intimate relationship with Jesus.

John is writing to Christians, some who are 2nd and 3rd generation believers, to encourage and remind them to stay the course grounded firmly in Jesus and **life in Him**. It appears that false teachers who were part of the “fellowship” split the community of faith, are gathering elsewhere, and are continuing to influence these readers to join them in building their faith around heretical doctrines. These doctrinal errors centered primarily around two major threads:

1. They denied the reality of sin (1:6,8,10)
2. They denied Jesus was the Messiah (2:22, 4:1-3)

John masterfully tackles many of these false doctrines by simply teaching the truth and presenting a very direct, no-nonsense look into what it really means and what it really looks like to live **Life in the SON!**

WRITING STYLE

John’s fatherly writing style tends to wander from point to point in what appears to be rather random ways. This is known as a circular writing. Don’t let this fool you because it is rich in theological, life-giving words to those who take their faith in Jesus seriously.

PURPOSE

John’s purpose is clear: 5:13 **“I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”**

The purpose of 1 John is closely related to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is written to persuade non-Christians to believe in Jesus and find eternal life in His name (Jn. 20:31). 1 John is written so that those who believe in Jesus would know they have indeed found life in Him have assurance of their eternal standing.

MAJOR THEMES

You will notice the same themes of life, light, love, righteousness, obedience, fellowship and more coming up again and again. “Love” appears 46 times in 1 John and while it is not the sole theme it’s safe to say that it is a primary theme that drives the other major subjects John covers. We know the word “love” means different things to people in different contexts. As we read through 1 John, we will come to see that John speaks of love expressed in sacrificial action. God’s love for us is the preeminent example of this love, it models and constrains how we love. One could say that “love” is the umbrella over all the other themes in 1 John.

First, God’s love models our love. John highlights the sending of Jesus, the Son, into the world to save us. This act was 1) an extraordinary sacrifice (John 15:13) 2) made towards undeserving and unworthy people (Romans 5:6) 3) to secure an everlasting promise (John 3:16) 4) freely given to display his great love for us (Ephesians 2:4).

Second, God’s love constrains how we love. While we have great freedom to love in many ways, we are not allowed to practice our love in ways contrary to the commands of Scripture. Not all definitions of love fit God’s definition. We should reject any definitions that don’t. In essence, we can view true Christian love as God’s love flowing through us.

God’s love flows through us as we walk in the light, have fellowship with God and one another, live in righteousness, abide in Jesus and as we love those around us especially those we call brothers and sisters in the faith.

Oh, and don’t miss the many parallelisms: Christ vs. antichrists, light vs. darkness, truth vs. falsehood, righteousness vs. sin, love of the Father vs. love of the world, and the Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the Antichrist.

OUR APPROACH

As we live “Life in the Son”, What does it look like to...

...Walk in God’s Light

- #2 Walking in the Light 1:5-2:2
- #3 Sin & Broken Relationships 2:3-2:11
- #4 Do Not Love the World – 2:12-17; 4:1-4:6

...Live in Truth and Righteousness

- #5 Doing What is Right 2:28-3:10
- #6 Signs of Life 3:11–24

...Love God

- #7 God is love 4:7–4:19
- #8 Overcoming the World 4:20–5:5
- #9 Assurance: The Spirit, the Water & the Blood 5:4-21

Week #1—An Eye Witness Account 1 John 1:1-4—Dave Parker

BIG PICTURE

With the authority and passion of an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus, the apostle John proclaims loud and clear, the identity of Jesus and the authority of Jesus, so that Life in the Son of God can be lived out boldly in fellowship with the Trinity and with other believers.

COMMENTARY

Have you ever pulled off a surprise for someone or had great news you just couldn't wait to share? Chances are you, like me, get excited with anticipation. John is no different and you can sense the excitement in his writing. It's as if he can't wait to remind his readers about what sets Jesus and his teachings apart, reminding them that the course they are on is the right course. I love the way John begins. It's lack of greeting or formal introduction is unlike any other letters we see in the New Testament.

In the Greek language 1:1-4 is all one run-on sentence which when literally translated seems like words thrown onto the page. I wonder if John wasn't so excited that he just started blurting out... ***“we are going to tell you about Jesus and remind you that he has no beginning and no end and that we heard him with our own ears, saw him with our own eyes and touched his very body that hung on the cross after he rose from the dead and before you go believing those who never witnessed Jesus' healing and loving and living life as the light of the world, then hang with me because I'm going to remind you what it really looks like...”*** (my translation). This reference to the humanity of Christ is reminiscent of John's word in John 1:1-5 and directly challenges and corrects the false teacher's claims that Jesus was not the incarnate God. Take away Jesus' deity and he becomes powerless to save!

It's John's proclamation, reminding this faithful church, who is being influenced by false teachers. These teachers had been in fellowship with these readers and then had split the church with their false doctrine. Without the incarnate Christ as the foundation, there is no fellowship between them. So, from the start John is going to separate and show the difference between what the transformed life of a believer looks like versus the life of someone who just says they believe.

RESPONSE

John wants all readers, past and present to experience the complete joy (1:4) that comes from knowing Jesus and so that we will trust and believe in the name of the Son of God so that we may be assured that we have eternal life (5:13). This relationship with Jesus brings us into fellowship with other believers, collectively known as the church. It starts with faith in Jesus and fellowship next. Not the other way around.

Our witness and testimony to others is important. You may not have physically touched, heard and seen Jesus in the flesh but Jesus reminds us that as we serve others, it's like we are serving him. We see, hear and touch the work of Jesus daily as we witness creation in action... ***“For by Him (Jesus) all things were created things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...In Him all things hold together”*** (Colossians 1:16a, 17b).

Wouldn't life take on a different meaning if our every interaction had us excited, that we may have the opportunity to let someone else know about the goodness of Jesus, so that they too could believe in the name of the Son of God so that they could be assured they had eternal life? This evidently is what fueled John's excitement to write this letter.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of John pointing out that he was an eyewitness to Jesus at the very first of this book and how does that help his case against the false teachers?
2. Compare the opening of 1 John 1:1-4 to John 1:1-5. Compare common themes, facts etc. Why do you think John opens both of his writings in this manner?
3. If you were to read 1 John for the first time, what would you surmise John was going to talk about throughout the book? In other words, what themes appear in the first 4 verses and what significance does that hold?
4. How have you seen your witness and testimony about Jesus make a difference?
5. Have you studied 1 John before? What are you most excited about as we enter this study?

Week #2—*Walking In The Light*

1 John 1:5-2:2 —Linda Gall

BIG IDEA

John addresses honesty in this passage and the ways we can deceive ourselves. When we truly walk in the light, we experience increased freedom to love and the progressive freedom from sin.

COMMENTARY

It is interesting that John combines these three: walking in the light, fellowship with one another and freedom from sin. Walking is progressive. We are to keep going, prayerfully keep moving, stay on the path that will allow our transformation. This is a journey. We don't become transformed overnight. Although forgiveness and rebirth are immediate, the transformation into the image of Christ takes time and our sincere desire for it.

We don't journey alone. The depth of fellowship that we enjoy with the body will depend on how consistently we are walking in the light and how consistent the process of transformation in us is. John says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin." (v1: 7) Bonding grows as we experience this life-giving transformation.

To walk in darkness is to allow, excuse and tolerate sin as we are made aware of it within ourselves. This is not fellowship with God, no matter what we say. (v1:6)

To walk in the light is to confess sin as God reveals it to us and seek the transformation only available by the work of the Holy Spirit.

RESPONSE

How I react when I am made aware of my sin reveals the level of honesty that I live in. It impacts my transformation and my fellowship.

If I get defensive and go into denial, I am taking a detour. I am not walking in the light. I can't see clearly. I have stopped, paused, taken a break, and if my sin is allowed to remain it will not only stop my transformation, but will start me on another path. A path of self-righteousness to combat the guilt I feel and condemnation for the lies that pull me further from freedom, of hiding the truth from others, of working harder to compensate. I have traded freedom for slavery. Worst of all I have called God a liar. I have said I have no sin.

If I really believe that God loves me and He is continually working in me, if I really believe that I have blind spots and I want to see them, I will have a very different response. My heart will react with gratefulness, humility and even joy. Because when God reveals my sin to me it is His intent and sincere desire to free me from that sin. And to bless me with more of His light, greater love and deeper fellowship. Isn't that what I really want?

Without experiencing the progressive overcoming of sin in our lives, this very real transformation that comes as we walk in the light, the gospel has no reality for us. It is just words. Words that we struggle to believe.

Walking in the Light, in obedience, is having the eyes to discern the goodness and love of my Lord. It allows me to see my sin properly. Not with undue shame, but as a revelation that will lead me to further redemption and holiness. It allows me the freedom to receive correction, the freedom to grow without hindrance, to be enough-just as I am, without the need to pretend. What glorious freedom! What peace! What rest!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do we find some sin so difficult to admit to and own?
 - A) What is the promise in this passage regarding confessing our sins?
 - B) How does a deeper understanding of God's love help us with this?
2. John deals with honesty in this book. Exposing the often subtle lies we tell ourselves that make our sin okay. What are some of the lies that you tell yourself?
3. Is it possible that a defensive spirit is worse than the sin you are defending? Explain.
4. What would it be like or what is it like to walk in freedom from sin? To have a clear conscience before God and man? To know that every sin that God has revealed to me has been repented of and I am seeing deliverance from? To know that He is crazy proud of you? We're cleaning up as we go.
5. What would it take for you to have deeper peace with God today?

Week #3—*Sin & Broken Relationships*
1 John 2:3-2:11—Todd Jensen

BIG IDEA

If we love Jesus Christ, then we will obey the Father's commands, as Jesus did.

COMMENTARY

In verse 2:1 John writes this letter so we will not sin (paraphrase). Why? Sin destroys relationship. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden what was their first response? Makeshift clothing and to hide from God (Genesis 3:7-10). On the other side, people we have sinned against can hold a grudge, leading to hate. Sin breaks relationship both vertically between us and God and horizontally between people we know. In the same way that sin breaks relationship, love builds and strengthens relationships with God and our neighbors.

When you spend time in a group, you often start to pick up their nuances. You use the same terminology and start to acquire the same mannerisms. To know Jesus isn't merely enough to just acknowledge that He was a great teacher. It isn't enough to believe that He was a good person. You need to experience Jesus, commune with Christ via the Holy Spirit. Spend so much time together that you start to take on the characteristics of Christ.

Why did Jesus come to Earth? To show us the Father's love by rescuing us from the consequences of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23).

RESPONSE

We have all fallen short of the glory of God. Once we become Christians it does not mean that we suddenly stop sinning. Our sin nature is with us while we are on earth. It's not a question of if we will sin, but when. And when we do, how do we restore relationship with Jesus, the Father, and our neighbor?

What should our response be when we sin?

1. Confess our sin to Jesus, repent, and ask for forgiveness.
2. Confess our sin to those we have wronged. Again, ask for forgiveness and make restitution when required.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In your groups, there are probably new Christians and those that have been following Christ for decades. This week, to help build each other up, let the Holy Spirit guide the discussion around events in your life where you were successful and where you failed for each of the following questions. There is no judgment here. The Holy Spirit will put situations in your mind that you can share. When you complete the discussion, take time to thank and praise God for those experiences (both positive and negative) and pray that each of you continues to grow in knowledge of Christ's love.

1. Describe a time when have you intentionally disobeyed God? What was the consequence?
2. Describe a time when you have intentionally obeyed God? What was the consequence?
3. Share a time when you sinned against someone and how it affected you and the relationship. Was that relationship restored? If not, what do you need to do?
4. What about when someone sinned against you? How did you respond? Was the relationship restored? If not, what can you do?

Week #4—*Do Not Love the World*
1 John 2:12-17 + 4:1-6—Zac Price

BIG IDEA

“If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.” -1 John 2:15

COMMENTARY

We start off with praise, John is writing and uplifting those who have been honoring and overcoming (1 John 2:12-14). John then starts to write a very serious warning that is less of a warning and more of a command. What does John mean when he says, “Do not love the world” and what is “the world”?

David Jackman writes, “It is obvious that he is not thinking about ‘things’ in themselves, such as money or possessions, which are morally neutral. Rather he is talking about our personal attitudes towards these things.”

Keeping our eyes on God is always a struggle for every Christian. Money isn’t bad, owning a house isn’t bad, having stuff isn’t bad, however if we love them over our love for Christ, then we do not have the love for the father in us. (see 1 Tim 6:10, 17-19) This is a scary statement because we tend to do this a lot, right? We sometimes take our eyes off the prize, God, and focus on what we physically have right now. The two words in the beginning are “do not” which is an authoritative command, one we must take seriously. For instance, the same “do not” was used in Genesis when Abraham was told not to sacrifice his son, Isaac. We see that John uses the word “lust” which is defined as a strong desire for something. The lust of the eyes, flesh, and the pride of life are all things John is saying are not of the Lord, but of the world.

So if we go back to our original question, which is, “what is the world”? God created the world and He said that “it was good”. So, we know John is not telling us to hate that which God created but rather to hate what is of the world. We know that there is an enemy in this world; we live in a world at war. The world is whatever distracts you and brings you further away from the presence of God. We see that it is key to not let our eyes wonder and stray away from the love of our heavenly father.

John Piper writes, “The first incentive John gives is that “if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him” (verse 15b). In other words, the reason you shouldn’t love the world is that you can’t love the world and God at the same time. Love for the world pushes out love for God, and love for God pushes out love for the world.” I love that Piper says love for God pushes out love for the world. Let that be our prayer as Christ followers, that as we continue to live on this earth, we push out the love for the world and get closer to God.

RESPONSE

I love Rich Mullins. He wrote some powerhouse songs such as, “Awesome God,” “Creed,” and many others that are just great worship songs. Rich Mullins was a simple man, and he lived a simple life. He was known for donating most of his money to charities and those who needed the help. He was making great money at the peak of his career, however it was known that he gave most of it away. He wanted to live like the rest of us and didn’t want to “live of this world”. Do not love the world is a very interesting sentence that we commonly think we obey on a daily basis. However, John is being very clear that we must not put worldly possessions above our love for God.

I don’t think John’s intention for this passage was for everyone to wear blindfolds all day, every day, and ignore what is in front of us. We see all over scripture God giving blessings to people that often come with worldly possessions whether that be riches, authority over a group of people, or blessing them with health. We need to be Christians who don’t value what the world has to offer, rather we need to value what God has to offer. And what God offers is eternal life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is John saying when he says, “Do not love the world”?
2. Was Rich Mullins crazy or commendable for doing what he did with his wealth? At the same time is that the model we all should choose or what determines that?
3. What is the “Will of God”?
4. Discuss 1 John 2:17
5. Pray as a group that your love for Jesus will always be above everything else.

Week #5—*Doing What is Right* 1 John 2:28-3:10—Greg Stanislaw

BIG IDEA

In this selection, John discusses the nature and source of righteousness. John states that God alone defines righteousness and only those who fully believe in Christ and embrace being a child of God can truly be righteous. John also links righteousness to love in such a way to make us see that they are not separate things but really just different aspects of God's nature.

COMMENTARY

John emphatically declares that God is the source of all righteousness and that only the children of God are capable of true righteousness. He continues to exclaim that we should be joyful that we can be called children of God and claim this righteousness. John is giddy with the idea that we have the honor to be called children of the Creator of the universe. He wanted the contemporary and future receivers of his letter to understand the full implications of this. THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE WANTS TO CALL US HIS CHILDREN! Once this cracks through our cynical shells of busyness and self-interest, it should put us on our knees in wonder.

Those who do not know Godly righteousness practice sin, but sin is more than simply breaking rules. Sin is living in a state of lawlessness without Christ. If sin is more than breaking rules, then righteousness must be more than not breaking the rules. In Galatians 2:21, Paul states that Christ died for nothing if we can be righteous by simply following the rules. Here, John states that one can only be righteous by residing in Jesus and being righteous as He is righteous (see also 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus came to destroy sin because without His redemption we could not overcome it on our own. Both our capability to be righteous and our redemption are only possible because we are God's children, and just like human children are like their parents, we can hope to be like our heavenly Father.

Finally, John links righteousness, love, and being a child of God. Those who do not practice righteousness are the same ones who do not love fellow Christians and therefore are not the children of God. In order to be truly righteous like Jesus and a child of God, we must also and equally love like Jesus loves us. Righteousness and love cannot be separated as a redeemed child of God.

RESPONSE

Oh, how we love to be right! We want to meet Mister or Miss Right. When we will return promptly, we'll be right back. When we buy something, we want the price to be right. When we are driving, we want to have the right-of-way so we can go first. We want to be on the right track. We want to do right by people. When we have a problem, we want everything to fall right into place. If we aren't insane then we are in our right mind. Sometimes we are wrong, but our heart is in the right place. Am I right or am I right?

There are a lot of popular sayings in the English language that use the word "right". This may come from our collective desire to be correct. Sometimes our desire to be right has more to do with telling other people that they are wrong. Many people are very good at telling others that they are wrong, but the righteousness, the being correct, that John is talking about goes far beyond following the rules. John explains that righteousness only comes from God and that righteousness goes beyond following the rules and must be accompanied by love.

When we talk about Jesus's righteousness, many think about His righteous anger as He turned over the money changers tables in the temple [John 2:13-16], but how often do we think about His righteousness as He lovingly and mercifully forgave the woman who was caught committing adultery [John 7:53-8:11]. He was merciful and loving when He stopped her from being stoned, but He was righteous when He matter-of-factly told her to leave her life of sin. He showed that He was fully righteous and perfectly loving. This is what we strive for by living fully in Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about a time when you were wrong. Did you find out in a loving way or a cruel way?
2. How do you define righteousness? How can it be more than following the rules?
3. Talk about a time when you saw someone reveal equal parts love and righteousness.
4. Why does it seem like being both righteous and loving at the same time is so hard for us?

Week #6—*Sign of Life*
1 John 3:11-24—Daniel Tang

BIG IDEA

Our love for each other, the church, is evidence of God's love in us.

COMMENTARY

This passage opens with a strong contrast between the world (Cain) and the church (Abel). Cain murdered his brother "because his deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous." (v12) This means two things. First, if we are walking in righteousness, the world's hate should not surprise us (v13). Second, if we find ourselves hating a brother or sister, we can be certain that our sin goes far deeper (v15). Note that in this book, John does not consider hate to be merely a strongly negative disposition toward someone. Hate is simply not loving (v17, 4:19–20).

Our love for one another is evidence of the love and life of God residing in us (v14, 17, 24). Hate would show that we have neither (v17). In sum, "conduct is the clue to paternity." (NET notes) To a Christian struggling with doubt, this is a comfort and a source of reassurance. Our conscience is sometimes weighed down by sin, but God is greater than our conscience (v20) and He "knows those who are His." (2 Timothy 2:19) He knows that even though sin mars our life, His life is still in us.

We can see this too: the fact that our own sin bothers us, is itself evidence of God's life in us. It is an opportunity to repent and clear our conscience. When we know that we love our brothers and sisters in Christ and believe in Jesus as Christ, we can have a clear conscience. With the Holy Spirit testifying to us, we can approach God with our requests, having confidence that God will give what we ask (v21–24).

RESPONSE

Do you ever feel doubt about your salvation? Has the question ever crossed your mind: "Am I even a Christian?" If so, join me in turning to 1 John as a source of comfort in two ways. First, receiving hate for doing the right thing can serve as assurance that we are walking in the light. Facing hatred is never comfortable and we should never seek it out. Instead, we can use it to confirm our calling to walk in the light and even have joy in the midst of trial! (Matthew 5:11–12) We can take heart and continue on, laying our lives down for others, especially our fellow Christians, as John has in view.

Second, our acts of love for our fellow Christians can provide assurance that we are on the right path, but sometimes our sin causes us to lose confidence. In these times, we can look back on our lives and say as John Newton, former slave trader and author of the hymn "Amazing Grace," did: "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever experienced mistreatment for doing the right thing? What did you do in that circumstance?
2. What does it mean to lay down your life for someone? Discuss how other Christians have done this for you and any struggles you might have with sacrificing for the good of others. As the body of Christ, we can help each other learn how to love more and more. Especially consider: 1) when you experience the same events, such as the coronavirus, differently from others 2) when you see others going through trials.
3. Have you ever experienced doubt of your salvation? If so, how did you resolve it? How does John say we can resolve it?
4. Do you believe that you receive whatever you ask of God (v22)? Why or why not?

Week #7— *God is Love* 1 John 4:7-19—Daniel Tang

BIG IDEA

Our love for one another and faith in Jesus flow from God, who is love.

COMMENTARY

“God is love.” We know that God is loving in His nature. Before the creation of the universe, the Father loved the Son (John 17:24). In these verses, we see that God’s love is the basis for our own (v7–11). Because God sent His Son into the world to give us life, we have been fathered by God and know God, and inherit His loving nature (v9–10).

If we have inherited His loving nature, then we will want to love: “for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.” (Philippians 2:13, NET) Acting on our desires to love confirms our calling (2 Peter 1:13). When John speaks of God’s love perfected in us in verse 13, he means that we are completing God’s work of love when we love others!

We come to know God’s love through our faith (v13–16). John repeats his eyewitness status. Not only does he testify that the Father sent His Son to be our Savior, but the Holy Spirit does as well (John 15:26). Here we see truth and love tied together by faith. When we understand God’s love for us in the depths of our souls, then we have confidence for the day of judgment, rather than fear.

John is not saying that we have no fear at all, but only that we have no fear of punishment. The Bible addresses the general topic of fear in many other places and speaks of the fear of the Lord positively (Job 28:28, Proverbs 9:10, Isaiah 33:6). John’s point is that God’s perfecting love gives us assurance of our salvation. If we have assurance of God’s love for us, then we will love Him in return, rather than worry about punishment. Fear of punishment signifies a lack of trust in God’s faithfulness to forgive (1:8). As love for our fellow Christian is founded in God’s love for us, so also is our love for God himself.

RESPONSE

Sometimes, we may think of loving others merely as service to God or obedience. Indeed, it is both, and more! Our love for others is God’s gift and love to others through us: “All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.” (James 1:17, NET). True Christian love is first God’s love.

Similarly, all truth is God’s truth! The truth of God’s love for us (v9–10) is the root of our love. Part of our faith is knowing and believing the truth found in the Bible. When we have truth and love, we have assurance of salvation. When we only have one or the other, it’s as if we’ve “attempted to take away heat from the sun.” (John Calvin) Therefore, as we pursue love, let us pursue truth with the same passion.

Do you ever experience doubt about the day of judgment? We live between the “already” and the “not yet.” While love is being perfected in us, it has not yet reached its full perfection. Even so, we can increase our assurance of final salvation. As we discussed last week, one way is looking at our “long obedience in the same direction,” as coined by the late Eugene Peterson. But, the hymn “Before the Throne of God Above” expresses the ultimate way:

*When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see him there,
who made an end to all my sin!*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Does the thought of our love being God’s love expressed through us change how you think about love? If so, how?

1. Similar to last week, discuss how other Christians have loved you and any struggles you might have in loving others. Consider situations where other Christians are different from you in: 1) age 2) sociability 3) spiritual maturity 4) health 5) wealth 6) cultural heritage 7) political alignment
2. How have fellow Christians surmounted the aforementioned differences to show love to you?
3. How does the Holy Spirit help us know that we abide in God?
4. What do you think about the day of judgment? Is it something to look forward to, or to fear? A matter of indifference?

Week #8—*Overcoming the World* 1 John 4:20-5:5—Daniel Tang

BIG IDEA

Love of God, belief in Jesus, obedience to God's commandments, and love of one another are all bound together in the Christian life and are evidence of our true faith.

COMMENTARY

This passage unites love and obedience together under the banner of faith. John points out two reasons why love of God and love of our fellow Christians are inseparable. First, it is easier to love something you can see than to love something you can't see. Second, being born of God, as love is perfected in us (4:12), our love for others who are born of God increases.

How do we know that we love the children of God? By loving God and obeying His commandments! John typically uses love for the church as a basis of knowing we love God (2:10, 4:20), but here it is stated in reverse. This emphasizes how inseparable they are. Next, John links loving God and keeping His commandments, as before (2:3–4, 3:24). The Christian does not keep God's commandments out of obligation or as a way to pay for salvation. Instead, we obey because we love.

How are we able to do these things? Our faith has "conquered the world," so that our acts of obedience are not burdensome (5:3–4). Through our faith, God empowers us and frees us to follow Him. Obedience becomes a joy, not a burden! Faith is nothing short of a miracle, a gift from God that makes us alive (Ephesians 2:4–8) and brings us into his family (1 John 5:1). Through our faith, God gives us a new nature. When we obey, we act according to our new nature and follow the path that God has set out for us (Philippians 2:13, Ephesians 2:18, 1 John 3:14). That doesn't sound burdensome, does it? As Jesus says in Matthew 11:30, "My yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry." And "you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13)

RESPONSE

We love to talk about love. Rightly so, because God is love. When it comes to the words obedience or doctrine, sometimes our legalism detectors start sounding warning bells. After all, isn't Christianity about love, not rules? While it's certainly possible to get stuck in the weeds, the fact remains that love, truth, and obedience are inseparable. True love is shaped by the commandments God has set out for us. This has always been God's intent in the law (Matthew 22:36–40). More than that, our faith makes God's commandments our joy, rather than our burden. When we see the law as an expression of his holy and loving nature, meant for our good, we can join David in Psalm 19 in saying, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul," and, "the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." (v7, 8 ESV) Our faith truly overcomes the world!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What commandments does John refer to in 5:2–3?
2. How does obedience to God's commandments show love to the children of God? Does 5:2 change how you think of loving your fellow Christian? If so, how?
3. Does obedience to God ever seem burdensome? In what ways? What can you do in that situation?
4. How is it that David was able to talk about God's commandments as he did in Psalm 19? Are we able to think about them in the same way? If so, how?
5. How has faith enabled you to "conquer the world" in your life?

Week #9—Assurance: The Spirit, the Water & the Blood

1 John 5:4-21—Todd Jensen

BIG IDEA

1 John 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.”

COMMENTARY

What struck me during this study, is the full realization that John was there. He was there at the beginning (John 1:35-39). He was there through the many healing miracles. He doled out food and collected leftovers when Jesus fed the 5000 from a few loaves of bread and fish. He was there when Jesus walked on water. He was there when Jesus was taken and hung on the cross. He was there when Jesus appeared to the disciples after rising from the dead. He was there when Jesus ascended. He was there. So, what does an old man, who walked with Jesus while He was alive, and served Him after He ascended have to say?

John assures us that our faith is not unfounded. Who is this Jesus that John talks about? He is the Son of the Living God. When the feelings fade and the emotions dry up, and times get tough, how do we know? We know that Jesus is the Son of God:

- Through Water – Matthew 3:13-17.
- Through the Testimony of the Spirit – Matthew 3:16.
- Through the Testimony of the Father – Matthew 3:17.
- Through the Blood on the Cross – Matthew 27:32-56.

As a believer in Christ, John offers you 3 more assurances in vs. 18-19:

- Anyone born of Christ does not continue to sin.
- God protects His children.
- We know that we are children of God.

John wasn't expecting perfection in your Christian walk. He knows the evil one is persistent and powerful. He also knows the power that overcame the evil one! If you struggle with doubt, or fear, then turn your heart to the love of Jesus Christ. As we read in 1 John 4:18 – perfect love casts out fear. Repent of any sin that is keeping you from good relationship with Christ, or your neighbor. Then show Christ's love to those around you!

RESPONSE

What is our response to faith in God's love for us?

- Read your Bible.
- Pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Obey Christ in love and take hold of your life in Christ so that sin is not your master.
- Know that God keeps us safe and evil can't harm us.
- Keep yourselves from idols – know and worship the True God. Don't settle for anything less!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I pray that the Holy Spirit guides your discussions. Listen to His voice and share what is laid on your heart.

1. Is there someone that God is laying on your heart that needs prayer right now? Either share that request with your community group if appropriate or be sure you follow through with praying for them. Why not contact them and let them know you were compelled to keep them in prayer!
2. What are some of the things you can do to restore, or strengthen your faith?
3. What are some of the insights you learned from the study of John?
4. How will you assure a friend

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