



Written by:

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INTRODUCTION

The three letters of John were written by a mature disciple who was dramatically transformed by his encounter with Jesus Christ. John was a young man when he began following Christ. His temper earned him the nickname "Son of Thunder" Ultimately the "Son of Thunder" became the "Apostle of Love." As an eyewitness of Christ's ministry, the apostle John proclaimed in these letters what he had seen and heard of Christ so a conflicted early church might not be led astray.

In a day not unlike ours, when captivating teachers expounded compelling new ideas, he warned his readers that Christ alone is the true source of life and love. Christ's love is always to overflow in our lives. As Christ's dear children we are to love not with words or but with actions, guided by truth.

John writes these letters from the perspective of an aged saint who has learned what really matters. His first letter counters the temptation to embrace false teaching, to love the world, or to practice religion not rooted in genuine and sacrificial love. The second letter encourages truth and the separation from those who refuse to embrace the truth. The third addresses a threat to the church of a person who loved to be first.

All of John's letters encourage the followers of Christ to know and love the truth, and to walk in it. John had no greater joy than hearing from those who chose this life. You are encouraged to join the host of followers whose lives have been transformed and whose faith has been deepened through study of these love-soaked letters.

LESSON ONE: 1 JOHN 1:1-7

OPENING QUESTION: *Name something unusual about the beginnings of your life.*

1. Read the entire book of 1 John.

What is the author's tone?

What are the repeated phrases and ideas that represent what the author holds most important?

Why do you think the letter was written? What difference will it make as you study it?

READ 1 JOHN 1:1-7

2. What indicates that the author of this letter is providing an eyewitness account?

How does this strengthen his message?

3. Describe Jesus as fully as you can from these passages:

1 John 1:1-7

John 1:1-18

4. What was John emphasizing by referring to Christ as the “Word of Life”? (John 1:4-5)

5. What is the basis of true fellowship
with God? (see also John 15:1-16)

with one another?

6. Read Acts 2:42-47. How does the example of the early church challenge your idea of fellowship?

7. What will increase your joy? (v.4)

Memory Verse: “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.” *1 John 1:3*

Prayer Guide: Lord Jesus, increase my love.

LESSON TWO: 1 JOHN 1:5-2:14

OPENING QUESTION: *Has fear of darkness ever shaped a choice you made?*

1. What was God's command about love from the beginning?

Deuteronomy 6:5

Leviticus 19:18

2. What was God's new command about love?

1 John 2:5-8

John 13:34

3. What claims did people make about themselves?
What deceptions accompanied those claims?

Claim

Deception

1 John 1:6

1 John 1:8

1 John 1:10

1 John 2:6

1 John 2:9

4. What prompts you to make "claims" about your past or your performance that may be deceptive?

What is the impact of such deception on your relationship with God and one another?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4-6 and John 8:12. What does God's light provide for life?
6. Why is darkness such a threat?

Where have you seen or where would you like to see more of God's light in your life?

7. What has Christ done *once* for all sinners? (1 John 1:7, 2:2, Hebrews 10:10)

How do you receive this? (John 1:12)

8. What is Christ's *ongoing* work for sinners?
(1 John 2:1, see also John 17:9, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25)

How do you receive this? (1 John 1:9, Psalm 32:3-5)

Read Romans 6:1-14

9. What are the dangers of disbelieving God's forgiveness?
10. What are the dangers of taking God's forgiveness too lightly?
11. Where in your life do you need the freedom of greater forgiveness?

Note: John's three-fold encouragement, recognizing fathers, little children and young men, emphasizes the spiritual maturity of each group.

Memory Verse: "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6

Prayer Guide: Lord Jesus, help me to walk in Your light.

LESSON THREE: 1 JOHN 2:15-29

OPENING QUESTION: *Recall something you longed for deeply and found unsatisfying after you received it.*

Note: When John uses the word “world”, (Gr. kosmos), he can mean either the created material universe, which is good, or the world of sin that stands in aggressive opposition to God.
(*NIV Application Commentary*)

1. How would you define the meaning of the *world* as used here? What phrase could you replace it with?
2. Contrast the meaning of the *world* in this passage with the meaning of the *world* in John 3:16-21.
3. Why are you not to love the *world* that John denounces? (Luke 16:13, James 4:4)
4. Why is it so difficult not to love the *world*? Why is it so dangerous to love it? (Luke 9:25)
5. What is the root cause of the *world's* ungodliness?

Romans 1:18:22

James 1:13-15

Read Genesis 3:1-19

6. What are three ways the *world* lures people away from God? v.16
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
7. How are each of the *world's* "lures" illustrated by Eve's temptation and fall?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
8. Which of these currently poses the most danger to you?
9. How did the *antichrist* pose another threat to the church? How does this remain a threat today? vv. 18-23
10. Read John 17:14-18. What was Jesus' prayer of protection for you as one of His followers?
11. How does this encourage you to live without fear in a dangerous *world*?
12. Read 1 John 2:24-29. What equips you today to engage in the *world*?
What difference will you allow this to make in your life this week?

Memory Verse: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one." *John 17:15*

Prayer Guide: Lord, help me engage wisely with the *world*.

LESSON FOUR: 1 JOHN 3:1-3:24

OPENING QUESTION: *Describe with one word the kind of love you received from your human father.*

1. What do you think is the impact of a human father's love on his child?
2. Describe God the Father's love for you. How is it different from even the best human father's love?

3. What has God done to show His love?

1 John 3:16

1 John 4:9-10

4. What allows you to become God's child and receive His love?

John 1:12-13

Romans 8:14-17

5. Why does sin mar the relationship God intends to have with His children? 1 John 3:4-8

6. What evidences of your love for God will be reflected in the way you treat sin?
(1 John 1:8-10, 3:8-10)

7. What evidence of your own struggle against sin is there in your

- prayer life?

- interaction with others?

- work habits

- use of money

- use of time

8. What basic commands are critical to live the Christian life?

v.23a

v.23b

Why do these commands belong together? How will practicing them together bring about God's intended family resemblance?

9. Review the entire passage. List the ways you are to show love to others.

10. What is personally most challenging as you seek to love in this way?

11. Why did Jesus say that love is the distinguishing mark of Christians? (John 13:34)

Memory Verse: "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." 1 John 3:18

Prayer Guide: Lord, help me love like Jesus.

LESSON FIVE: 1 JOHN 4:1-5:21

OPENING QUESTION: *Where did you see love in action this week?*

Note: God's love (Gr. agape) loves the unlovely and unworthy; it is therefore neither elicited nor motivated by the loveliness or worth of its object. (*Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*)

1. What does it mean to believe that "GOD IS LOVE"?
Why is this difficult to grasp?

2. From these chapters list what God did in love for you.

3. What response to such love pleases God? How will you respond?
1 John 4:7-16

1 John 5:2-3

1 John 5:21

4. How can you be sure that you belong to God and really are His child?

5. What gives you confidence
 - facing the world? 1 John 5:4-5, 20 (see also John 17:3)
 - facing death? 1 John 5:11
 - facing judgment? 1 John 4:16-18 (see also 1 John 2:28)
 - facing fear? 1 John 4:16-18
 - as you pray? 1 John 5:14-15

6. What do you think can lead to *hatred* if not dealt with? (1 John 4:20)

7. Read Genesis 4:1-8. What lessons are provided in this story about *hatred*?

8. What steps can you take to prevent the seeds of *hatred* in your life? (see James 3:13-18)

Note: John counters the false teaching of his time that denied the divinity of Jesus. They taught that the divine Christ entered Jesus at His baptism and left before His death.

9. Which of John's teachings emphasize the divinity of Jesus? What difference does it make that Jesus is both fully human and divine?

10. Why do you think John ends with the warning against idols?

Memory Verse: "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

Prayer Guide: Lord, help me know and rely on Your love.

OPENING QUESTION: *Have you ever received a message that provided important truth told with love?*

Note: Commentators debate about the identity of the *chosen lady* and her *children*. Most view this as a local church personified as a lady with the members as her children.

1. Read through this entire short letter that is a model of first-century correspondence and identify the letter's key ideas. Why do you think the letter was written?
2. What is *truth's* role? vv.1-4
3. What threatened truth? vv.7-11
4. Why is the truth of Christ's humanity important? What difference does it make that Jesus came as God in a human body?
5. What lengths are you willing to go to in order to know truth? Preserve truth? How do you respond when people say, "you have your truth and I have mine"?
6. How were false teachings to be resisted then, and how are they to be resisted now?

7. Why are *truth* and *love* to remain in partnership?

8. Describe the danger of

- walking in truth without love.

- walking in love without truth.

9. Why did John, who had commended his readers for walking in truth, still warn them about deception? vv.7-9

10. What happens when you fail to walk in truth? vv.8-9, (see also 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

11. What harsh warning did John issue? vv.10-11

How do you reconcile these words with his earlier words about love? vv.5-6

12. What was John's hope for this Christian community? What is your hope for the Christian Community?

Memory Verse: "Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love." 2John 3

Prayer Guide: Lord, help me walk in Your truth and love.

LESSON SEVEN: 3 JOHN 1-14

OPENING QUESTION: *What phrase or word do you use in messages to express affection?*

1. What was John's relationship with Gaius?
2. Describe the qualities in Gaius.
3. To whom is hospitality to be extended and why?

vv.5-8

Matthew 25:34-35

Romans 12:13

Hebrews 13:1-2

1.Peter 4-9

4. How freely do you extend hospitality to others?
What steps might you take to extend it more?

5. What do you think was most important to Diotrephes?
6. What characterizes a person who “loves to be first”?
7. How did Diotrephes damage the church community then?

How do such leaders damage the church today?

What personal warning is there for you in your leadership and service?

8. What were John’s steps to deal with Diotrephes?

v.9

v.10

vv.13-14

9. What do you think are the pitfalls of writing about someone’s misbehavior in a letter?
10. Why was face-to-face engagement to be desired and why does it remain important when communicating hard truth?

Memory Verse: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”
3 John 4

Prayer Guide: Lord, be first in my life.

REVIEW LESSON

1. What key verses do you want to remember?
2. What truth about Jesus do you want most to take with you from this study?
3. What did you learn about love that will impact the way you live?
4. What most threatens truth?
5. How did the apostle John, the writer of these letters, provide an example for you of caring for others?
6. What challenges were presented in dealing with divisive people?
7. What are you thankful for?