

## *Acts 2 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Seven: John's Epistles – 1 John, 2 John, 3 John*

Overview: skim the book of 1 John.

- 1) Make a list of contrasting words or phrases that John used (for example: light and darkness [1:5, 2:8]). What general truth about the Christian life do these opposite terms illustrate? **Some of the contrasting terms and phrases John uses are: light and darkness (1:5; 2:8), lie and truth (1:6; 2:4), deceive and truth (1:8), sin and righteousness (1:9), love and hate (2:9-10), passing away and living forever (2:17), deny and acknowledge (2:23), death and life (3:14, 5:16), from the world and from God (4:5-6), listens and does not listen (4:6), spirit of truth and spirit of falsehood (4:6), knowing God and not knowing God (4:7-8), fear and love (4:18); believing and not believing (5:10), and having life and not having life (5:12). The contrasting terms illustrate that those who know God and have fellowship with Him are radically different than those who do not know Him.**
- 2) What can you ascertain about the growing problem the church faced near the turn of the first century from the following verses: 1 John 2:18, 26; 3:7; 4:1, 3, 6; 2 John 7-8; 3 John 4, 11? **Near the turn of the first century, the presence of false teachers in the church was a growing problem. The heresy known as Gnosticism did not fully develop until the second century (after John's time), but the issues John addressed in this epistle indicate that an early form of it was already threatening the church.**
- 3) According to these verses, what can you "know" and how can you know it?
  - a) 1 John 2:3 **We have come to know Him if we obey His commands.**
  - b) 1 John 2:5-6 **We are "in Him" if we walk as Jesus did.**
  - c) 1 John 2:18 **It is the last hour when antichrists come.**
  - d) 1 John 3:16 **We know what love is by Jesus' example of laying down His life for us.**
  - e) 1 John 3:18-20 **We belong to the truth when we love not only with words but with actions.**
  - f) 1 John 3:24 **He lives in us by the Spirit He gave us.**
  - g) 1 John 4:6 **We recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood by whether or not a person listens to and accepts apostolic teaching.**
  - h) 1 John 4:16-17 **We will have confidence on the day of judgment, because we are like Him and because we know and rely on His love for us.**
  - i) 1 John 5:14-15 **He hears us and will answer our prayers once we have confidence that we can approach God.**
  - j) 1 John 5:18-20 **We are distinctly different from those who are of the world ("under the control of the evil one"), we have been enlightened to know God through Jesus, and we don't allow sin to remain in us (we are "born of God" and therefore have a new nature.)**
  - k) 1 John 5:12-13 (when John said, "I write *these things*," he seemingly referred to everything he had written) **John wanted his readers to know that they had eternal life. We can be certain of this if we believe in the Son of God, have adhered to Scriptural teaching, and are conforming to Christ's likeness (in love and in obedience.) There are other things John says that we can know (included above), but his main concern was giving evidences of true fellowship. This not only gives us assurance but also discernment in recognizing false teachers.**

Read 1 John 1-2.

- 4) Which verses in chapters 1-2 set the bar very high for those who follow Christ? Which verses give proof that God also makes provision for our failures? **In the following verses, John presents a very high standard for the believer. 1:6 says that if we walk in darkness we cannot claim fellowship with God. 2:3-6 says that if we know Him we will obey His commands and “walk as Jesus walked.” 2:11 says that if we hate our brother we are in darkness and do not know where we are going. 2:15 tells us we must not love the world if God’s love is in us. However, 1 John 1:9-2:2 says that we will inevitably sin and tells us how to be cleansed. Apart from God’s provision of Jesus, no one could meet His standard.**
- 5) According to 1 John 2 and what you have discovered so far in 1 John, what is the spirit of antichrist (see also 1 John 4:1-6)? What evidence do you see that this spirit is present in the world today? **The spirit of antichrist is all that sets itself against Christ. It denies Him (2:22; 4:2-3) and denies or rejects His representatives (4:6). The spirit of antichrist is most certainly present in the world today. An upsurge in the efforts of atheists and false teachers to dissuade others from faith in Christ (or in God at all) is one proof. 1 John 4:3 says that this spirit “is coming and even now is already in the world.”**
- 6) Reread 1 John 2:15-16. From what kind of worldly cravings, lust, or boasting do you need to be freed? Is there anything in your life that you have perhaps failed to recognize as “worldly”? **Personal sharing**

Read 1 John 3-5.

- 7) What contrast does John draw between Cain and Jesus in 3:11-20? **Jesus modeled true love by sacrificing Himself for His “brothers,” whereas Cain (who murdered his own brother for doing right) represents the self-centered person who does not love others and hates those who do what is right.**
- 8) According to these verses, whom is the Christian especially called to love and how is this love to be manifested: 3:14, 16-18; 4:7, 9-11, 20-21; 5:1-2 (also 2:10)? **Christians should especially love other Christians (“brothers,” “one another,” “the children of God”). We show this love by sacrificial deeds (i.e. “laying down our lives for our brothers” [3:16]), not merely in words (3:18). Helping with material provisions is specifically mentioned (3:17). God modeled this love by sending Jesus to atone for us (4:9-10). He showed us that true love is not dependent upon reciprocation (4:10). Our love for other believers is also demonstrated through our love for God and obedience to His commands (5:2).**
- 9) Name some specific ways you can to apply the teaching in 1 John 3:11-24, 4:7-5:2 to your present life, in action as well as in attitude. **Personal sharing**

From 1 John:

- 10) According to 1 John 1-5, what proves the existence of true fellowship with the Father? What indicates that fellowship between an individual and God is non-existent (include references)? **We know we have fellowship with God if we “walk in the light” (1:7), keep a short account of our sins before Him (confess them regularly [1:9]), obey him (2:3), love other believers (2:10, 3:16-19, 4:21, 5:1, etc.), persevere in the truth (2:24), have the testimony of His Spirit within (3:24, 4:13, 15), and have no fear of judgment (4:17-18). Conversely, if we live in darkness (1:6), love the world (2:15-16), claim to be without sin or continue in it (1:8, 10; 3:6, 9; 5:18), fail to love other Christians (2:9, 11; 3:10, 14-15), fail to persevere in the faith (2:28), fail to do what is right (3:10), and fail to acknowledge Jesus [as fully human and fully divine [4:2]], then fellowship with God is nonexistent.**

- 11) According to 1 John, how are love, obedience (right living), and faith (belief) related to one another? Include references. **First, all three are concrete evidences of our salvation. “With St. John the grounds of assurance are ethical, not emotional; objective, not subjective; plain and tangible, not microscopic and elusive. They are three, or rather, they are a trinity: Belief, Righteousness, [and] Love. By his belief in Christ, his keeping God’s commandments, and his love to the brethren, a Christian man is recognized and recognizes himself as begotten of God.”<sup>i</sup> Second, each is a proof of the other: belief is evidenced by obedience and love. Love is evidenced in belief and obedience. Demonstrating love to God and His children [1 John 3:23-24; 5:1-5] is evidence of obedience.**
- 12) Reread 1 John 4:1-6. Which teaching(s) that prevail in your culture (overt or subliminal) need to be tested by you and which of these messages have you (at least in part) “bought into”? **Personal sharing**

Read 2 John and 3 John.

- 13) Compare 2 John 10 and 3 John 8. What admonition is presented as both a positive and a negative command? **While hospitality toward believers is essential, hospitality extended to false teachers is forbidden.**
- 14) List themes that are common to:
- a) 2 and 3 John **Both letters seem to be addressed to an individual who is “loved in the truth” (2 John 1, 3 John 1). In both letters, John said he had joy that those who would read the letter were walking in the truth (2 John 4, 3 John 4). Both mention hospitality (2 John 10, 3 John 8) and that John would have preferred to talk with them face to face and hoped to do so soon (2 John 12, 3 John 13-14).**
  - b) 1, 2, and 3 John **Joy is mentioned in connection with the addressee in all three letters (1 John 1:4, 2 John 4, 3 John 4). Truth, love, and doing right are common concepts. In all three, John was concerned with the threat and identification of false teachers (antichrists).**
- 15) In the last lesson, you were asked to consider a deceived individual for whom you would pray. What have you learned in 1, 2, and 3 John that could help you know how to pray more specifically?  
**Personal sharing**

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<sup>i</sup> Kruse, C. G. (2000). *The Letters of John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (200). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.