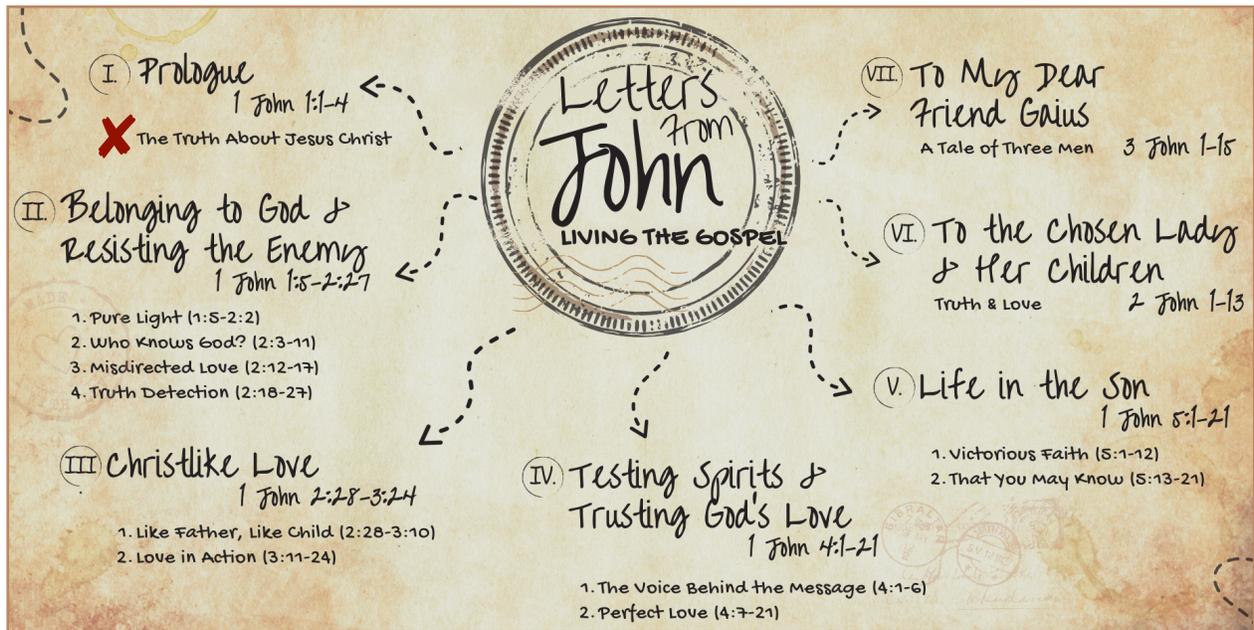


Letters  
From  
John

LIVING THE GOSPEL

**PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE**





# 1 | The Truth About Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-4)

Sept 8-14, 2024

## WELCOME!

We are so glad you are joining us in studying the letters of John. When the church studies together, it opens up wonderful opportunities for God to speak to us, and through us. Connecting the Sunday messages with personal study helps us understand God's Word better and remember it longer.

This guide is structured to walk you through the process of studying scripture for yourself, with the primary goal of understanding the messages of John's letters as a whole. In this process, you will first *explore* and *comprehend* what was written. What words did John use? What did he say? Next, we want to *interpret* John's original meaning, the message he wanted to communicate. Finally, we will be ready to *apply* the passage and ask, "How should I respond? How should this change me?" This may be some action you should take, or it may be developing a new perspective of God and his character.

While you work through each section, remember that the Bible is first about God. Through it, God reveals his character, actions, and intentions. Self-discovery comes as a result of God-discovery. When we know God, we know truth, and that truth guides us to see and understand ourselves and the world.

Each week, THE BIG PICTURE summarizes what we have learned in previous weeks, along with occasional background information and historical notes to orient us within the letter and all of scripture.

**HOMEWORK:** Beginning the second week, the study will be divided into four days of homework. The weekly small group discussions will use selected questions from the homework (see SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION). Some of the questions may be challenging. Do your best to answer and then discuss the question in your small group. The most important part of the study is the process of digging into scripture and contemplating God's Word, not getting the "right" answer to the questions. You will get more out of the process if you study the text on your own, rather than checking your study Bible notes, so try to wait to refer to other aids until after you have completed the questions on your own.

Ideally, all or most of the homework will be completed **before** the Sunday message covers the same passage. Then when you sit down on Sunday, you will be familiar with the passage and ready to interact deeply with the message.

## THE BIG PICTURE

The letters of John, particularly 1 John, are some of the best-loved letters in scripture. Some of our favorite verses of encouragement come from John's writing. John writes with the heart of a pastor—clarifying the heart of the gospel, encouraging believers, challenging them to live in obedience and love, and warning them about the dangers of false teachers.

Last year we looked at Paul's letter to the Romans. We encountered the height and depth of the gospel—what it is and what it means for us. John's letters offer a practical call to action—encouragement to live in response to the gospel forgiveness we have experienced.

Following Jesus' ascension, John remained with the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Early church fathers recorded that he left the city and relocated to Ephesus shortly before its destruction by Rome in AD 70. John remained there until his exile to the island of Patmos (Rev. 2:8-3:22). Scholars generally agree that John wrote his gospel first (AD 85-90), followed by his letters (AD 90-95), and the Revelation (AD 95-96). Following his exile, John lived out his days in Ephesus.

When John wrote these letters, approximately six decades separated the people from Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. Errors and distortions have begun to creep into the churches. There are conflicts between church members. People come and go, often taking others with them. The challenges of the late first-century church are eerily similar to those we face today.

Sometimes called the "apostle of love," John mentions "love" more times in his first letter than in any other book in the Bible, except for Psalms. John's writing style is designed to stir emotions and educate minds as he calls the church to love and fellowship.

John's first letter flows more like a sermon than an argument, or even a typical letter. He moves seamlessly between topics, often circling back to repeat and reinforce a point that he made previously. His repetition is part of his teaching style, and by the end of the study, you will be well acquainted with his main themes.

John begins his first letter by establishing why his teaching about Jesus can be trusted. He writes as an eyewitness of Jesus' life and character, who wants to encourage the fellowship the apostles shared with God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son in the churches John oversees.

## RESOURCES

[BIBLEPROJECT: Books of 1-3 John Summary: A Complete Animated Overview](#)



### AUDIO BIBLE APPS/WEBSITES

**Bible.is**  
[live.Bible.is](https://live.Bible.is)

  
[biblegateway.com](https://biblegateway.com)

 **YouVersion**  
[bible.com](https://bible.com)

## SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

**COMMITMENT:** Commit to attending group every week, making it a priority to be prepared, present, and on time.

**CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY:** What is said in the group stays in the group. Keeping things shared in the group confidential builds trust and shows value to the person. Confidentiality can prevent gossip that only values the story. Jesus always valued the person above their story or their sin.

**THIS IS A SAFE GROUP:** We will all do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open & honest with their struggles and victories. This allows for authenticity and for everyone to share openly.

**LISTEN WELL:** Let's value one another during our discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you're going to respond or what you're going to say next.

**ALLOW PAUSES:** Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to allow the person sharing the chance to finish and the group to consider what was shared before responding.

**ALLOW SILENCE:** It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

**NO 'CROSSTALK':** Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

**NO FIXING:** We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Encourage, speak truth, and point to Jesus, but don't try to solve or fix each other.

**PRAYER:** Promise to pray for others in the group regularly.

**NO RESCUING:** When people are sharing something deeply personal there can be a tendency to try and make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

**ENCOURAGEMENT:** Everyone in the group may be at a different point in their relationship with Jesus. Accept each group member where they are and for who they are and always encourage them to take that next step in becoming more like Jesus.

**LEAVE SPACE TO SHARE:** Be sensitive about the amount of time you share. Be sure to leave space for others who hesitate to jump in.

**BE SELF-AWARE:** Pay attention to how you affect the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

**USE 'I' STATEMENTS:** It's easiest to talk about the issues of others, but we want to share with each other. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them," "they," "we," "us," "the church," etc.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** It's important to use this time to consider where we are related to any given subject or issue and what God would have us do. How am I walking this out in my personal life? What changes does God want me to make?

**RESOLVE CONFLICT BIBLICALLY:** When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, choose to honor God and each other in dealing with these issues. These are a few key Scripture references regarding conflict resolution (there are many more).

- Someone sinned against you (Matt 18:15-20).
- Restoring someone in sin (Gal 6:1-5).
- Forgiving a sinner (Col 3:12-13).
- Reconciling differences (Matt 5:23-24; 7:1-5).

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME

### ICE BREAKER

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray  
No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1, 2, & 3 JOHN**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** Read all of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John aloud. What words and themes stand out to you?

2. **EXPLORE:** What does John say about "the eternal life" (v. 2)? To what does that phrase refer?

**APPLY:** John is not talking about a future reality. He claims that Jesus IS eternal life. How has knowing Jesus been life-giving for you? In what specific areas have you witnessed him bringing life from death?

3. **EXPLORE:** What do you remember about the apostle John, his life and personality, from previous studies of the New Testament? (John is mentioned in all four Gospels, Acts, Galatians, and Revelation.)

4. **EXPLORE:** Reread 1 John 1:1. What did John hear, see, and touch? (Skim these events for examples: Luke 5:1-11; Luke 8:40-56; Luke 9:28-36; John 20:1-9; Luke 24:36-40.)

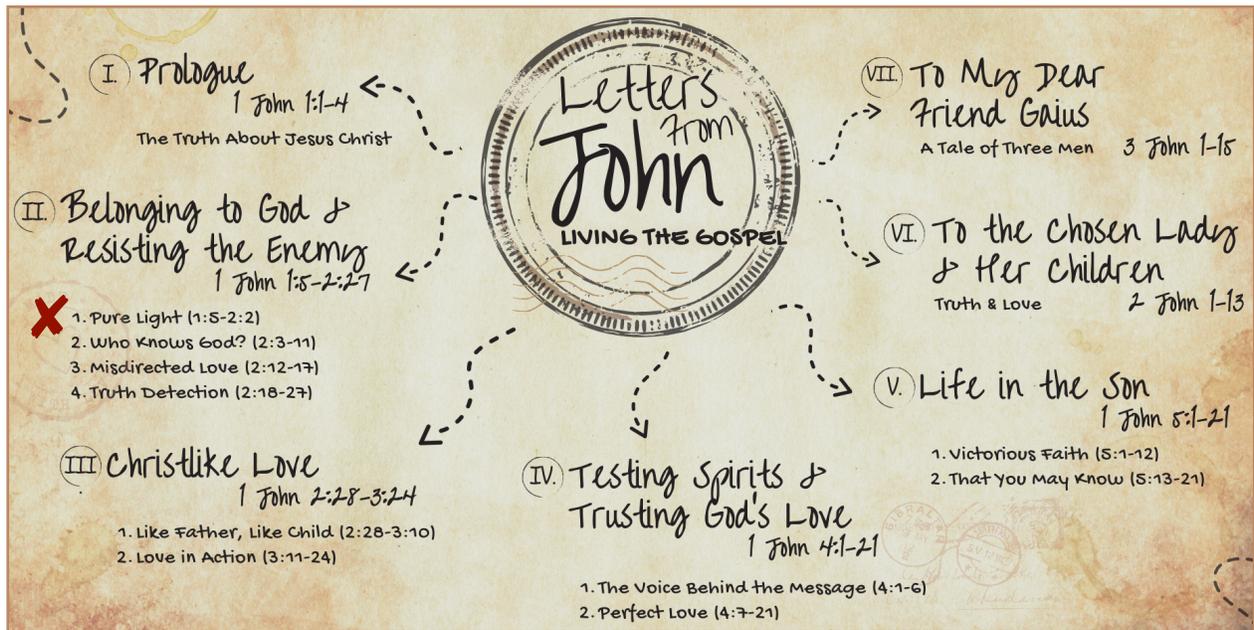
**APPLY:** John roots his testimony in the apostles' eyewitness experiences. None of us are eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, but we are witnesses to God's work in our lives. How have your experiences of God uniquely prepared you to testify about him?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 2 | Pure Light (1 John 1:5-2:2)

Sept 15-21, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

Last week, we looked briefly at the opening paragraph of John's first letter. Much like the opening lines of the Gospel of John, this letter begins with a proclamation of the appearance of Jesus, the Christ, in the world. Jesus Christ is the Word and eternal life. He was with the Father from the beginning and was revealed to the world. Jesus, as John describes him, was not a ghost or vision. John proclaims that Jesus really was present and active. His disciples *heard* him speak. They *saw* his miracles. They *touched* him.

For us today, John's words are evidence that Jesus was not a character created to sell a new religion to ignorant people. What we read in the Gospels, including John, are eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Those living in the first century were not likely to question the truth of the Gospels because they contained miracles, like many people do today. His world was much more open to spiritual realities. However, their beliefs about the world did influence what they thought was possible and how they understood the message about Jesus. Many people thought the spiritual world was superior to the material world and this belief tainted the way that some thought about Jesus. When you believe the material world is filthy and degrading, rather than something created by a good God, then a holy Christ must come from purer, higher realms. The Christ, they reasoned, must be spirit.

As we dive deeper into John's letter, we will begin to see some hints of what was occurring in some churches. Some who claim to be part of the fellowship of believers have beliefs and behaviors that contradict John's teaching. In this week's passage, John begins to address some of these false ideas and describe the characteristics of being in fellowship with God.

# Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John this week. (Around 30 min.) Read it in a single sitting or break it up over a few days. (YouVersion and other Bible apps can also read it to you while you follow along.) Note one or two observations or questions from your reading.

## FOR REVIEW: READ 1 JOHN 1:1-4.

1. What reasons does John give for proclaiming what he and others have seen and heard?
2. Using a dictionary or thesaurus, write out a definition of FELLOWSHIP that fits John's use of the word. What are some synonyms that convey this meaning?

FELLOWSHIP:

3. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*. It indicates an active partnership, not a passive relationship. Using these definitions, paraphrase (write in your own words) verse 3.
4. **APPLY** How does this understanding of fellowship challenge your understanding of your relationship with other Christians? How does it impact the way you see your relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

**PRAY:** As you close your time today, ask God to bless your study of the letters of John and to help you overcome any obstacles that make it difficult to spend regular time in the study of his Word.

# Day Two .....➔

**READ THIS WEEK’S PASSAGE: 1 JOHN 1:5-2:2.**

- 5. Summarizing is a great tool to increase your understanding of something you have read. In 2 or 3 sentences, summarize 1 John 1:5-2:2.
  
- 6. In 1:5, John summarizes the message he and others have proclaimed. What are the two key points in his message?
  
- 7. Later, we will see that John and the church have been impacted by false teachers. In this passage, John addresses three false claims about fellowship with God and their consequences. Today, we will look at the first claim and John's correction. Complete the chart below.

Verse	Claim	Consequences
	If we...	we... and...
	But if we...	we have... and...

- 8. What is meant by walking “in the light” or “in the darkness?” Read the **Gospel of John 3:19-21** for more insight.
  
- 9. **APPLY** Consider the concepts of light, darkness, and fellowship. What keeps us from having true fellowship with God and with other Christians? What changes could move us toward authentic Christian fellowship?

**PRAY:** Is anything hindering your fellowship with God and with others? Ask him to help you overcome these barriers to walking in his light.

# Day Three .....➔

## READ 1 JOHN 1:8-10.

10. Here John addresses two more false claims, with his counterclaim sandwiched in between. Note these claims and their consequences.

Verse	Claim	Consequences
	If we claim...	we... and...
	If we...	he is... and will... and...
	If we claim...	we... and...

11. What do these claims tell us about the person walking in darkness/sin? What is different for the person walking in the light of fellowship with God?

12. Why is confessing our sins necessary if God is already aware of them? Why isn't changing behavior enough?

13. **APPLY** Given the positive consequences that come from confessing our sins, why do we so often hesitate to admit them to God? To each other?

**PRAY:** Review the claims and counterclaims in 1:5-10. What characteristics of God do you see revealed in these verses? List all you can find, then praise God for who he is.

# Day Four .....>

## READ 1 JOHN 2:1-2.

- 14. To whom does John address his comments in 2:1? What does this imply to you about John's relationship with the people of this church?
  
- 15. So far in the letter, John has given two reasons for writing. What are they (1:4, 2:1)? How do these reasons relate to one another?
  
- 16. Although his goal is to prevent his children from sinning, John is aware that they will still sin occasionally. He points them to the good news that Jesus is our advocate with the Father and atoning sacrifice (or propitiation). Define these terms using a dictionary or thesaurus.

ADVOCATE:	
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PROPITIATION:	
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- 17. **APPLY** What does it mean to you, personally, that Jesus is both advocate and propitiation? How does this impact the way you walk daily in fellowship with God? With others?

**PRAY:** Reflect on Jesus as you advocate and propitiation. Thank him for willingly taking on these roles so that you could have a restored relationship with him.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray  
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 1:1-2:2**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 2) Using a dictionary or thesaurus, write out a definition of FELLOWSHIP that fits John's use of the word. What are some synonyms that convey this meaning?

**APPLY:** (question 4) How does this understanding of fellowship challenge your understanding of your relationship with other Christians? How does it impact the way you see your relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 8) What is meant by walking "in the light" or "in the darkness?" Read the Gospel of John 3:19-21 for more insight.

**APPLY:** (question 9) Consider the concepts of light, darkness, and fellowship. What keeps us from having true fellowship with God and with other Christians? What changes could move us toward authentic Christian fellowship?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 12) Why is confession of our sins necessary if God is already aware of them? Why isn't changing behavior enough?

**APPLY:** (question 13) Given the positive consequences that come from confessing our sins, why do we so often hesitate to admit them to God? To each other?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 15) So far in the letter, John has given two reasons for writing. What are these reasons (1:4, 2:1)? How do these reasons relate to one another?

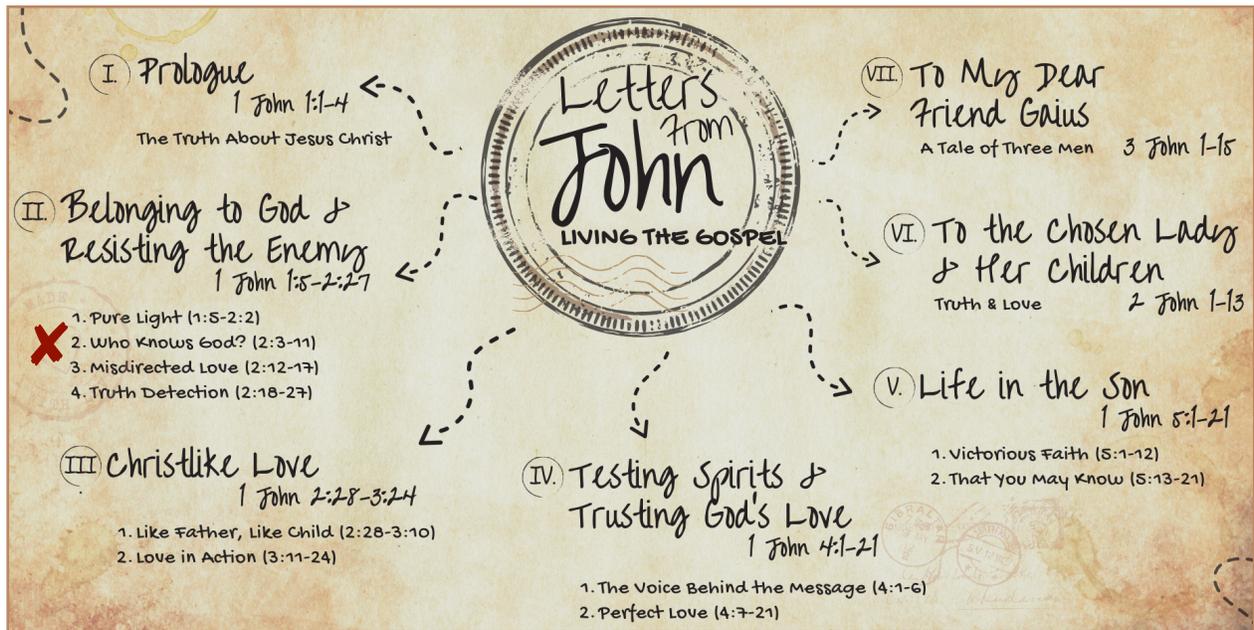
**APPLY:** (question 17) What does it mean to you, personally, that Jesus is both advocate and propitiation? How does this impact the way you walk daily in fellowship with God? With others?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



### 3 | Who Knows God? (1 John 2:3-11)

Sept 22-28, 2024

#### THE BIG PICTURE

In 1 John 1:5-2:2, John wrote about those who claimed to have fellowship with God. Apparently, some who claimed to be part of the Christian fellowship of the church were not living that way. Fellowship involves an active partnership toward a common goal, and fellowship with God goes beyond the simple awareness that he exists and created the world. God is light, and if we are partnered with him, then we, too, will live our lives in the light.

What is a sign that we are walking in the light? We recognize and confess our sins. Sin and darkness are connected. When we deceive ourselves by denying (and continuing) our sins, it reveals that we are walking in darkness. In the light, there is truth. And in the light is the forgiveness and purification that comes when we recognize the truth of our sins and confess them.

In his letter, John is not only speaking in general about sin and deception. He is also specifically warning about false teachers and their claims. Phrases like “if we claim,” “whoever claims,” and “whoever says” indicate that he is writing about the kinds of false ideas that were circulating in the churches. One of the strains of false teachings that became prominent in the second century was Gnosticism, and it appears that early forms of this belief may have begun to appear in the churches to whom John was writing. The Gnostics claimed to have ritualistic access to special knowledge not taught by the apostles. As you study this week’s passage, watch how John addresses the idea of knowing God.

In this week’s passage, John explains how to identify those who live in fellowship with God—those who know God and live in the light.

## Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. (Around 30 min.) Read it in a single sitting or break it up over a few days. (Or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along.)  
What is one new observation or question that you discovered?

### READ 1 JOHN 2:3-11.

1. What does this passage teach us about God? Note your observations.
2. How does this passage connect with the previous one? What theme or idea is continued in 2:3-11?
3. What are some of the keywords/ideas in this section? Note them here.
4. Summarize this section in two or three sentences.
5. **APPLY** Have you ever wondered if you really know God? How did/could you find the answer to that question?

**PRAY:** Choose one of your observations about the passage from above and talk to God about it. Thank or praise him for what you have learned. Or ask him for clarity about something you found challenging.

## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 2:1-6.

6. How does John say we can be certain we know God? Why is a person who claims to know God, but does not obey him, a liar?
7. Look up Matthew 7:21-23. How does Jesus communicate what 'knowing' him looks like?

Look back at Matthew 7:15-20 for the context. To whom will he say, "I never knew you" (v. 15)?

Connect Jesus' words in Matthew to John's words in today's passage. How can we discern the truth of a person's claim to be a Christian?

8. In 2:5a, the phrase 'love for God (NIV)' is literally 'the love of God,' and it could refer either to our love for God *or* God's love for us.

Consider both of these possibilities. How is the love of God made complete or perfect in those who are obedient? Does that mean we become perfectly obedient or loving? Why or why not?

9. **APPLY** How can 1 John 2:3-6 help us discern trustworthy Christian teachers? Does this mean pastors and teachers must be perfect? What would make someone untrustworthy?

**PRAY:** Look at 1 John 2:3. Ask God to show you how well you know him. Respond in prayer to whatever he reveals to you.

# Day Three .....➔

## READ 1 JOHN 2:3-11.

10. In this passage, John continues to discuss fellowship with God. He uses different phrases to describe our relationship with God and the behavior that is evidence of them. Compare these using several different translations and note any differences in the descriptions.

Verse	Relation to God?	Evidence?
v. 3		
vv. 5-6		
v. 10		

11. How does the phrase “live in him” add to or change your understanding of a relationship with God?

12. What does it mean to “live as Jesus did” (v. 6 NIV)? How do you know which things Jesus did are meant for us to imitate and which are specific to his life?

13. **APPLY** If you were perfectly living like Jesus (v. 6), what would your daily life look like? (Think specifically about *your* life, given your job, family, commitments, etc.) In what areas are you living most like Jesus? In which areas do you struggle most?

**PRAY:** Ask God to show you specific ways that you can walk more like Jesus walked. Write them down and pray over each of them.

## Day Four .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 2:7-11.

14. What command is John referring to that is both old and new? Look at 1 John 2:9-11, Leviticus 19:18, and John 13:34-35 to develop your answer.
  
15. How is the truth of the command seen in him and us? See John 15:12-13 and 1 John 3:16 for additional understanding.
  
16. John connects love with living in the light and hate with living in darkness. How do these lead to his statement that there is nothing in those who love their brother and sister to make them stumble? Why is this true?
  
17. **APPLY** *Agape* love can be defined as “an intelligent, purposeful attitude of esteem and devotion; a selfless, purposeful, outgoing attitude that desires to do good to the one loved.” How should Christians show this kind of love to one another when we have significant conflicts or differences of opinion? Do you find it easier to *agape* a group of people or an individual? Why?

**PRAY:** Consider your relationships. Is there anyone you should be more intentional about loving based on the above definition? Write their name(s) below and ask God to show you tangible ways to love them.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

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No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 2:3-11**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 4) Summarize this section (1 John 2:3-11) in two or three sentences.

**APPLY:** (question 5) Have you ever wondered if you really know God? How did/could you find the answer to that question?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 8) In 2:5a, the phrase 'love for God (NIV)' is literally 'the love of God,' and it could refer either to our love for God *or* God's love for us. Consider both of these possibilities. How is the love of God made complete or perfect in those who are obedient? Does that mean we become perfectly obedient or loving? Why or why not?

**APPLY:** (question 9) How can 1 John 2:3-6 help us discern trustworthy Christian teachers? Does this mean pastors and teachers must be perfect? What would make someone untrustworthy?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 12) What does it mean to "live as Jesus did" (v. 6 NIV)? How do you know which things Jesus did are meant for us to imitate and which are specific to his life?

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4. **EXPLORE:** (question 15) How is the truth of the command seen in him and us? See John 15:12-13 and 1 John 3:16 for additional understanding.

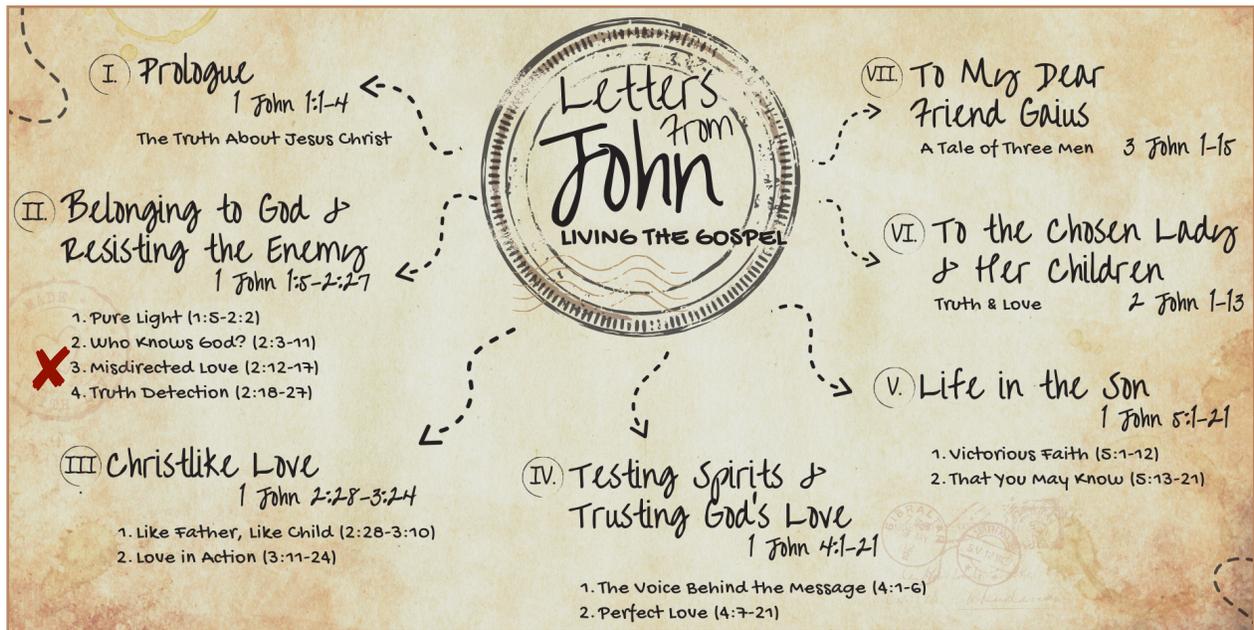
**APPLY:** (question 17) Agape love can be defined as "an intelligent, purposeful attitude of esteem and devotion; a selfless, purposeful, outgoing attitude that desires to do good to the one loved." How should Christians show this kind of love to one another when we have significant conflicts or differences of opinion? Do you find it easier to *agape* a group of people or an individual? Why?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 4 | Misdirected Love (1 John 2:12-17)

Sept 29-Oct 5, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

John gets straight to his point in his first letter. Those who claim to be in fellowship with God should show evidence of that relationship. The first evidence he tells us to expect is the awareness and confession of sins. Those who are close to God cannot help but see the reality of the sins they have committed. Of course, the point is to stop sinning altogether, but John knows we will not live perfectly. If we sin, Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father, speaking on our behalf and restoring the relationship with the Father.

In the second chapter, John provides two more pieces of evidence to help us recognize whether someone is in fellowship with God: obedience to his commands and love for their brothers and sisters in the family of God. Obedience reveals our love for God and allows his love for us to complete its work in bringing us to exhibit his love for others. John directs us to obey an old command that is also a new command. Jesus called this old/new command the two greatest commandments: to love God with your whole self and to love your neighbor as yourself.

John will offer his final test of fellowship in next week's passage, but first, he offers encouragement and a warning in our passage this week.

## Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. (Around 30 min.) Read it in a single sitting or break it up over a few days. (Or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along.)  
What fresh observation did you have from this reading?

### **READ 1 JOHN 2:12-17.**

1. What ideas/themes from earlier in the letter are repeated in this passage?
2. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
3. Forgiveness is one of 1 John's recurring themes. Compare John's statements in 1:9 and 2:12. How does each verse describe why we are forgiven? Why are both aspects important to remember?
4. **APPLY** What practices help you to confess your sins regularly and keep short accounts with God? Why is it important?

How do your relationships with God and other Christians help?

**PRAY:** Ask God to reveal to you any sins that you have not yet confessed. Thank him for his great gift of forgiveness on account of his name.

# Day Two

## READ: 1 JOHN 2:12-14

5. Complete the table.

I write to you...	...because...	...and because...
children		
fathers		
young men		

6. Why does John address these three groups? Are the groups based on chronological age? Or are the categories figurative?

What do you think John intended to communicate to the church through this poetic list? (Consider how John previously described those who are in fellowship with God and what thoughts his readers may have had in response.)

7. Look more closely at the table above. What do you observe about the specific reasons for writing for each group and between groups?

8. **APPLY** John's words are for the whole church, regardless of age or level of spiritual development. How are these truths encouraging to you today? What do you most need to be reminded of as you face life's challenges?

**PRAY:** Thank God for his encouragement through his Word today.

# Day Three .....➔

## READ 1 JOHN 2:15-17

9. Summarize John’s warning in these verses.

*In John 3:16, when we are told that Jesus came because God “so loved” the world, God’s love for all people is in view. In this passage, though, John uses “world” to refer to the viewpoints and systems set against God.*

10. What does “love the world” mean? What exactly is he instructing the church not to do? What does loving the world indicate about someone? Why is this true?

11. John names three categories of world love in 2:16. Describe what each one means and offer a few common examples.

Category	Description	Examples

12. **APPLY** What things in the world are you most tempted to love? What signs let you know when you have crossed that line?

What habits or safeguards can you develop to help you live contentedly in the world without becoming overly attached?

**PRAY:** Ask God to reveal any ways you may be loving the world. Ask his forgiveness for misdirected love, and ask him to redirect your love and desires according to his will.

## Day Four .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 2:17

13. Why do you think John includes this statement? How is it encouraging?
14. What messages are proclaimed in our American culture about how people should live their lives?
15. John says that the person who follows the will of God lives forever. What is God's will for his people? Look up these verses to help with your answer.

**Luke 10:25-27**

**1 Thessalonians 5:15-18**

**1 Peter 2:15**

**John 6:27-29**

16. **APPLY** As Christians, we are sometimes eager to discover God's will for each of us individually. How do 1 John and the passages above impact your thoughts about God's will for you? Do they mean that God's will for your life is not unique? Explain.

**PRAY:** Look up Psalm 25:4-5. Pray these verses back to God.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray  
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 2:12-17**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 3*) Compare John's statements in 1:9 and 2:12. How does each verse describe why we are forgiven? Why are both aspects important to remember?

**APPLY:** (*question 4*) What practices help you to confess your sins regularly and keep short accounts with God? Why is it important? How do your relationships with God and other Christians help?

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 7*) What do you observe about the specific reasons for writing for each group and between groups?

**APPLY:** (*question 8*) John's words are for the whole church, regardless of age or level of spiritual development. How are these truths encouraging to you today? What do you most need to be reminded of as you face life's challenges?

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 10*) What does "love the world" mean? What exactly is he instructing the church not to do? What does loving the world indicate about someone? Why is this true?.

**APPLY:** (*question 12*) What things in the world are you most tempted to love? What signs let you know when you have crossed that line? What habits or safeguards can you develop to help you live contentedly in the world without becoming overly attached?

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 15*) John says that the person who follows the will of God lives forever. What is God's will for his people? Look up these verses to help with your answer: Luke 10:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18; 1 Peter 2:15; and John 6:27-29.

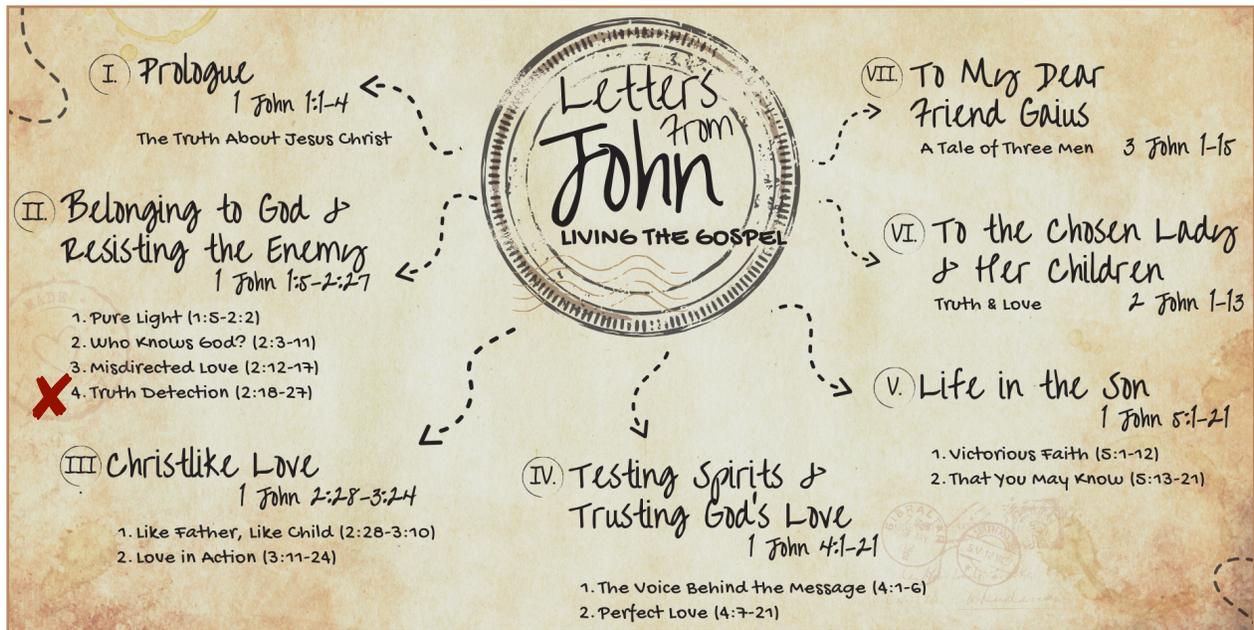
**APPLY:** (*question 16*) As Christians, we are sometimes eager to discover God's will for each of us individually. How do 1 John and the passages above impact your thoughts about God's will for you? Do they mean that God's will for your life is not unique? Explain.

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 5 | Truth Detection (1 John 2:18-27)

Oct 6-12, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

John has offered his “dear children” several ways to determine whether or not someone who claims to be a Christian is telling the truth. This is not an exercise in being judgmental. John’s dual motives are to protect his churches from the false teachers who would lead them away from Christ and instruct them about the Christian life. He has provided both theological and ethical tests—beliefs and behaviors required of anyone who claims to have fellowship with God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Theologically, John has pointed to the apostles' testimony as evidence they have seen and heard “the Word of life” who came from the Father. They have shared the message of God’s holiness—that God is pure light, untainted by darkness and sin. Ethically, John has declared that the believer must be righteous—treating God with obedience and one’s Christian brothers and sisters with love.

Meeting this ethical test was undoubtedly as difficult for this church as it is for us today. Although our spirits are willing, we are still too weak to carry it out fully. John’s encouragement to the children, fathers, and young men reassured them that they do know the Father. They have been forgiven.

In this week’s passage, John offers a warning, encouragement, and another test. This warning discusses the antichrists. This term has come to be associated with one particular end-times character from the book of Revelation. Here John uses the term more generally to refer to false Christs or false teachers.

# Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Read it in a single sitting, break it up over a few days, or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along. Write down one new observation or question.

## READ 1 JOHN 2:18-27.

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
2. What does this passage teach us about God?
3. What reasons does John give for writing about these specific topics (vv. 21, 26)?
4. Who do you think the people were who “went out from us” (v. 19)? Were they leaving a specific church? Their Christian faith? Something else? Explain your thinking.
5. **APPLY** John wrote that it was “the last hour” nearly 2,000 years ago, yet the end has not come. What did he mean by that phrase? Was he mistaken?

How does your understanding of this statement impact the way you live your daily Christian life?  
How should it?

**PRAY:** Look at your answers to #2, above. Praise God about one or more things you saw revealed about him this week.

## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 2:20-27

6. What is the anointing that John says they have (v. 20)? (See also: John 14:26; John 16:13; and Acts 2:1-4.) What does the anointing teach us (v. 27)?
  
7. How does this inner anointing teach us? Is it something we can feel or measure? Does 'what you have heard from the beginning' play a role in this training? How?
  
8. What indicates someone is a false teacher/antichrist?
  
9. Why is denying Jesus is the Christ also a denial of "the Father and the Son?" How does Acknowledging the Son give someone the Father? What do these statements indicate about the relationship between the Father and the Son?
  
10. Look at some things John recorded in his gospel about truth and deception in the verses below. What does each tell us about truth and where it is found?

**John 8:44**

**John 16:13**

**John 17:17**

**John 18:37**

11. **APPLY** What impact do false teachers have on the church? On unbelievers? Is it important to identify and name false teachers? Why or why not?

**PRAY:** Pray the following for yourself and for others you know who are believing false teachings.  
"Father, help \_\_\_\_\_ to recognize false teachings and to stand firm in the truth of your Word.  
Anchor \_\_\_\_\_ in the truth of Christ and guard \_\_\_\_\_ heart against deceptions."

## Day Three .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 2:24-27

12. One important concept in John's letter is the idea of remaining/abiding/living in God (see 2:6, 24, and 28). Our English terms do a good job of capturing what John is getting at. Look up the words below in a dictionary or thesaurus and write the definitions that fit John's meaning. Include relevant synonyms.

<b>REMAIN</b>	
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<b>ABIDE</b>	
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13. How are the ideas of remaining/abiding connected to the test of truth in 2:20-23?

### REVIEW 1 JOHN 2:1-27

14. Where does John use the word remain/abide/live in this chapter? What or who is described as remaining or instructed to remain? Where?
15. **APPLY** What comes to mind when you think about "home?" Look up John 14:23. How does knowing that God makes his home with those who love him impact how you understand the instruction to abide in God?

**PRAY:** If you have never asked God to forgive you and make his home with you, are you ready to do that today? Talk to God, then let your group know!

If God already abides with you, thank him for his constant presence and love.

## Day Four .....>

### LOOK UP THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 15:4-11

16. In this passage, who is speaking? To whom?
  
17. What word from 1 John is repeated throughout this passage? How many times does it appear?
  
18. List all the benefits and instructions associated with this word in the passage.
  
19. What is the fruit that should be produced? See Galatians 5:22-23 for more insight.
  
20. **APPLY** Consider your activity and habits over a typical week. What helps you to abide in Christ? What tempts you to abide in the wrong places?

What are two specific ways you can abide in the truth this week?

**PRAY:** Ask God to help you remain firmly connected in Christ. Thank him for the fruit of a changed life and that you are more like Christ today than when you first followed him.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 2:18-27**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 4*) Who do you think the people were who "went out from us" (v. 19)? Were they leaving a specific church? Their Christian faith? Something else? Explain your thinking.

**APPLY:** (*question 5*) John wrote that it was "the last hour" nearly 2,000 years ago, yet the end has not come. What did he mean by that phrase? Was he mistaken? How does your understanding of this statement impact the way you live your daily Christian life? How should it?

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 9*) Why is denying Jesus is the Christ also a denial of "the Father and the Son?" How does Acknowledging the Son give someone the Father? What do these statements indicate about the relationship between the Father and the Son?

**APPLY:** (*question 11*) What impact do false teachers have on the church? On unbelievers? Is it important to identify and name false teachers? Why or why not?

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 13*) How are the ideas of remaining/abiding connected to the test of truth in 2:20-23?

**APPLY:** (*question 15*) What comes to mind when you think about "home?" Look up John 14:23. How does knowing that God makes his home with those who love him impact how you understand the instruction to abide in God?

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 18*) List all the benefits and instructions associated with abide/remain in the Gospel of John 15:4-10.

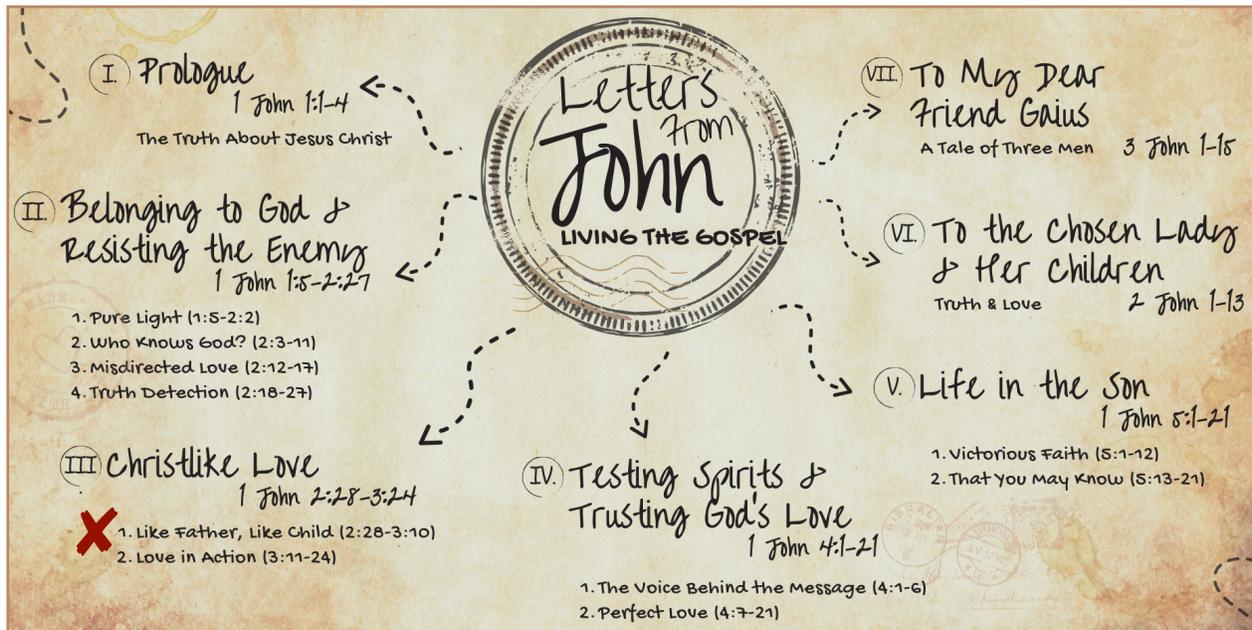
**APPLY:** (*question 20*) Consider your activity and habits over a typical week. What helps you to abide in Christ? What tempts you to abide in the wrong places? What are two specific ways you can abide in the truth this week?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 6 | Like Father, Like Child (1 John 2:28-3:10)

Oct 13-19, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

Last week, John addressed the concern lurking below the surface of his letter—the problem of false teachers and their impact. It seems that these people were once considered part of the Christian fellowship overseen by John. The way they left the church showed they had never really belonged to it in the first place, because their beliefs were corrupted—they denied the truth about Jesus Christ.

We cannot be entirely sure what they taught. From John's letter, it appears they thought there was some secret knowledge beyond what had been originally revealed. This was a core belief of the second-century group called the Gnostics, and the early stages may have been seen in John's churches. Other false beliefs of that time involved the nature of Jesus. Some believed that Jesus was divine, but that he only appeared to be human. (Think of Superman—he looks human but is not actually one.) On the other side, some groups believed that the "Christ-spirit" came to an entirely human Jesus at his baptism and then left before his crucifixion. (Think of Iron Man gaining powers only when he wears a special suit.) In other words, one error was thinking Jesus was only a spirit, and the other was that he was entirely, and only, human. John, however, continues to proclaim Jesus as the eternal life that came from God in real, touchable flesh (1:1-2; 2:22-23).

In the face of this false teaching, the question of who could legitimately claim to be part of the fellowship of Christian believers was crucial, particularly if they were teachers. Valid teachers are those whose lives show righteousness, love, truth, and obedience to God's commands, love for one another, and who confess that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God.

This week, we look at life in God's family and the traits of his children.

## Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Read it in a single sitting, break it up over a few days, or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along. Write down one new observation or question.

### READ 1 JOHN 2:28-3:10.

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
  
2. What does this passage teach us about God?

### **LOOK AT 1 JOHN 2:28-29.**

3. Why does John encourage his children to continue/remain in Christ?
  
4. **APPLY** How do you feel about Jesus' return? Are you confident? Concerned? Eager? What is the reason for your feelings?

How would you live differently if you could know he was returning in one week? Or one month?

**PRAY:** Look at what you learned about God, above. Choose one aspect and praise God for who he is, or ask about an aspect you found difficult.

## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 2:28-3:3

5. What does John mean when he writes the world does not know us and that it did not know Jesus? What sense of the word “know” is being used here?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How is God’s lavish love illustrated by calling us his children? How does someone become a child of God? (See also the Gospel of John 1:12-13 and 3:1-16.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. John says that what we will become is not yet known. He also says we will be like Christ. What does he mean by these statements? (See also 2 Corinthians 3:18.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does purifying ourselves relate to the hope of becoming like Christ (3:3)? How do we purify ourselves? What role does God play in the process?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. **APPLY** What do you imagine it will be like when you first see Jesus face to face? Describe the scene as you envision it.

Will we be changed just by seeing Jesus in all his perfection? Or do you think there will be more to it? What change do you most eagerly anticipate?

**PRAY:** *“Lord, purify my heart and give me a desire to pursue holiness. Give me the strength to resist temptations, and the grace to live in a way that honors you.”*

## Day Three .....➔

### READ 1 JOHN 3:1-8

10. What three things does John say have happened, or will happen, when Christ appears?

### LOOK AT 1 JOHN 3:4-8

11. How does John define sin? To what law is he referring?

12. What is the relationship between the children of God and sin? Does this contradict what John wrote in 1:8? Why or why not?

13. What is the false teaching that John seems to be correcting in this passage? Who would be trying to lead this church astray?

14. **APPLY** What are the lies told in our world about sin? Which of these have you believed? What changed your mind?

What would you say to a friend or loved one who believes one of these lies?

**PRAY:** Ask God to reveal any lies you may have begun to believe—about sin in general or a certain sin specifically. Thank him for showing you the truth.

## Day Four .....➔

### LOOK AT 1 JOHN 3:7-10

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15. How does John determine who the children of God are? What are the key points he considers?
16. What does John mean when he says that God's seed remains in his children? What has he already said remained in believers (2:24, 27)?
17. John likens Christians to adopted children ("called children of God," 3:1) and to biological ones ("God's seed," 3:9). What aspects of the Christian life do each of these illustrate?
18. **APPLY** How do we know that we are children of God? Can someone who deals with persistent or habitual sin be a Christian? Why or why not? How should believers deal with lingering sins?

**PRAY:** Reflect on 1 John 3:1. Praise God for the gift of being called his child. Ask that he would enable you to live in a way that shows he is your Father.

## Final Reflections .....➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

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No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 2:28-3:10**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 3*) Why does John encourage his children to continue/remain in Christ?

**APPLY:** (*question 4*) How do you feel about Jesus' return? Are you confident? Concerned? Eager? What is the reason for your feelings? How would you live differently if you could know he was returning in one week? Or one month?

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 8*) How does purifying ourselves relate to the hope of becoming like Christ (3:3)? How do we purify ourselves? What role does God play in the process?

**APPLY:** (*question 9*) What do you imagine it will be like when you first see Jesus face to face? Describe the scene as you envision it. Will we be changed just by seeing Jesus in all his perfection? Or do you think there will be more to it? What change do you most eagerly anticipate?

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 12*) What is the relationship between the children of God and sin? Does this contradict what John wrote in 1:8? Why or why not?

**APPLY:** (*question 14*) What are the lies told in our world about sin? Which of these have you believed? What changed your mind? What would you say to a friend or loved one who believes one of these lies?

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 15*) How does John determine who the children of God are? What are the key points he considers?

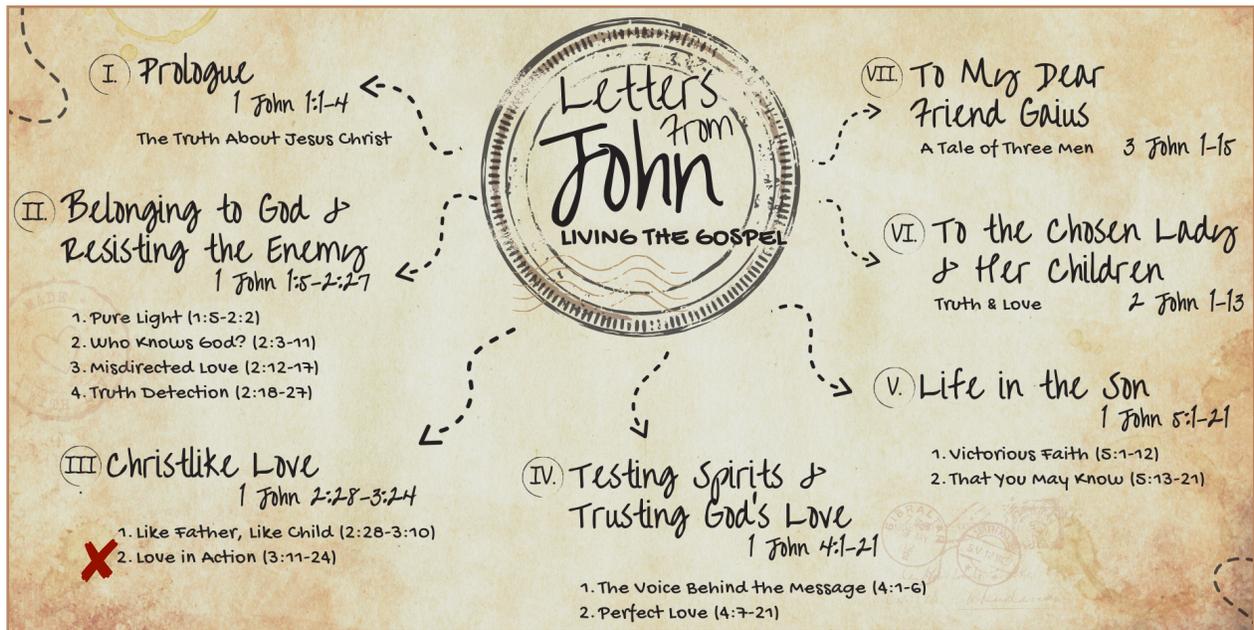
**APPLY:** (*question 18*) How do we know that we are children of God? Can someone who deals with persistent or habitual sin be a Christian? Why or why not? How should believers deal with lingering sins?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 7 | Love in Action (1 John 3:11-24)

Oct 20-26, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

In last week's passage, John described the character traits that distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil. He began by reassuring his "dear children" that they could confidently, and without shame, anticipate Christ's return. Whatever doubts the antichrists may have caused, as long as God's children remain in him, they will be made like Christ when he returns.

John warns his readers not to follow bad teachings regarding sin and righteousness. Sinners sin and the righteous do the right (good, just, obedient) things. Christ came to destroy the work of the devil. Apparently, some people thought that sinning was inevitable--"I'm a human...no one is perfect...I can't help it...I will sin, it can't be stopped."

But God's children have the seed of his divine nature living within them and changing them from the inside out. Their father is no longer the devil. In some way, they are both adopted and "natural" children. In the same way that the influence of human fathers is seen in their children both physically and behaviorally, the children of God (and of the devil) take on the characteristics of their Father. They can be recognized by their obedience and righteousness. The children of God obey his commands, stop sinning, and love one another.

In this week's passage, John continues where he left off. Love is more than a warm feeling. It is active.

# Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Read it in a single sitting, break it up over a few days, or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along. Write down one new observation or question.

## **READ 1 JOHN 3:11-24.**

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
2. What does this passage teach us about God?
3. When John uses the phrase “from the beginning,” he is referring his readers back to the initiation of their relationship with Christ. What was heard from the beginning (3:11)?
4. How is the message heard from the beginning related to the command? What results come from the message and the command (3:23)?
5. **APPLY** What message did you learn when you first came to Christ? What about it, or how it was communicated, stands out to you most?

What makes the initial message so important to the life of a believer? How has it impacted you?

**PRAY:** Praise God about one or more things from Question 2.

## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 3:11-15

6. John begins this section with the ultimate example of how **not** to treat your brother.

Look over the story of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-16). What do you notice about Cain's attitude toward God? About God's attitude toward Cain?

How would you describe Cain's attitude/feelings toward his brother? What motivated him to murder Abel (see 1 John 3:12; Heb. 11:4)?

7. Why shouldn't Christians be surprised to be hated by an unbelieving world? What drives that hatred?

8. What do we know is true about us if we love our fellow believers (v. 14)?

If we hate our fellow believers (vv. 14-15)?

9. How is hate like murder? When we refuse to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, what is the effect on them?

10. **APPLY** Have you witnessed (or experienced) hate or a refusal to love between believers? How were these believers impacted? How were others in the church or group affected?

**PRAY:** Ask God to fill you with love, compassion, and understanding for your fellow Christians you find most difficult to love.

# Day Three .....➔

## READ 1 JOHN 3:16-18

11. What attributes of genuine love are described in each of the following? Give at least one real-world example of each attribute in action.

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

12. Consider all that you know about Jesus' life. In what ways did he lay down his life for us? For additional thoughts, see Philippians 2:5-11.

13. How does John direct Christians to show love through the things we possess? Does he supply any limits or reasons to refuse to share with our brothers and sisters in need? Explain.

14. **APPLY** Is it difficult to practice Godlike love in your relationships? What beliefs, priorities, fears, etc., might tempt you to delay or refuse to love?

**PRAY:** Ask God to show you what you can do to actively love the people in your life, both inside and outside of your immediate family.

## Day Four .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 3:16-24.

15. What three things does John say we can know in this passage? Why do you think he considers *how* they can know these things to be important?

Verse 16

Verse 19

Verse 24

16. What does John mean by the statement: "God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything"? How does that help us "set our hearts at rest" (lit. "persuade our hearts")?

17. What connection is John making between obedience and answered prayer? Does our obedience earn us good things from God (vv. 21-22)? Explain.

18. **APPLY** How has the Spirit shown or testified that he lives in you? What evidence do you rely on when the doubts and difficulties of life bring questions?

**PRAY:** Thank God for the presence of his Spirit in your life.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 3:11-24**

## DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (*question 3*) When John uses the phrase "from the beginning," he is referring his readers back to the initiation of their relationship with Christ. What was heard from the beginning (3:11)?

**APPLY:** (*question 5*) What message did you learn when you first came to Christ? What about it, or the way it was communicated, stands out to you most? What makes the initial message so important to the life of a believer? How has it impacted you?
- EXPLORE:** (*question 8*) What do we know is true about us if we love our fellow believers (v. 14)? If we hate our fellow believers (vv. 14-15)?

**APPLY:** (*question 10*) Have you witnessed (or experienced) hate or a refusal to love between believers? How were these believers impacted? How were others in the church or group affected?
- EXPLORE:** (*question 13*) How does John direct Christians to show love through the things we possess? Does he supply any limits or reasons to refuse to share with our brothers and sisters in need? Explain.

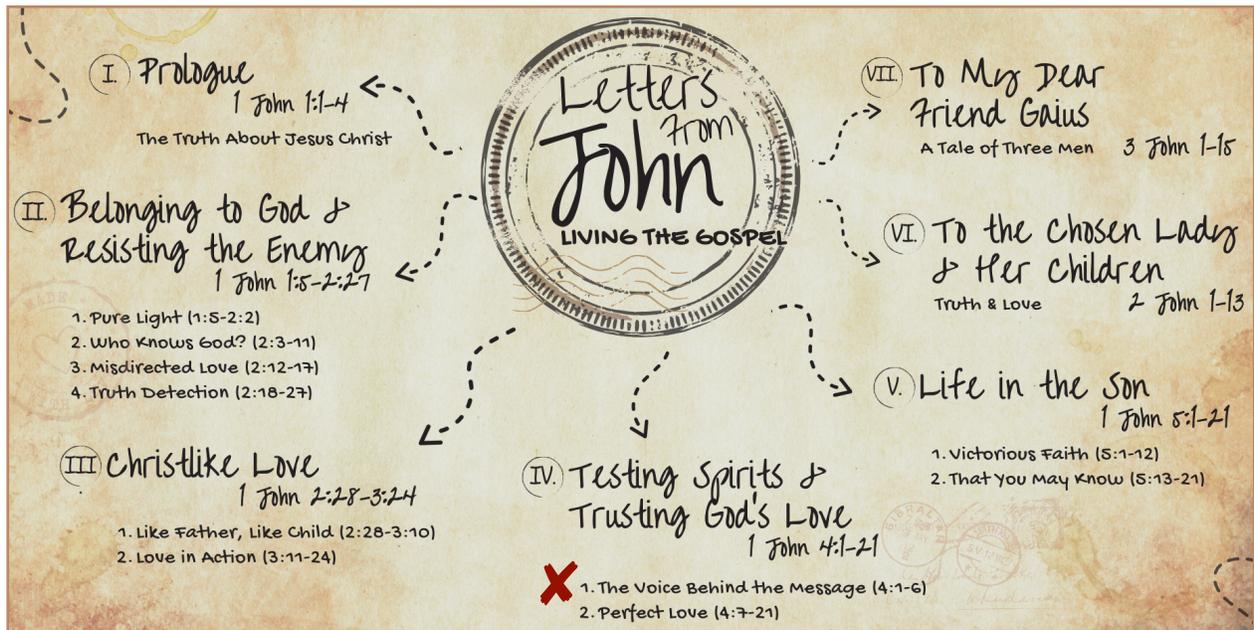
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- EXPLORE:** (*question 16*) What does John mean by the statement: "God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything"? How does that help us "set our hearts at rest" (lit. "persuade our hearts")?

**APPLY:** (*question 18*) How has the Spirit shown or testified that he lives in you? What evidence do you rely on when the doubts and difficulties of life bring questions?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 8 | The Voice Behind the Message (1 John 4:1-6)

Oct 27-Nov 2, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

The characteristic above all others that identifies the children of God is love. Last week, we looked at the active love exhibited by the children of God through the command to love one another. Unlike Cain, who murdered his brother, God's children lay down their lives for their siblings in Christ. We know what it means to love because our "big brother" demonstrated it when he gave up his life for us. God not only sent us scripture to proclaim his love for humanity, but through Jesus, he stepped into the world and acted it out before our eyes.

John wants the believers to be able to be confident in this. They can know they belong to the truth. They can know that God dwells within them. They are characterized by love because they abide in him and he is in them. God's Spirit testifies about this truth to his children.

This week, John circles back to deal with the troubling issue of false teachers again. Earlier, John showed how important the ability to recognize who our father is. Now, he details the importance of determining whose voice we should listen to.



## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 2:20-23

6. In verse 1, John offers a firm warning. What is it? What should they do? Why?
  - Do not ...
  - but...
  - because...
7. What does John mean when he says to “test the spirits”? Who or what, exactly, should be tested?
8. What are the characteristics of a false prophet or teacher? See Matt. 7:15; Mark 13:22; and 2 Peter 2:1 for insight.
9. What tests did John give to discern whether or not someone is speaking from God’s Spirit?

#### **1 John 2:22**

#### **1 John 4:2-3**

Look up Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and 18:14-22. What do the tests for Old Testament prophets and John’s tests have in common?

10. **APPLY** What should we do if we identify a false prophet or teacher? When should we approach someone privately? When should false teaching be exposed on a larger scale?

**PRAY:** Ask God for wisdom and discernment to recognize which spirit is behind the messages you hear. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to a clear knowledge of the truth.

# Day Three .....>

## LOOK AT 1 JOHN 4:4-6

11. John uses the word listen/hear three times in these three verses. Who is listening to whom in each situation?
12. There is a wide range of meanings for the words listen and hear. Look up these words in a dictionary or thesaurus and list their full range of meanings.

<b>LISTEN/HEAR</b>	
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Circle the definitions that are possible ways to understand John's point.

13. John stresses the importance of listening to "us." Who is included in this pronoun, and why is it important to listen to "us"? (Consider 1:2-3 also.)
14. **APPLY** What factors make it more or less likely that you will hear and listen to a particular person and message?

What can we do to make it more likely that the true message of God (the Gospel) is heard? What is our responsibility to share the truth of the gospel?

**PRAY:** Ask God for opportunities to share gospel truth with those you encounter. Pray that he would enable you to communicate the Good News of Christ clearly.

## Day Four .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 4:1-6

15. In what sense have John's readers "overcome" the false teachers?

How did they achieve this victory?

16. Should Christians learn to understand various worldly viewpoints, like other religions, philosophies, etc.? Is it generally helpful for overcoming false teaching? Or is it a hazardous and foolish exercise? Explain.

17. **APPLY** What false teachings have you believed (either before coming to Christ or as a Christian)? How did you overcome the message? What hope does this offer you when you see others embracing false teaching?

**PRAY:** Reflect on 1 John 4:4. Where do you need that encouragement today? Thank God for being your deliverer and protection against the schemes of the devil.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray  
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 4:1-6**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 3) How does verse 1 flow naturally from the concluding verse of the previous chapter (3:24)?

**APPLY:** (question 5) Rate yourself using the scale below. On a scale from 1 (total trust) to 10 (doubt everyone), how do you tend to process the Christian messages you hear? Are you satisfied with your position on the scale? Do you think you should change your approach at all? Explain.

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 9) What tests did John give to discern whether or not someone is speaking from God's Spirit? (1 John 2:22; 4:2-3) Look up Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and 18:14-22. What do the tests for Old Testament prophets and John's tests have in common?

**APPLY:** (question 10) What should we do if we identify a false prophet or teacher? When should we approach someone privately and when should false teaching be exposed on a larger scale?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 13) John stresses the importance of listening to "us." Who is included in this pronoun, and why is it important to listen to "us"? (Consider 1:2-3 also.)

**APPLY:** (question 14) What factors make it more or less likely that you will hear and listen to a particular person and message? What can we do to make it more likely that the true message of God (the Gospel) is heard? What is our responsibility to share the truth of the gospel?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 15) In what sense have John's readers "overcome" the false teachers? How did they achieve this victory?

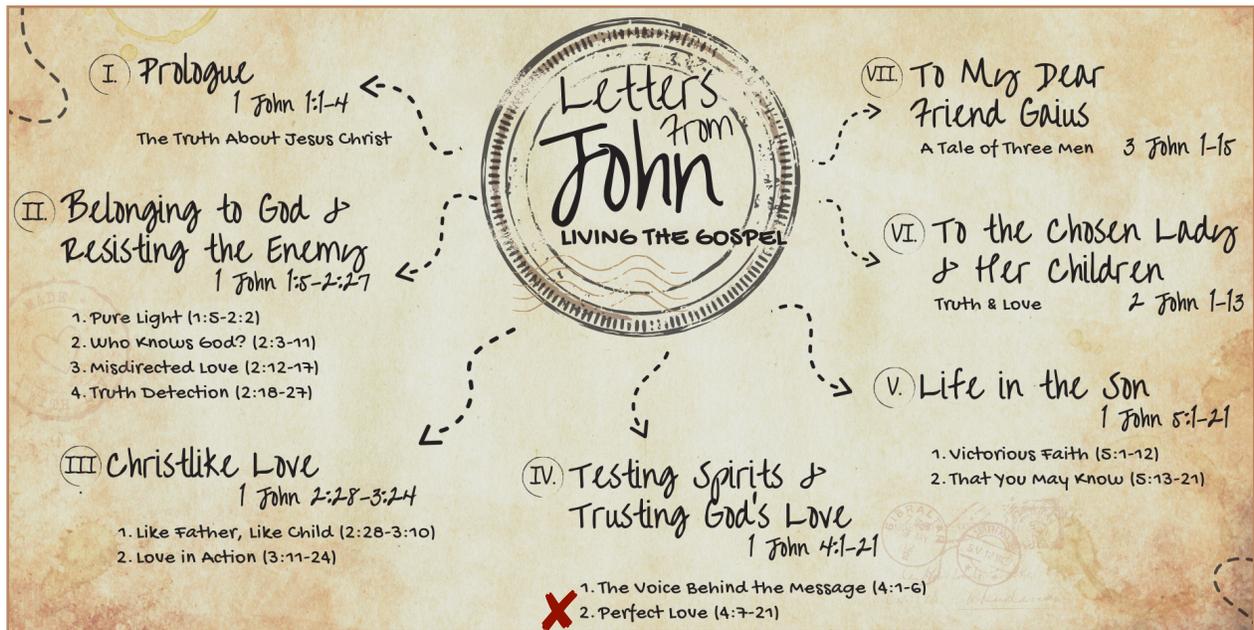
**APPLY:** (question 17) What false teachings have you believed (either before coming to Christ or as a Christian)? How did you overcome the message? What hope does this offer you when you see others embracing false teaching?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 9 | Perfect Love (1 John 4:7-21)

Nov 3-9, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

A significant part of the confidence believers can have is rooted in the messages to which they listen. John has pointed repeatedly to the message that believers heard from the beginning. We do not need to find a new message. The Good News has been faithfully transmitted from Jesus to the apostles, and down to us. In the last passage, he urged them to “test the spirits” to determine whose message they were proclaiming. God is consistent and true. Because his message has not changed, we can compare any new messages to the original. Those people who share God’s message will acknowledge the truth that Jesus came from God, in human flesh. The spirit of those who deny it is antichrist.

John also commended his audience for having overcome the false teachers. Despite the alternative messages to which they were exposed, and any doubts or confusion that may have resulted, the church remained faithful. They chose to hear from God and the apostles because the Spirit of God in them is greater than the spirit of the world. For all believers, the ultimate protection against false beliefs and distorted faith is the work of the Spirit of God dwelling within them.

And with that, John turns again to the idea of love.

# Day One

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Spend some time memorizing the passage you chose last week.

## READ 1 JOHN 4:7-21.

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
  
2. What does this passage teach us about God?
  
3. What two things does John say about God and love in vv. 7-8?
  
4. What do the following verses have to say about who God is?

Verse	God is...	Verse	God is...
Ex. 15:11		Deut. 10:12	
Josh. 24:14		Isaiah 6:3	
John 4:24		1 John 1:5	

5. Based on the above answers, what does it mean to say that God is love? What does it *not* mean?
  
6. **APPLY** Why do you think the idea that “God is love” is so popular with people of all kinds? How do our cultural ideas about love pollute the way we think about this phrase, even as believers?

**PRAY:** Review the characteristics of God revealed in the answers to the questions above. Praise God for who he is.

## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 4:9-14

7. Why did God send his Son into the world?

**Verse 9**

**Verse 10**

**Verse 14**

8. Why has no one ever seen God (v. 12a)? Look up Exodus 33:18-20 and the Gospel of John 4:24 to confirm your answer.

9. How can people 'see' an invisible God? Look at 1 John 4:12b; Gospel of John 13:35 and 17:20-21.

10. **APPLY** Think of a time when God revealed himself to you through another person. How did that person show God to you?

How did that affect you?

**PRAY:** Thank God for the ways he has been revealed to you through the love of others. Thank him for allowing us to be part of his plans to show himself to others.

# Day Three .....>

## READ 1 JOHN 4:12-18.

11. What does it mean that God's love is made complete in us (vv. 12, 17)?

Use a dictionary or thesaurus to define "complete" as John means it in these verses.

<b>COMPLETE</b>	
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How is God's love made complete in us? What part do we play in the process?

How do we know it's happening (vv. 13-16)?

12. What makes fear and God's perfect, complete love incompatible? Does John mean that a Christian will never feel afraid? Why or why not?

13. **APPLY** What fears do you have about God, other people, or circumstances?

How does God's perfect love address your fears?

What might be different about your life if these fears were gone?

**PRAY:** "Father, thank you for your perfect love. Help me to understand and experience the love you have for me deeply. Let your love cast out all fear in my life."

## Day Four .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 4:19-5:1

14. What type of person is described in these verses?
  
15. Why is it impossible to love God without loving other believers??
  
16. Why isn't it easier to love God, who is perfect, than to love other imperfect believers (v. 20)?
  
17. **APPLY** Think about the brothers and sisters in Christ that you have difficulty loving. What do you think John would say to you about these hard relationships?

**PRAY:** Ask God to show how you can apply this message to one of the hard relationships in your life. Ask him to help you follow through on any insights.

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray  
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 4:7-21**

## DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 5) Based on the above answers, what does it mean to say that God is love? What does it *not* mean?

**APPLY:** (question 6) Why do you think the idea that "God is love" is so popular with people of all kinds? How do our cultural ideas about love pollute the way we think about this phrase, even as believers?
- EXPLORE:** (question 9) How can people 'see' an invisible God? Look at 1 John 4:12b; the Gospel of John 13:35 and 17:20-21.

**APPLY:** (question 10) Think of a time when God revealed himself to you through another person. How did that person show God to you? How did that affect you?
- EXPLORE:** (question 11) What does it mean that God's love is made complete in us (vv. 12, 17)? How is God's love made complete in us? What part do we play in the process? How do we know it's happening (vv. 13-16)?

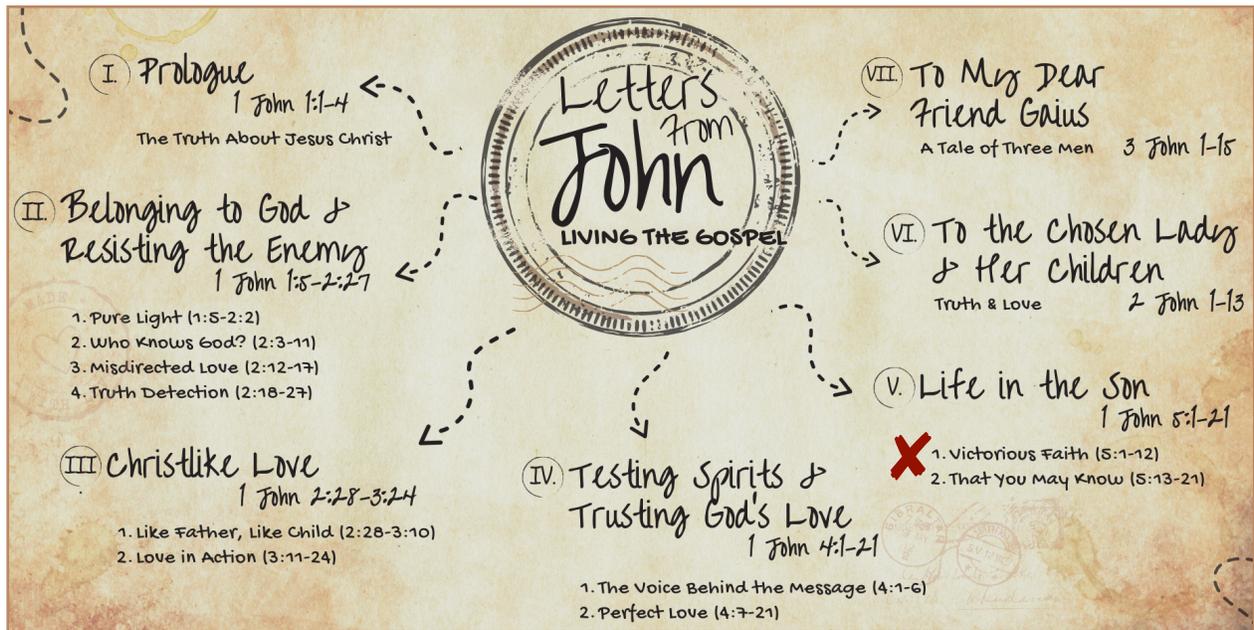
**APPLY:** (question 13) What fears do you have about God, other people, or circumstances? How does God's perfect love address your fears? What might be different about your life if these fears were gone?
- EXPLORE:** (question 16) Why isn't it easier to love God, who is perfect, than to love other imperfect believers (v. 20)?

**APPLY:** (question 17) Think about the brothers and sisters in Christ that you have difficulty loving. What do you think John would say to you about these hard relationships?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 10 | Victorious Faith (1 John 5:1-12)

Nov 10-16, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

Having instructed his readers to “test the spirits,” John turned last week to call for the believers to examine themselves.

Those who claim to know and love God must demonstrate love for one another because love comes from God and God is love. And God showed his love through Jesus Christ his Son. Jesus came into the world to bring life, to be the final atoning sacrifice for sins, and through that to be the Savior of the whole world. God’s love is not like the on-again-off-again feelings in the world. His love is reliable. It gives us confidence to face the final judgment. We love God because he loved us first, and when we love our Christian brothers and sisters, we love God also.

The abiding presence of God gives us the ability to begin to love like he does. Even more amazing, though, is that his love is “made complete” or “made perfect” in us. That does not mean we will manage to love perfectly or completely. It means that God’s love will fulfill its purpose in the lives of believers as we practice loving one another. We are not diminished by loving others. Rather, love reaches its full potential through God’s work in us as we make the effort to love others. Love expands beyond our greatest imagination, changes us, and drives out fear.

Now, John turns his attention to the faith that overcomes the world and leads to eternal life.

# Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

## READ 1 JOHN 5:1-12.

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does this passage teach us about God?

## **LOOK AT 1 JOHN 5:1-2.**

3. What thought from the previous section continues into this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How do we know we love our fellow believers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. **APPLY** How does obeying God's commands demonstrate love toward others?

Choose one of God's clear commands. How is it a loving act?

**PRAY:** Choose one thing from Question 2 above and meditate on it with God in prayer. Praise him for who he is. Ask him to shed light on any aspects that are hard to understand.

## Day Two .....➔

### READ: 1 JOHN 5:3-5.

6. Review what John has taught about love and obedience. Explain the relationship between the following pairs:
- Loving God & obeying God (2:5-6; 5:2-3)
  - Loving God & loving other believers (4:20-5:2)
  - Obeying God & loving other believers (3:23; 4:21)
  - Believing in Jesus & loving other believers (3:16; 4:9-11)
  - Believing in Jesus & loving/obeying God (5:1-5)
  - Being born of God & righteousness/obedience/love/belief (3:10, 23-24; 5:1)
7. Why are God's commands, including the command to love, not burdensome? (Also see Matthew 11:28-30.) Why do you think John makes this point?
8. Define the word 'overcome' using a dictionary or thesaurus.

**OVERCOME**

What does it mean to 'overcome the world'?

9. **APPLY** What evidence of overcoming (conquering/defeating, prevailing over) the world have you seen on display in your life or the lives of other Christians you know?

**PRAY:** "Lord, help me overcome the world through faith in Jesus, your Son. Give me the courage to stand firm in my belief and to live victoriously."

# Day Three .....➔

## READ 1 JOHN 5:6-12.

10. Define *testify* and *testimony* using a dictionary or thesaurus.

<b>TESTIFY</b>	
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<b>TESTIMONY</b>	
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11. List everything or everyone that testifies in 5:6-12. What is their testimony?

12. Why do you think John takes the time to specify these witnesses? How do multiple testimonies influence the strength of a case?

13. **APPLY** How have powerful testimonies from other believers influenced you and your faith?

**PRAY:** Thank God for providing multiple witnesses to the truth. If you have any doubts, share them with him. Ask for his help in overcoming them.

## Day Four .....>

### READ 1 JOHN 5:6-12.

14. Possible ways to understand John's reference to the water and blood include 1) The ordinances of baptism and communion; 2) Jesus' incarnation in a human body; 3) Jesus' baptism and death; 4) The piercing of Jesus' side (John 19:34); and 5) the meaning of Jesus' death.

To what do you think the water and blood refer? Why?

15. On what do the spirit, the water, and the blood agree (vv. 8, 11)?

16. How does God testify about his Son? Why is his testimony greater than the testimony of men?

17. **APPLY** Is the inner witness of God to your heart as reliable as the objective physical and historical evidence (water & blood)? Why or why not? How does your personal testimony add to the evidence? Which evidence showing Jesus is God's Son and the source of eternal life is most persuasive for you?

**PRAY:** "Lord, strengthen my faith. Help me trust the testimony of your Word and confidently hope in your promise of eternal life."

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 5:1-12**

## DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 3) What thought from the previous section continues into this passage?

**APPLY:** (question 5) How does obeying God's commands demonstrate love toward others? Choose one of God's clear commands. How is it a loving act?
- EXPLORE:** (question 7) Why are God's commands, including the command to love, not burdensome? (Also see Matthew 11:28-30.) Why do you think John makes this point?

**APPLY:** (question 9) What evidence of overcoming (conquering defeating, prevailing over) the world have you seen on display in your life or the lives of other Christians you know?
- EXPLORE:** (question 12) Why do you think John takes the time to specify these witnesses? How do multiple testimonies influence the strength of a case?

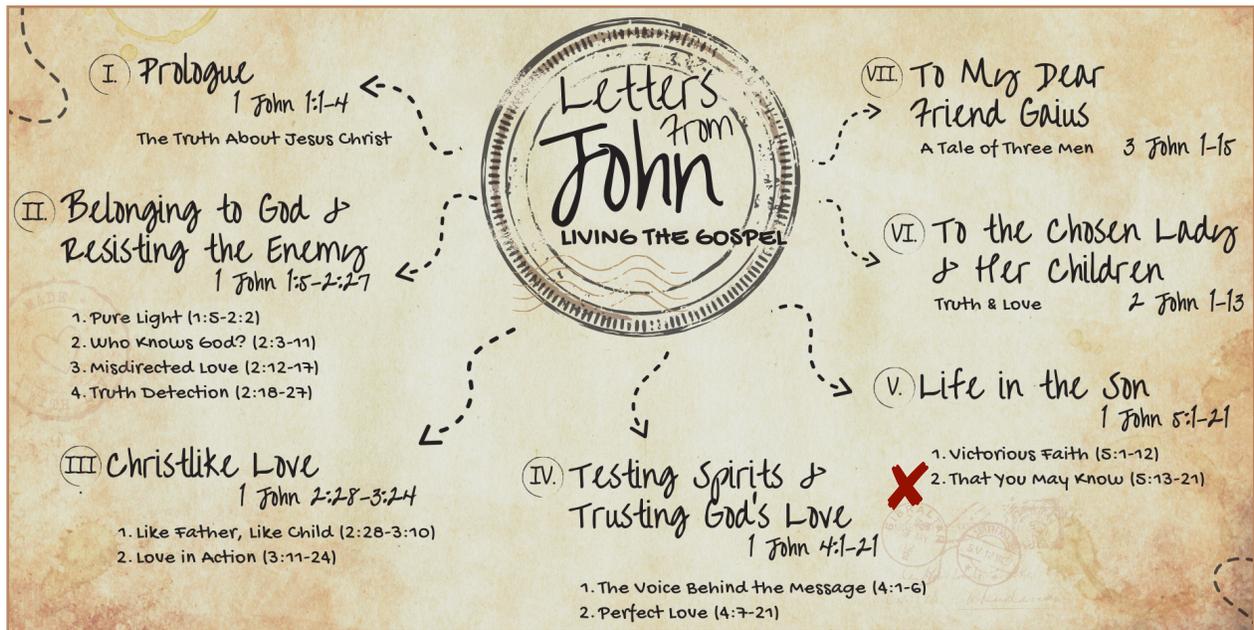
**APPLY:** (question 13) How have powerful testimonies from other believers influenced you and your faith?
- EXPLORE:** (question 16) How does God testify about his Son? Why is his testimony greater than the testimony of men?

**APPLY:** (question 17) Is the inner witness of God to your heart as reliable as the objective physical and historical evidence (water & blood)? Why or why not? How does your personal testimony add to the evidence? Which evidence showing Jesus is God's Son and the source of eternal life is most persuasive for you?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



# 11 | That You May Know (1 John 5:13-21)

Nov 17-23, 2024

## THE BIG PICTURE

This week, we will reach the end of John's first letter.

He has spoken like a father to his children in the church he oversees. He has encouraged and challenged them to live in the face of antichrists and false messages. Repeatedly, he has reminded them of the truth they have heard "from the beginning," of the command to love one another, and of the need to remain in God and live as his children. He has inspired them to lead lives of Godlike love. He has painted a picture of how they should live in response to the truth of the gospel.

In the section last week, John focused on the faith that overcomes the world and leads to eternal life. That faith is rooted in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and "the Spirit, the water and the blood" all testify to the truth of Jesus' identity. This testimony of God through his Spirit is greater than any testimony offered by men. This witness, which the believers heard from the beginning, distinguishes the truth of the gospel from the errors of the false teachers.

Now in this final section, John revisits several of the themes he addressed within the letter and offers a final exhortation.

# Day One .....➔

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Spend some time memorizing the passage you selected.

## **READ 1 JOHN 5:13-21.**

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
2. What does this passage teach us about God?
3. Compare the reasons for writing that John has offered in the letter.

**1:4**

**2:1**

**5:13**

How are these reasons related?

4. Refer back to the opening of the letter (1:1-4). What does John have in mind when he refers to "eternal life"? What evidence has he indicated so that they might know they have it?
5. **APPLY** Why might John's original audience have needed assurance that they had eternal life? Why do we need this same assurance? How does this assurance impact your daily life?

**PRAY:** Thank God we can be certain we have fellowship with him and the promise of eternal life.

## Day Two .....➔

### LOOK AT: 1 JOHN 5:14-15.

6. John mentioned the confidence that believers have before God previously. What kinds of confidence did John say we have?

**2:28**

**3:20-21**

**4:17**

How does John now say we can have confidence (5:14)? How does it relate to the others?

7. What type of requests does John say we can be assured that God will grant?
8. List examples of things we can ask for that always align with God's will.
9. **APPLY** Do you typically ask God for things like those you listed in Question 8? Should we limit our requests to things we already know are part of his will? Or are any other types of requests also valid? Explain.

**PRAY:** Ask God to align your heart and desires with his. Thank him for hearing and answering your prayers.

## Day Three .....➔

### LOOK AT: 1 JOHN 5:16-17.

10. What do these verses describe as our responsibility to the Christians we fellowship with? Why is this important?

11. Compare 5:16-17 with 3:4-10. Based on these verses, select which of the possible understandings of "sin that leads to death" you think John meant to communicate.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sin that leads to the person's physical death (1 Cor. 11:30; Acts 5:1-11).

\_\_\_\_\_ Sin that leads a Christian to spiritual death.

\_\_\_\_\_ Direct and unrepentant rebellion (like the secessionists/antichrists John has written about).

\_\_\_\_\_ Sin that leads an unbeliever to irrevocable death (Matt. 12:22-32)

Should we try to determine what specific sinful actions might be sins leading to death? Why or why not?

12. **APPLY** When you see a fellow believer sinning, what is your first reaction?

Why is prayer often not our first response? What else do we tend to do instead?

**PRAY:** Do you know of a Christian brother or sister who is obviously sinning? Pray that God would intervene in that person's life so they will repent and be restored. Thank God for his family and for the relationships that provide support, love, and accountability for one another.

## Day Four .....➔

### LOOK AT 1 JOHN 5:18-21

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13. What three things does John say we know in verses 18-20?
14. Why do you think that John ends by directing them to keep away from idols? How does this connect to the rest of the letter, particularly 2:15-17?
15. An idol is an image of a god and the focal point for people to express love and devotion to that god. Where should God's children find his image to show their love for him? Look up Genesis 1:27 and review 1 John 4:12, 20.
16. **APPLY** What kinds of idols are prevalent in our current American culture? Are you tempted by any of these? Which one(s)? How does knowing "him who is true" prevent idolatry?

**PRAY:** Thank God for John and his letter. Ask that his Spirit would help you to apply what you have learned and to walk in fellowship with him.

## Final Reflections .....➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

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No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 1 JOHN 5:13-21**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 4*) Refer back to the opening of the letter (1:1-4). What does John have in mind when he refers to "eternal life"? What evidence has he indicated so that they might know they have it?

**APPLY:** (*question 5*) Why might John's original audience have needed assurance that they had eternal life? Why do we need this same assurance? How does this assurance impact your daily life?

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 8*) List examples of things we can ask for that always align with God's will.

**APPLY:** (*question 9*) Do you typically ask God for things like those you listed in Question 8? Should we limit our requests to things we already know are part of his will? Or are any other types of requests also valid? Explain.

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 11*) What do these verses (5:16-17) describe as our responsibility to the Christians with whom we fellowship? Why is this important?

**APPLY:** (*question 12*) When you see a fellow believer sinning, what is your first reaction? Why is prayer often not our first response? What else do we tend to do instead?

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 15*) An idol is an image of a god and the focal point for people to express love and devotion to that god. Where should God's children find his image in order to show their love for him? Look up Genesis 1:27 and review 1 John 4:12, 20.

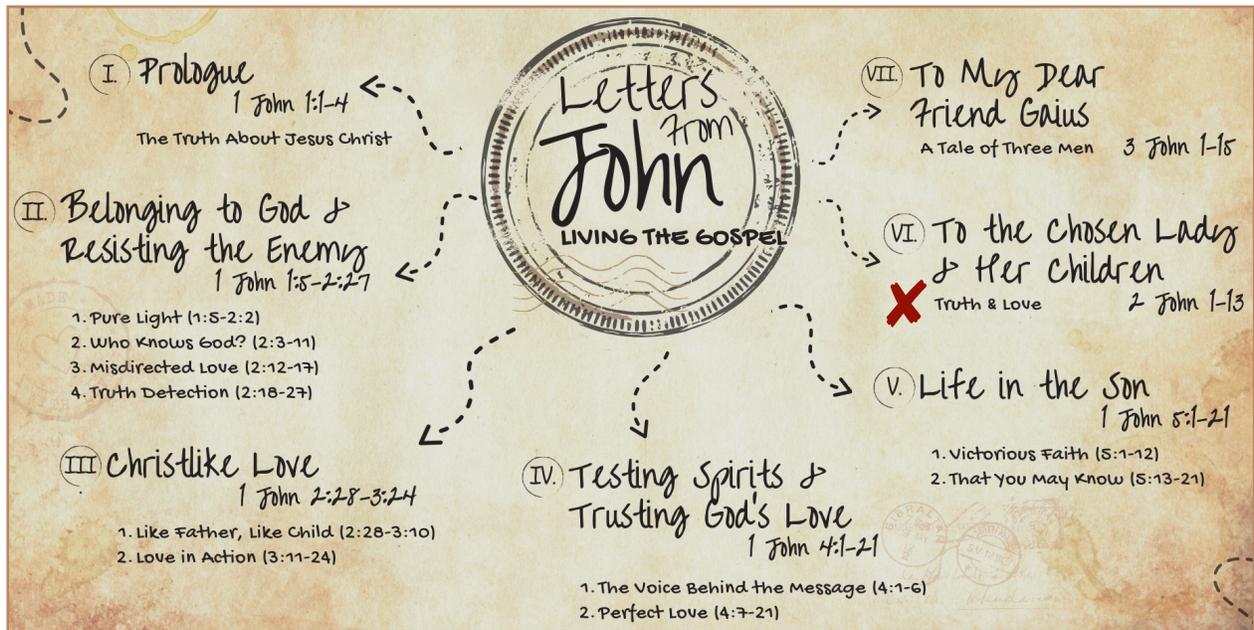
**APPLY:** (*question 16*) What kinds of idols are prevalent in our current American culture? Are you tempted by any of these? Which one(s)? How does knowing "him who is true" prevent idolatry?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



## 12 | Truth & Love (2 John 1-13)

Nov 24-30, 2024

### THE BIG PICTURE

John's second letter seems closely related to the first, but how they may be connected is unclear. Unlike the first letter, 2 John is formatted like a traditional letter, beginning by identifying the author and recipient. Even though the format is typical, the generic titles leave us with questions. Who are "the elder" and "the lady chosen by God"? Why the secrecy? Traditionally, the elder has been identified as the apostle John, and the letter certainly sounds like its author is the same one who wrote 1 John (which seems to connect with John's Gospel). Although Bible scholars cannot remove all questions about the author, it is safe to assume that those who received the letter initially found it much less mysterious. We ultimately have no reason not to trust the tradition of John as the author.

The order of the letters is also a mystery. Second John comes second in biblical order, but it may not have been written after 1 John. One theory is that all three of John's letters were written to people in the same church location and delivered as a set of letters. Second John may also have been a follow-up letter to the 1 John church, or it may have been written to another church in the same general area.

In many ways, 2 John seems like another chapter of 1 John. The similar language and topics give the letter a familiar feel (particularly if you have been reading through them each week). Second John provides additional support for what we have learned from 1 John regarding the conflicts and issues facing the churches near Ephesus.

# Day One

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory. Try reciting it aloud to someone.

## READ 2 JOHN 1-13.

1. Summarize 2 John in 2-3 sentences.
2. What does 2 John teach us about God?
3. John repeats many words and phrases in 2 John that he used in 1 John. What **differences** do you find? Are there any new ideas or directions of thought? Note the differences you find and the verses where you found them.
4. This letter is addressed to “the lady chosen by God and to her children.” This may be a literal woman and her family, or it may be written to a church. Based on your understanding of the letter, which is more likely? Why? Which verses support your answer?
5. **APPLY** How have you been the recipient of each of the three gifts mentioned in verse 3? How have you seen them in your life? Where have you witnessed them in the last month?

**PRAY:** Praise God today for all he is. Praise him for all he has done as Father, Son, and Spirit. Thank him for revealing himself through his Word.

## Day Two .....➔

### LOOK AT: 2 JOHN 1-6.

6. How many times does John use the word 'truth' in the first four verses? What does he say about the truth? Note everything you learn about truth from verses 1-4.
  
7. How is "walking in the truth" (2 John 4) different than knowing or believing the truth?
  
8. In the first six verses, how many times does John use the word 'love'? Note everything you learn about love in 2 John 1-6.
  
9. Why do you think John emphasizes *walking* in truth, obedience, and love?
  
10. **APPLY** Why do we need to understand both truth and love? What might happen if one or the other is absent? Give an example.

What relationship in your life would improve if you walked in greater truth toward that person?

What relationship in your life would improve if you walked in greater love toward that person?

**PRAY:** "Father, help me to walk obediently in truth and love. Let my life reflect your truth and my love for my Christian siblings be sincere and steadfast."

## Day Three .....>

### LOOK AT: 2 JOHN 7-9.

11. Some of the lady's children are walking in truth, but other people have become deceived. Describe their error in your own words (vv. 7, 9).

12. Why is this deception so terrible?

Why is it important that Jesus Christ was both truly human and truly God? What is the danger in believing he was one or the other, but not both?

13. John warns his readers to be careful and remain faithful to the true teaching about Christ so that they will receive a full reward (v. 8). What does he identify as the reward in verse 9?

John also wrote about rewards in his Gospel. Look up John 4:34-36 and 6:27. What do these verses tell us about the reward for continuing in faithful service?

14. **APPLY** From where do you expect deception and false teaching to come? Why?

What skills or habits are you building to help you watch for deceptive teaching?

**PRAY:** Ask God for guidance and direction to strengthen your ability to recognize distorted teachings about Jesus Christ and his gospel.

## Day Four .....>

### LOOK AT 2 JOHN 9-13.

15. What do you think it means to run ahead rather than “continue in the teaching of Christ” (v. 9)?

16. How does John say believers should act toward false teachers who seek out their hospitality? Why?

Is John saying that we should not show hospitality to unbelievers or believers who do not fully agree with us on all things? Explain.

17. **APPLY** Why do you think John chose to leave certain topics for an in-person conversation? What kinds of conversations are better handled face-to-face? How do you decide when to use written communication (email, text, social media) or face-to-face?

**PRAY:** “Father, help me to guard the faith passed down from Jesus and the apostles and to pass it on to those who have not come to know you yet.”

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRAYER

**PURPOSE:** To walk alongside one another as we grow into mature disciples of Jesus, ready and able to disciple others.

**GUIDELINES:** Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well  
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray  
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware  
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 2 JOHN 1-13**

## DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 4) This letter is addressed to "the lady chosen by God and to her children." This may be a literal woman and her family, or it may be written to a church. Based on your understanding of the letter, which is more likely? Why? Which verses support your answer?

**APPLY:** (question 5) How have you been the recipient of each of the three gifts mentioned in v 3? How have you seen them in your life? Where have you witnessed them in the last month?
- EXPLORE:** (question 7) How is "walking in the truth" (2 John 4) different than knowing or believing the truth?

**APPLY:** (question 10) Why do we need to understand both truth and love? What might happen if one or the other is absent? Give an example.
- EXPLORE:** (question 12) Why is it important that Jesus Christ was both truly human and truly God? What is the danger in believing he was one or the other, but not both?

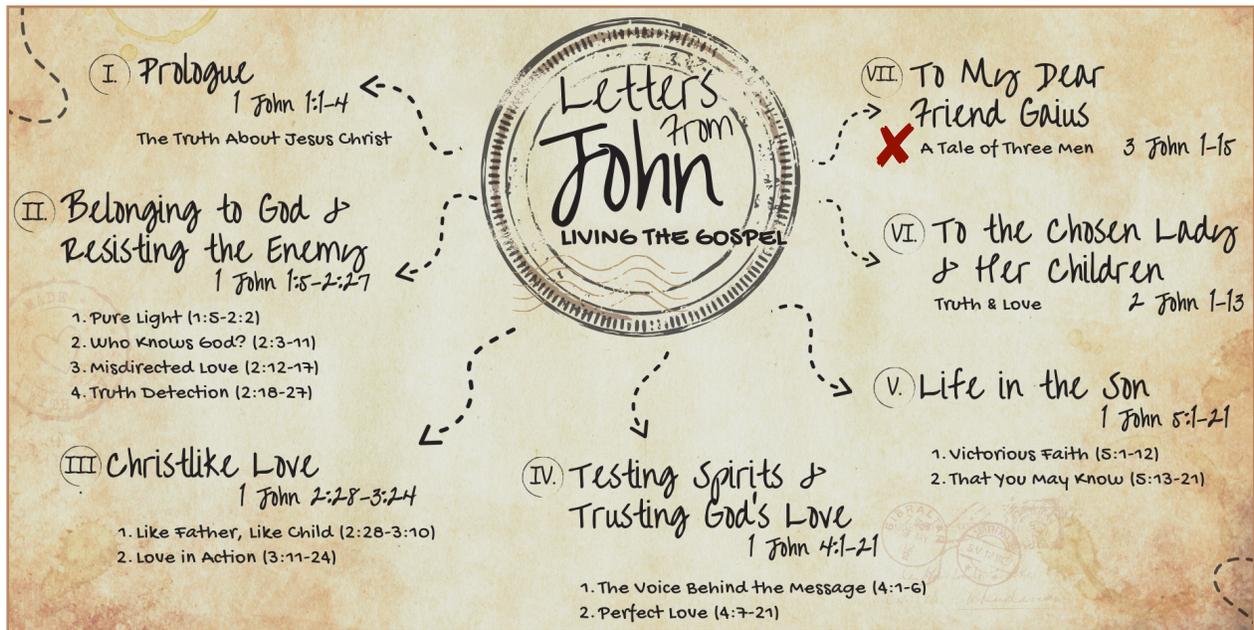
**APPLY:** (question 14) From where do you expect deception and false teaching to come? Why? What skills or habits are you building to help you watch for deceptive teaching?
- EXPLORE:** (question 16) How does John say believers should act toward false teachers who seek out their hospitality? Why? Is John saying that we should not show hospitality to unbelievers or believers who do not fully agree with us on all things? Explain.

**APPLY:** (question 17) Why do you think John chose to leave certain topics for an in-person conversation? What kinds of conversations are better handled face to face? How do you decide when to use written communication (email, text, social media) or face to face?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

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## CLOSE WITH PRAYER



# 13 | A Tale of Three Men (3 John 1-15)

Dec 1-7, 2024

## THE BIG PICTURE

We have come to John's third and final letter.

Like 2 John, the third letter also comes addressed from "the elder," but in contrast, this letter is addressed to a single individual named Gaius. Several people named Gaius are mentioned in the New Testament (apparently a very popular name), but we cannot be sure if this Gaius corresponds with any of the others.

In his first letter, John wrote in a warm pastoral tone, but still, his comments were broad and theological. He explained relationships between love and truth, light and darkness, and how to discern which people belong to God and which to the devil. John's messages in the previous letters were practical, but he didn't provide any specific examples.

In this letter, John names names. We can see how some of the principles from the first letter are exhibited, or not, by a few specific individuals. It is immediately obvious in this letter that we are reading someone else's mail. Even though this letter is short and John did not write directly to us, the personal stories help to flesh out the issues of love and truth that John has been teaching. John was dealing with real people and real conflicts, just like we find inside our churches today.

# Day One

Take time to read through 1, 2, & 3 John again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

## **READ 3 JOHN 1-15**

1. Summarize this passage in 2-3 sentences.
2. John repeats many words and phrases in 3 John that he used in 1 & 2 John. What **differences** do you find? Are there any new ideas or directions of thought? Note the differences you find and the verses where you found them.
3. What does 3 John teach us about God?
4. What does John indicate is his greatest joy? State it in your own words.
5. **APPLY** Think about what brings you joy when you think about other people. Would you say your greatest joy is seeing godly obedience from those you love? Why or why not?

**PRAY:** Think about your friends and loved ones who are walking faithfully with God. Praise God for his work in their lives.

## Day Two .....➔

### LOOK AT: 3 JOHN 5-8.

6. What do we learn about Gaius and his activities? What kind of person does he appear to be? Note everything you learn about him in verses 5-8.
  
7. What do you think 'for the sake of the Name' means (v. 7)? See Philippians 2:9-11. Why do you think John includes this detail?
  
8. What do you think John has in mind when he writes that we should show hospitality in verse 8?
  
9. How do we "work together for truth" when we offer hospitality to other believers?
  
10. **APPLY** How do you show hospitality to believers who are doing work for God's kingdom? Why is this such an important activity?

What causes us to hesitate to extend hospitality or generosity? Are we ever justified to hesitate?

**PRAY:** Ask God to give you a generous and hospitable spirit. Ask him to show you who you might support in working for God's kingdom, through hospitality, resources, or prayer.

## Day Three .....➔

### LOOK AT: 3 JOHN 9-10.

11. What can we learn about Diotrephes and his activities? What sort of person does he appear to be? Note everything you learn about him.

12. How does Diotrephes score on John's tests of love, obedience, and truth found in 1 John?

13. **APPLY** How are people like Diotrephes potentially harmful to a group or organization? Why are people like him so damaging to the work of the church, in particular?

Have you ever been in a church with a person or group who acted like Diotrephes? What did you learn from the experience?

### LOOK AT: 3 JOHN 11-12.

14. What contrasting terms does John introduce in verse 11?

15. Which of the people mentioned in 3 John "imitate good"? Who "imitates evil"?

**PRAY:** Ask God to help you guard your heart from pride and self-centeredness. Ask that he would give you a soft heart ready to serve with humility.

## Day Four .....>

### LOOK AT 3 JOHN 11-15

16. What can we learn about Demetrius and his activities? What sort of person does he appear to be? Note everything you learn about him.
17. Compare verses 13-15 to 2 John 12-13. How are these closing comments similar? How are they different?
18. What does 3 John 13-15 reveal about John's character? How do his closing comments model Christlike virtues?
19. **APPLY** Why do you think John tells Gaius to greet the friends by name? How do you feel when someone makes an effort to learn and remember your name? Do you have trouble remembering someone's name? Commit to pray for that person by name this week.

**PRAY:** *"Lord, I thank you for the joy of fellowship with other believers. Help me to value each of these relationships and to seek opportunities for deeper, face-to-face connections with my brothers and sisters in Christ."*

## Final Reflections .....>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

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## SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

### WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

#### SET THE SCENE

**READ: 3 JOHN 1-15**

## DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 3*) What does 3 John teach us about God?

**APPLY:** (*question 5*) Think about what brings you joy when you think about other people. Would you say your greatest joy is seeing godly obedience from those you love? Why or why not?

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 9*) How do we "work together for truth" when we offer hospitality to other believers?

**APPLY:** (*question 10*) How do you show hospitality to believers who are doing work for God's kingdom? Why is this such an important activity? What causes us to hesitate to extend hospitality or generosity? Are we ever justified to hesitate?

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 12*) How does Diotrephes score on John's tests of love, obedience, and truth found in 1 John?

**APPLY:** (*question 13*) How are people like Diotrephes potentially harmful to a group or organization? Why are people like him so damaging to the work of the church, in particular? Have you ever been in a church with a person or group who acted like Diotrephes? What did you learn from the experience?

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 18*) What does 3 John 13-15 reveal about John's character? How do his closing comments model Christlike virtues?

**APPLY:** (*question 19*) Why do you think John tells Gaius to greet the friends by name? How do you feel when someone makes an effort to learn and remember your name? Do you have trouble remembering someone's name? Commit to pray for that person by name this week.

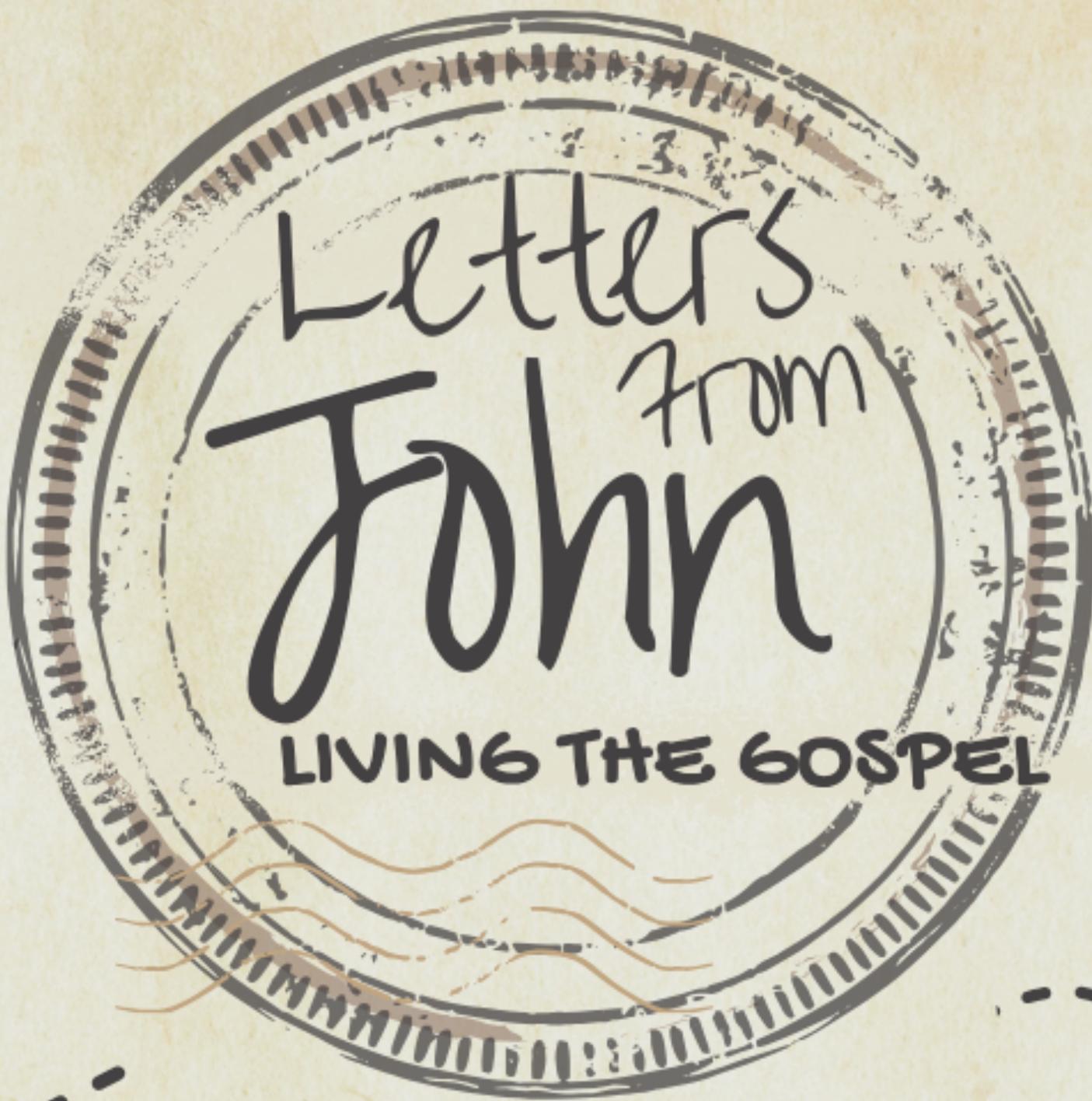
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## CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Letters  
From  
John

LIVING THE GOSPEL