Back to the
Drawing Board



Studies in 1 John

**Introduction**The teaching of 1 John takes us back to the basics of Christianity as the platform we need to live the Christian life. Our faith is grounded fully and firmly in the historical appearance of the eternal Son of God. Living in obedience to Christ and loving with fervent devotion requires we constantly go back to the drawing board for certainty and drives us forward into ongoing authentic Christian living.

**Setting**Although the letter is written anonymously John the Apostle and author of John’s gospel is the most likely candidate. The dating of letter fits best as written in the last third of the first century AD. John’s original recipients were more than likely the Christians of Ephesus and the surrounding area.

**Purpose**Many have seen 1 John as a response to false teachers who had left the true teaching and were proclaiming a false understanding of salvation based on special ‘knowledge’. There is mention of antichrists who had left the apostles 2:19 and were teaching error regarding the personhood of Jesus Christ. It seems that the warning of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians in Acts 20:29-30 was no empty threat. Fierce wolves had come who were teaching twisted truths and causing great damage. But within the letter John also gives us several other reasons for why he wrote. In 1:4, ‘to make our joy complete’, in 2:1 ‘so you won’t sin’, and in 5:13 ‘that you may know you have eternal life’. So we see the purpose of the letter is on the one hand to encourage joy, holiness and assurance, and on the other to strengthen us against false teachers.

**Tips for reading 1 John.**

**Structure:** 1 John unlike many of the other letters and books of the bible lacks a clear systematic structure. John covers many fantastic topics such as; how to live a godly and holy life, clear directions about Christian love, how to spot impostors and the greatness of our God for adopting us. But there’s no systematic structure in how he goes about doing this. John makes three key statements regarding God in the letter: God is ‘Light’ 1:5, God is ‘righteous’ 3:7, and God is ‘Love’ 4:16 and each time he urges us to act in accordance with our God. We are to walk in the light, we are to practice righteousness and we are to live out Christ’s love with each other and in the world.

**Literary tips:**  You will notice John uses the term ‘I/we write’ often, it shows up 13 times in the letter and it’s worth noting he does so to add weight to what he’s about to say. You’ll also notice he has a huge love for opposites try spotting these ones and others… light/darkness, life/death, love/hate, truth/lies, of God/of the Devil. John is black and white in a grey world but his manner is always very pastoral.

**Study guide:** These study guides are written with the intention that **you do your own homework before you come together as a growth group.** The weekly format will follow a basic structure which spells the word **T.E.A.M.S** and here is the breakdown of how this works.



**T. Truth**

 The aim is to study the passage and discern the clear teaching point, the Big Idea of the passage.



**E. Equipping**

The aim here is to now take the truth and make it understandable and usable in our life situations.



**A. Accountability**

The aim here is to reflect on how God’s truth clashes with our rebellion and how obedience brings blessing and disobedience breeds discontent.



**M. Missional**

The aim here is to think bigger than ourselves and even our Church family. The aim is to take and apply God’s truth in the mission field God has placed us in.



**S. Supplication**

This is a fancy word for prayer so the acronym reads **T.E.A.M.S** not **T.E.A.M.P** (which doesn’t make much sense). The aim here is to pray and ask God to allow his truth to abide in us and be lived out thorough us to others. Prayer keeps us on target.

**Outline:** The 8 studies in this series cover the letter in these sections

1. 1 John 1:1-4 **Check your foundations!** (Doctrine)
2. 1 John 1:5-2:6 **The difference Light makes.** (Revelation)
3. 1 John 2:7-17 **Great new fruit, same old vine.** (Perseverance)
4. 1 John 2:18-27 **Beware… same Jesus only different.** (Deception)
5. 1 John 2:28-3:10 **How Great is our God.** (Adoption)
6. 1 John 3:11-24 **Why does doing good go so bad?** (Opposition)
7. 1 John 4:1-21 **Diagnosing spiritual Goosebumps.** (Spiritualism)
8. 1 John 5:1-21 **Faith in Jesus.** (Faith)
1 Check your foundations!
 **Read 1 John 1:1-4.**

D.A. Carson says, ‘*The love of novelty combined with an admiration for piety easily breeds an irresponsible tolerance for theological rubbish.’* From the opening paragraph of 1 John we see the importance of holding firmly to the foundational apostolic truth concerning Jesus Christ. To wander from this truth is to walk off into error. Foundations affect our whole life and practice. They need to be right.

**Truth**

Who is the ‘we’ John speaks of in this opening paragraph… and why is it so important for all Christians to only accept their proclamation of Jesus? Cf John 14:26, 17:20, Eph 2:20, Rev 21:14.

From the first 2 verses what do we learn about the nature of Jesus?

What benefits are there for those who accept the Apostolic proclamation of Jesus in vv3-4?

Why is John so concerned to present Jesus as the historical, audible, visible, tangible appearance of the eternal?

Summarise as simply and clearly as you can in your own words the content of what the Apostles were proclaiming from these 4 verses. What is the key truth to know from this passage?



**Equipping**

Have a discussion about how other religions, belief systems and cults view Jesus. Which ones deny Jesus’ humanity? Which ones deny his divinity? Which deny both? Atheism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Mormons, Jehovah witnesses… other…

What should you say to someone who gets angry at you for claiming Jesus is only way available for people to have fellowship and joy with God?

**Accountability**

To what extent does knowing Jesus is the ‘Word of life, and our means to lasting fellowship and joy, help you to resist the urge to chase after happiness and satisfaction in things like retail therapy, body image, friends, food, entertainment and finances?

Write down the top two things *in this world* you are most committed and attached to?

Would your convictions concerning the person and power of Jesus be strong enough to break your commitment and attachment to the things of this world?



**Missional**

In what ways will proclaiming and writing the certain truth about Jesus to others result in joy for John, v4?

When we tell others the truth concerning Jesus, we are speaking the Word of life to people who are spiritually dead. What reactions should we anticipate as we do this? And how can anticipating typical reactions keep us motivated to go on sharing the truth?

Reflect on the power of the gospel. As we proclaim the Word of life we are using a powerful weapon that brings dead people to life. What do we need to keep doing to get better at handling this weapon?



**Supplication**

Pray for a desire to keep growing in your love and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Pray for the ability to spend more time reflecting on the doctrines of God’s word and appreciating what God has done for us in Christ.

2 The Difference Light makes.

**Read 1 John 1:5-2:6**

*“What is God?”* That’s the fourth question of the Shorter Catechism and the abstract and complicated answer given is, *“God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.”*  John’s answer to the question is simpler yet more profound, *“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”*



**Truth**

What does John mean by ‘light’ and ‘darkness’?

What you claim and how you behave are two different things. What does v 6 teach us about ***words*** no matter how impressive they might sound?

Verse 7 states, **‘if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another…’** so from this, what kind of social behaviour would we expect to be on display by people who walk in the darkness?

How does John further describe the actions of light and darkness in 2:3-6

Name two facts can we see in the last section of 1:7 that bind all true believers together in humble and joyful common fellowship?

Discuss the tragic irony of sin in 1: 8,10. Why do we need to live a life of ongoing confession of sin v9?

On what grounds can God forgive our sins 2:1-2?

**Equipping**

Why is it dangerous for people to claim they have a deep and personal relationship with God while at the same time their behaviour is arrogant and disruptive within the Christian community?

The sacrifice of Jesus is our only hope of forgiveness and acceptance. How is this reminder such a big help in enabling us to live in love and unity with other believers?



**Accountability**

It has been said of Jesus that, *‘he afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted’.* What are you in more need of, affliction or comfort, when it comes to how you see yourself before God?

The sin of self-deception is a particularly tough sin to deal with. How does a healthy and functioning church family network help us to avoid falling into this sin of self-deception?



**Missional**

‘God is Light’- This is the message John and the other apostles heard from Jesus and handed on to us. Think of practical ways this truth helps you live in your current circumstances?

1 John 2:6 states, **“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”** What was the mission of Jesus and how is your living an ongoing attempt to imitate him in this regard? Cf. Lk19:10, Mark 1:38



**Supplication**

Pray for a deeper appreciation of the revelation of God we have received in Jesus through his Word.

Pray for a stronger conviction of how Jesus’ mission is entrusted to us to carry out, for greater confidence in declaring the truth to the lost and more opportunities to open up for this.

3 Great new fruit, same old vine.

**Read 1 John 2:7-17**

Little children are known to quickly grow bored with things. The same thing can be said of many adults. The constant desire for the latest and greatest gizmo leaves many always on the lookout for something new and fresh and exciting. Rather than jettisoning the truth of Jesus for some strange new spiritual experience, John encourages us to keep expressing the same old truth of Jesus Christ in ever new, fresh and relevant ways for our generation.



**Truth**

How can you explain John saying in v7 that he is not writing a new command and then in v 8 saying he is writing a new command? What’s old, what’s new and what has the passing darkness and the coming light got to do with it?

How do the age-old attitudes of love and hate provide the ever-new standard by which we can measure a person’s spiritual growth and understanding, vv9-11?

 John writes to children, fathers and young men vv12-14. Do you think he’s talking about biological or spiritual age? Why?

Capture what John specifically says to each age group in your own words. What’s the point of him repeating himself?

Should you qualify v15 and if so how and why?

List some actual things that are ‘cravings of sinful man’ and other things that are ‘the lust of the eyes’ and yet other things that fit under ‘boasting about possessions and feats’.

How can true love of the Father v15 to be legitimately expressed according to v 17?

**Equipping**

What does it mean for you to have your identity in Jesus Christ alone rather than in what you have and can do?

How is it possible for us to continue to express the same old gospel in ever new and fresh ways? And how is it possible for individuals and churches to make the gospel stagnant and stale?



**Accountability**

Where would you plot yourself in relation to your spiritual life… child, youth or adult? Where should you be by now and why?

Test your heart. What sinful cravings and comforts are you unwilling to part with? Is lust in v 16 purely sexual or is lust broader than that? How can you stop defining yourself by what you have and do and start to build your identity in Christ?



**Missional**

How can you best help the people you know with the gospel when they live with their identity so tightly wrapped up in their achievements and possessions?

What changes would you need to make in your life circumstances to get the non-Christians around you to question you on your counter-cultural attitude to this life?



**Supplication**

Pray for a stronger conviction of the temporary and transient nature of all we currently see and love.

Pray for spiritual wisdom and spiritual eyesight to walk by faith in the power of the Spirit rather than by sight in the power of our abilities.

Pray for God’s mercy to be shown to the non-Christians you rub shoulders with every day, who live for the here and now and have no hope beyond the grave.

4 Beware! Same Jesus only different

**Read 1 John 2:18-27**

What a person believes will always impact the way the live. Within the church what a person believes about Jesus will decide how they behave and treat other believers. Surprisingly the way to get on better with others is to keep on getting a better understanding of who Jesus is.



**Truth**

Jesus made it very clear that no one knows the day or hour of his return. The bible speaks of the end times, the last times, these last days and the last time. How do you think John is using the phrase ***last hour*** here, and what does he highlight as evidence we are in the last hour?

When we think of being *anti*-something we tend to mean ‘against’. Although that is a legitimate meaning of the word *anti*, it also means *in place of*. What relationship damage happens as the end result of people holding to substitute Christs v19?

From vv22-23 list the things these antichrists were specifically denying regarding Jesus and where does their faulty belief system leave them in reality?

John speaks of believers having an anointing from the Holy One vv20, 27. Where does the Holy Spirit constantly take us and how does He help us to discern truth from error, vv24, 27?



**Equipping**

The title *the Christ* in v22 means God’s anointed, chosen, rightful king. Think of people you know who deny that Jesus fills that position and explain how this both categorises them as liars and positions them as antichrists?

How does the truth of knowing we are living in the last hour v18 and knowing we have the promise of eternal life v25 help us to press on in unity and resist the smooth talk of liars?

What does John mean in v27 when he says we don’t need anyone to teach us? How do you understand this when it comes in the context of John writing a letter to instruct his original readers and us concerning the truth?

 **Accountability**

There often seems to be a big gap between our convictions concerning Jesus and our actions. Share the area in life you struggle with the most to bring under the kingship of Jesus.

How easy and wrong is it to misread comfortable living and worldly success as confirmation of God’s favour and acceptance of our life choices? What does John emphasise over and over again as the hallmark of an acceptable life in God’s sight, v23, 24, 27?



**Missional**

John makes it clear there are many antichrists in operation in our world. How should this knowledge equip us as we aim to engage with those in our day to day lives?

To what extent does the way we treat each other and live in unity help outsiders come to recognise the truth and validity of the Jesus we serve who is the Christ?



**Supplication**

 Pray for a greater confidence in the Spirit and the Word enabling us to spot the real Jesus from the many counterfeits that are out there.

Pray for stronger and deeper unity and commitment to humbly keep walking with each other in unity.

Pray for those who promote false Jesus’ to be exposed and condemned as frauds and that their false teachings and lies will not result in people refusing to examine the truth.

5 How Great is our God.

1 John contains tests given for assurance of authentic Christianity. And although in many ways assurance is grounded in observable conduct the ultimate grounds for our assurance is Jesus finished work 2:2 and God’s matchless love in sending his Son 4:7-12. In this study we see how our observable conduct is driven by the deep love of God in adopting us as his children.

**Read 1 John 2:28-3:10**



 **Truth**

How can you show from the passage that the one we are to continue in is Jesus Christ, from vv:28-29? And how are we to go about continuing in him?

John pauses to reflect on the wonder of our Father’s love for us 3:1-3. What things does he focus on and what is his conclusion regarding those who spend time in such reflection?

John 3:4-6, 9 almost sound like a direct contradiction of what John said back in 1:8. How would you explain this to someone who pointed it out and claimed the bible is contradictory?

How does what we do so clearly betray our allegiance to either God or the devil?



**Equipping**

What does it mean to purify yourself 3:3? What is your current state of purity and how can you measure personal progress in purity?

Can you see the connection between Jesus’ sinlessness 3:5, ***in him there is no sin***, and John urging us to, remain in him 2:28. How is it that the more aware we are of being ***in Jesus***, the more effective we are in avoiding sin.

**Accountability**

Reflect on 3:1-3. To what extent are you motivated to be pure by the love of your Heavenly Father in adopting you and marking you out for an amazing eternity?

Doing what is right sounds a bit ambiguous doesn’t it? Whose version of right is right? What are the guidelines we use to do what is right?



**Missional**

There are a lot of people in our world who have no interest in Jesus yet seem to do a lot of things we would consider the right thing to do. What can you say to those who think their *right living* should be right enough for God?

How does 3:1 give us encouragement to press on doing what is right even if we get badly misunderstood as a result?

The accusation levelled at Christians is so often that we are hypocrites. From 3:10 what kind of behaviour within the church would confirm this accusation and what measures should we take to avoid such behaviour?



**Supplication**

Pray that our appreciation for our heavenly Father’s love will grow and that it will express itself in our authentic love for each other.

Pray for forgiveness for the many times we have avoided the difficult people at church because we find it easier to love those we like.

Pray that we will be a church full of people who are progressively becoming more and more like Jesus in the way we live and act.

6 Why does doing good go so bad?

In his commentary on Galatians 6:10 Jerome tells a famous story of, ‘blessed John the evangelist’ in extreme old age at Ephesus. He used to be carried into the congregation in the arms of his disciples and was unable to say anything except ‘Little children, love one another’. At last, wearied that he always spoke the same words, they asked: ‘Master, why do you always say this?’ ‘Because’, he replied. ‘it is the Lord’s command, and if this only is done, it is enough.’

**Read 1 John 3:11-24**



**Truth**

Cain is the only Old Testament character who gets his name mentioned in 1 John. Cain is held up as an example of how we are not to behave. It’s worth reading the Genesis passage. Genesis 4:1-8. From the story:

How can you show Cain was bringing his offering to God as a bargaining tool aimed at getting God to bless him?

What did Abel have that Cain hated and resented to the point of murdering him?

Why can our contentment in God and our love for brothers and sisters stir up hatred in those who are of this world?

Explain how v14 is true.

How does vv16-20 show us that as we grow as Christians we also find our hearts continually condemning us? And what’s John’s remedy for this situation?



**Equipping**

Some people think you are saved by God’s grace but you are then to live by Mosaic commandments. How does v23 give us a better understanding of what it means to obey God’s command?

Christian growth is us expressing love through personal sacrifice for the good of others. It’s eternal life via progressive personal death to *self*. How can this understanding of growth keep us humble?



**Accountability**

Who do you know who has needs that you could help with but aren’t? What reasons do we give for why we choose not to help out? Are they legitimate reasons or not?

So often it is personal fears that hold us back from progressing in living sacrificially. How comforting is it to reflect on the truth of v20 in such times?

John is so gentle in encouraging us into loving service of Jesus. Note his terms, ‘dear children’ v18 and ‘dear friends’ verse 21. Why is it so much more effective to urge us into Christian living with love rather than with rebuke and law?



**Missional**

John tells us to not be surprised by the world’s hatred of us. Instead of surprise what are we to keep on doing to the best of our abilities?

The focus of John’s letter in this section is on our love for each other within the believing community. But how does the example of Jesus drive us to love all people and how can we show appropriate love to those not in the faith?



**Supplication**

Pray for the example of love Jesus gives us to be the model of love we aim to imitate to others.

Pray for God’s Spirit to keep pricking our consciences and opening our eyes to how hard and unkind we often are to others and drive us to greater feats of sacrificial love.

7 Diagnosing spiritual Goosebumps.

**Read 1 John 4:1-21**

Some people are so gullible they will believe everything. Others are so sceptical they will believe nothing. Christians are not to be in either camp. We are to believe and accept the reality of spiritual and unseen powers because God’s word makes it plain such powers exist. But as a result of believing this, we are to exercise extreme discernment when it comes to things spiritual as not all that is spiritual is good.



**Truth**

What is the clear assumption John is working from regarding things spiritual from vv1-3 and do you share this assumption?

What further assumptions can we deduce regarding spiritual powers from v4-6, both positive and negative?

What tests can we apply in order for us to recognise spiritual messages as true or false v2,6,11, 20?

How is the perfect love of Jesus ultimately the power that drives out all of our fears v18?



**Equipping**

What weird and way out spiritual stories have you heard and how do you go about discerning the truth in the stories? A rule of thumb you will notice is the more spectacular the spiritual story is, the less verifiable it is.

What can you say to help or challenge those who go on and on about the importance of their spiritual experiences and yet are arrogant and impatient towards the church for not recognising their assumed spiritual superiority?

What is the fruit of all genuine spiritual experiences? Are there any genuine Christians who miss out on this experience v13?



**Accountability**

One way people have explained Christianity at work within us is by using the Facts, Faith, Feelings train. This is how it’s taught: *The train engine is Facts about Jesus which we study. Behind the engine comes the carriage of Faith. By God’s grace the Holy Spirit enables us to believe in those Facts and place our Faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Behind the carriage of Faith is the caboose of Feelings which is the back of the train.*The feelings are what so many Christians equate with spiritual life. They are legitimate and valuable provided they are the outworking of the Facts and our Faith. But if people uncouple the caboose of feelings from the engine and carriage of facts and faith then they run into the danger of pursuing spiritual goose-bumps from all sorts of wrong places to keep their caboose going. How could this be a helpful way for us to understand how to test spiritual and emotional experiences?

Why is the ongoing ‘slog’ work of showing Christ-like love for each other actually the clearest evidence of the Holy Spirit working within us and how can we encourage each other to keep on going?



**Missional**

How do those who are non-Christians in your experience view spiritual things? Are they impressed by the ‘spiritual’ or dismissive of it?

What image does the world paint of a spiritual person? How can we engage with this image and paint a more truthful picture of what it means to be spiritual?



**Supplication**

Pray for wisdom not to chase after spiritual experiences devoid of the sacrificial living Jesus calls us to.

Praise God for the power of the Spirit enabling us to love each other progressively in a more Christ-like manner and that in so doing the love of God is made complete in us.

Pray for the wisdom to assess spiritual things by looking for the fruit of the Spirit that will be displayed in the lives of those who really are spiritual: love, joy, peace, patience…

8 Faith in Jesus.

**Read 1 John 5:1-21**This chapter contains the three most difficult verses in the whole letter v6, 17 and 21. The first two raise lots of differing opinions while the last verse just seems to drop out of nowhere without any context to explain it. But in spite of some of the complexities the chapter focuses our attention on where our faith must rest.

**Truth**

What does John mean by saying our faith overcomes the world vv1-5? In what ways before we were born of God were we overcome by the world? Does v19 throw any light on the question?

How is love for the Father and for the Son and for each other all interconnected and why is it not acceptable to claim to be a Christian yet not display this three way love in practice?

Some understand v6 as saying Jesus came by natural birth, that he came as ‘flesh and blood.’ Others see the reference to water and blood as alluding to Jesus’ baptism and cross. Others see it as John’s reference to the spear thrust of the soldier, where water and blood flowed from Jesus’ side.
Personally I believe the reference takes us back to Old Testament predictions regarding the Messiah: God testified beforehand to his coming Son by establishing the purification rituals through his prophets the final one being through the last of the OT prophets John the Baptist. And God testified to his coming Son by establishing the sacrifice system that would find it’s fulfilment in the lamb who takes away the sins of the world. In this way the Spirit authored the Word which in the fullness of time came in the person of Jesus Christ. And the wedding of Canna is the clearest hint Jesus gives us to him being the one who will fulfil both the purification and sacrificial testimonies. There he turns purification water into rich wine, the symbol of his life-blood shed for our sin and salvation.

 Where is eternal life to be found and why is it only legitimately found here, v11?

Is John basically arguing in v13-15 from the greater to the lesser? Is he saying since God has given us his greatest treasure in Jesus will he not happily give us lesser good things if they are indeed good for us?

I think the best way to understand vv16-17 is to reflect on the fact that some things are good in and of themselves and other things are always evil. For example emotions are good but blind rage is always evil; sex is good but outside of marriage it always produces evil. Read in this light, give examples of how you could pray for the legitimate fulfilment of a desire for a brother or sister, who previously committed sin in order to gain?

How does knowing Jesus give us a true understanding of this life and a right perspective with which to assess this world v18-20?

How does v21 fit perfectly as the closing warning to avoid by those who have come to know Jesus?



**Equipping**

If Faith in Jesus is the most important thing in life how can you live this out in your everyday life?

What is the difference or line between enjoying the good things and blessings God gives us in life and turning those very things into idols in our life?



**Accountability**

Have you seen a brother or sister desire and want a good thing but end up sinning in an attempt to get in illegitimate ways? What should you do in such a situation?

It has been accurately said of our hearts that they are a ‘factory of idols’. Our idols are actually good gifts from God that have become *ultimate treasures we desire more than God*. What idols are you in danger of worshiping?



**Missional**

How does v12 continue to drive us to remember how important it is to share Christ with others?



**Supplication**

Pray for our faith to continue to increase and drive us to live our life under the Lordship of Jesus?

**1 John** *The Message (MSG)*

**1** 1-2From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we’re telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. 3-4We saw it, we heard it, and now we’re telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!

**Walk in the Light**5This, in essence, is the message we heard from Christ and are passing on to you: God is light, pure light; there’s not a trace of darkness in him. 6-7If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we’re obviously lying through our teeth—we’re not *living* what we claim. But if we walk in the light, God himself being the light, we also experience a shared life with one another, as the sacrificed blood of Jesus, God’s Son, purges all our sin.

8-10If we claim that we’re free of sin, we’re only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won’t let us down; he’ll be true to himself. He’ll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we’ve never sinned, we out-and-out contradict God—make a liar out of him. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God.

**2**1-2I write this, dear children, to guide you out of sin. But if anyone does sin, we have a Priest-Friend in the presence of the Father: Jesus Christ, righteous Jesus. When he served as a sacrifice for our sins, he solved the sin problem for good—not only ours, but the whole world’s.

**The Only Way to Know We’re in Him**2-3Here’s how we can be sure that we know God in the right way: Keep his commandments. 4-6If someone claims, “I know him well!” but doesn’t keep his commandments, he’s obviously a liar. His life doesn’t match his words. But the one who keeps God’s word is the person in whom we see God’s mature love. This is the only way to be sure we’re in God. Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.

7-8My dear friends, I’m not writing anything new here. This is the oldest commandment in the book, and you’ve known it from day one. It’s always been implicit in the Message you’ve heard. On the other hand, perhaps it is new, freshly minted as it is in both Christ and you—the darkness on its way out and the True Light already blazing! 9-11Anyone who claims to live in God’s light and hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. It’s the person who loves brother and sister who dwells in God’s light and doesn’t block the light from others. But whoever hates is still in the dark, stumbles around in the dark, doesn’t know which end is up, blinded by the darkness.

**Loving the World**12-13I remind you, my dear children: Your sins are forgiven in Jesus’ name. You veterans were in on the ground floor, and know the One who started all this; you newcomers have won a big victory over the Evil One. 13-14And a second reminder, dear children: You know the Father from personal experience. You veterans know the One who started it all; and you newcomers—such vitality and strength! God’s word is so steady in you. Your fellowship with God enables you to gain a victory over the Evil One.

15-17Don’t love the world’s ways. Don’t love the world’s goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity.

**Antichrists Everywhere You Look**18Children, time is just about up. You heard that Antichrist is coming. Well, they’re all over the place, antichrists everywhere you look. That’s how we know that we’re close to the end. 19They left us, but they were never really with us. If they had been, they would have stuck it out with us, loyal to the end. In leaving, they showed their true colors, showed they never did belong. 20-21But you belong. The Holy One anointed you, and you all know it. I haven’t been writing this to tell you something you don’t know, but to confirm the truth you do know, and to remind you that the truth doesn’t breed lies.

22-23So who is lying here? It’s the person who denies that Jesus is the Divine Christ, that’s who. This is what makes an antichrist: denying the Father, denying the Son. No one who denies the Son has any part with the Father, but affirming the Son is an embrace of the Father as well. 24-25Stay with what you heard from the beginning, the original message. Let it sink into your life. If what you heard from the beginning lives deeply in you, you will live deeply in both Son and Father. This is exactly what Christ promised: eternal life, real life!

26-27I’ve written to warn you about those who are trying to deceive you. But they’re no match for what is embedded deeply within you—Christ’s anointing, no less! You don’t need any of their so-called teaching. Christ’s anointing teaches you the truth on everything you need to know about yourself and him, uncontaminated by a single lie. Live deeply in what you were taught.

**Live Deeply in Christ**28And now, children, stay with Christ. Live deeply in Christ. Then we’ll be ready for him when he appears, ready to receive him with open arms, with no cause for red-faced guilt or lame excuses when he arrives. 29Once you’re convinced that he is right and righteous, you’ll recognize that all who practice righteousness are God’s true children.

**3**What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we’re called children of God! That’s who we really are. But that’s also why the world doesn’t recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who he is or what he’s up to. 2-3But friends, that’s exactly who we are: children of God. And that’s only the beginning. Who knows how we’ll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we’ll see him—and in seeing him, become like him. All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready, with the glistening purity of Jesus’ life as a model for our own.

4-6All who indulge in a sinful life are dangerously lawless, for sin is a major disruption of God’s order. Surely you know that Christ showed up in order to get rid of sin. There is no sin in him, and sin is not part of his program. No one who lives deeply in Christ makes a practice of sin. None of those who do practice sin have taken a good look at Christ. They’ve got him all backward.

7-8So, my dear children, don’t let anyone divert you from the truth. It’s the person who *acts* right who *is* right, just as we see it lived out in our righteous Messiah. Those who make a practice of sin are straight from the Devil, the pioneer in the practice of sin. The Son of God entered the scene to abolish the Devil’s ways. 9-10People conceived and brought into life by God don’t make a practice of sin. How could they? God’s seed is deep within them, making them who they are. It’s not in the nature of the God-begotten to practice and parade sin. Here’s how you tell the difference between God’s children and the Devil’s children: The one who won’t practice righteous ways isn’t from God, nor is the one who won’t love brother or sister. A simple test.

11For this is the original message we heard: We should love each other. 12-13We must not be like Cain, who joined the Evil One and then killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because he was deep in the practice of evil, while the acts of his brother were righteous. So don’t be surprised, friends, when the world hates you. This has been going on a long time.

14-15The way we know we’ve been transferred from death to life is that we love our brothers and sisters. Anyone who doesn’t love is as good as dead. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know very well that eternal life and murder don’t go together. 16-17This is how we’ve come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God’s love? It disappears. And you made it disappear.

**When We Practice Real Love**18-20My dear children, let’s not just talk about love; let’s practice real love. This is the only way we’ll know we’re living truly, living in God’s reality. It’s also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves.

21-24And friends, once that’s taken care of and we’re no longer accusing or condemning ourselves, we’re bold and free before God! We’re able to stretch our hands out and receive what we asked for because we’re doing what he said, doing what pleases him. Again, this is God’s command: to believe in his personally named Son, Jesus Christ. He told us to love each other, in line with the original command. As we keep his commands, we live deeply and surely in him, and he lives in us. And this is how we experience his deep and abiding presence in us: by the Spirit he gave us.

**Don’t Believe Everything You Hear
4** My dear friends, don’t believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying preachers loose in the world. 2-3Here’s how you test for the genuine Spirit of God. Everyone who confesses openly his faith in Jesus Christ—the Son of God, who came as an actual flesh-and-blood person—comes from God and belongs to God. And everyone who refuses to confess faith in Jesus has nothing in common with God. This is the spirit of antichrist that you heard was coming. Well, here it is, sooner than we thought!

4-6My dear children, you come from God and belong to God. You have already won a big victory over those false teachers, for the Spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world. These people belong to the Christ-denying world. They talk the world’s language and the world eats it up. But we come from God and belong to God. Anyone who knows God understands us and listens. The person who has nothing to do with God will, of course, not listen to us. This is another test for telling the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of deception.

**God Is Love**7-10My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn’t know the first thing about God, because God *is* love—so you can’t know him if you don’t love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they’ve done to our relationship with God.

11-12My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

13-16This is how we know we’re living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He’s given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we’ve seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God’s Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we’ve embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

**To Love, to Be Loved**17-18God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we’re free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ’s. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. 19We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first. 20-21If anyone boasts, “I love God,” and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won’t love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can’t see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You’ve got to love both.

**5** 1-3Every person who believes that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, is God-begotten. If we love the One who conceives the child, we’ll surely love the child who was conceived. The reality test on whether or not we love God’s children is this: Do we love God? Do we keep his commands? The proof that we love God comes when we keep his commandments and they are not at all troublesome.

**The Power That Brings the World to Its Knees**4-5Every God-begotten person conquers the world’s ways. The conquering power that brings the world to its knees is our faith. The person who wins out over the world’s ways is simply the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God.
6-8Jesus—the Divine Christ! He experienced a life-giving birth and a death-killing death. Not only birth from the womb, but baptismal birth of his ministry and sacrificial death. And all the while the Spirit is confirming the truth, the reality of God’s presence at Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion, bringing those occasions alive for us. A triple testimony: the Spirit, the Baptism, the Crucifixion. And the three in perfect agreement.

9-10If we take human testimony at face value, how much more should we be reassured when God gives testimony as he does here, testifying concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God inwardly confirms God’s testimony. Whoever refuses to believe in effect calls God a liar, refusing to believe God’s own testimony regarding his Son. 11-12This is the testimony in essence: God gave us eternal life; the life is in his Son. So, whoever has the Son, has life; whoever rejects the Son, rejects life.

**The Reality, Not the Illusion**13-15My purpose in writing is simply this: that you who believe in God’s Son will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have eternal life, the reality and not the illusion. And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely asking according to his will, sure that he’s listening. And if we’re confident that he’s listening, we know that what we’ve asked for is as good as ours.

16-17For instance, if we see a Christian believer sinning (clearly I’m not talking about those who make a practice of sin in a way that is “fatal,” leading to eternal death), we ask for God’s help and he gladly gives it, gives life to the sinner whose sin is not fatal. There is such a thing as a fatal sin, and I’m not urging you to pray about that. Everything we do wrong is sin, but not all sin is fatal.

18-21We know that none of the God-begotten makes a practice of sin—fatal sin. The God-begotten are also the God-protected. The Evil One can’t lay a hand on them. We know that we are held firm by God; it’s only the people of the world who continue in the grip of the Evil One. And we know that the Son of God came so we could recognize and understand the truth of God—what a gift!—and we are living in the Truth itself, in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. This Jesus is both True God and Real Life. Dear children, be on guard against all clever facsimiles.

Prayer Points

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