

# Joyful Life Bible Studies

## I John

### BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

#### Lesson I

Welcome to the Joyful Life Bible Study. We look forward to learning and growing with you in our study of the Epistle of I John. This letter, addressed to Christians at the close of the first century A.D., is timeless in revelation and application to Christians of all centuries. Keep in mind as you read this letter that those Christians of A. D. 90 were flesh and blood real people. living in a fallen world and morally bankrupt culture similar to ours today. The *message* (I John 1:5) declared unto them is still being declared unto us today.

This letter has been described as a ***tender letter from the Father to His children***. And so, it is. five times Christians are called ***beloved***. Doubts are dispelled and assurance is established. Our prayer life is enriched with confidence and our joy becomes full as we begin to understand and experience the meaning of ***fellowship*** with our ***Father and with His Son Jesus Christ***.

There are transforming truths contained in this I John letter that are meant to expose our pretensions and impact our life so that we will not only believe like a Christian but behave like a Christian. (I John 2:6)

Start your study each day with a prayer asking the Lord to open your eyes and ears, mind and heart, and will to the wondrous things in His Word. Then, commit yourself to His enabling power to work, in you all of His will and good pleasure.

***Your words are what sustain me;  
They are food to my hungry soul.  
They bring joy to my heart  
And delight me.***

***Jeremiah 15:16 TLB***



## BACKGROUND TO I JOHN

- AUTHOR OF THE LETTER:** The Apostle John, under the inspiration of God. (II Timothy 3:16)
- a. John also wrote the Gospel of John, 11 and III John, and Revelation.
  - b. The name John means *Jehovah is gracious*.
  - c. John was the only Apostle not martyred for Christ.
- DATE OF WRITING:** A.D. 90, approximately.
- a. Fifty to sixty years after Christ's resurrection.
  - b. Approximately 35 years after Paul founded the church in Ephesus.
- WRITTEN FROM:** Ephesus (Locate on a map.)
- a. Church in Ephesus founded by Paul the Apostle. Acts 18:19; 19
    1. Pastored by Timothy.
    2. Pastored by the Apostle John.
- WRITTEN TO:** Circular letter written to Christians everywhere, especially those in Asia Minor. (Perhaps to the seven churches mentioned in (Revelation 2, 3.)
- PURPOSE FOR WRITING:** Fill in the following verses to discover John's purpose:
1. I John 1:4  
\_\_\_\_\_
  2. I John 2:1  
\_\_\_\_\_
  3. I John 2:26  
\_\_\_\_\_
  4. I John 5:13  
\_\_\_\_\_
- CULTURAL CONTEXT:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Advanced students research and relate political, commercial, moral, and spiritual condition of Asia Minor in A.D. 90.

**FIRST DAY: Background to I John**

1. Read over the Welcome and Background to I John. Underline or highlight any thoughts or phrases that especially captured your attention. Share one of these with your group and briefly explain why it is significant to you.
  
2. John's life can be divided into two very distinct periods - before Christ and after Christ. Get acquainted with John through the following verses by jotting down what is revealed about him. Include encounters, relationships and events. (Do as many verses as possible, all if you have time.)
  - a. Matthew 4:(18a), 21, 22
  
  - b. Mark 3:17
  
  - c. Luke 9:54
  
  - d. Matthew 17: 1, 2
  
  - e. Mark 14:32, 33
  
  - f. John 19:26, 27-*The disciple whom Jesus loved refers to John.*
  
  - g. John 20:(2), 8
  
  - h. John 21:20
  
  - i. Acts 1:13, 14
  
  - j. Acts 3:1-8

Challenge: Write a more extensive biography of the Apostle John using a Bible Concordance or Bible Dictionary.

3. Often religious paintings distort our perceptions of Jesus' disciples. Using the information from the Bible, how would you describe John?
  - a. What impresses you most about him?
  
4. Watch for the word (*now* which runs all through I John. This word is found in the key verse of this letter, I John 5:13. What did the writer want all believers to *know*!
  - a. What assurance does this give you today?

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, 'Born of His Spirit, washed in His Blood.  
F. J. Crosby*

**SECOND DAY:** Read I John 1

1. Remember I John is a *letter*. This letter is somewhat like a letter from a pastor to each beloved Christian everywhere. Read it through as you would a letter from your pastor addressed just to you. By doing this you will gain a general idea of the contents and the main points. Later on, we will do a much more detailed study of the verses. Begin your *overview* by scanning the first chapter of I John. Read it in the KJV (King James Version), then in other versions if you have time. You may want to underline in your Bible or make a note on your lesson of words repeated in this chapter.
2. Give a brief title to I John 1 that summarizes its contents.
  - a. What impresses you most about this chapter? Be specific.

**THIRD DAY:** Read I John 2

1. On this first reading of I John 2, you might once again want to mark, repeated words or phrases.
2. Write a short sentence that summarizes this chapter.
  - a. Of the many subjects dealt with in this chapter, which one are you most eager to study more thoroughly? Why?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read I John 3

1. Scan I John 3. List a few of the topics in this chapter.
2. Summarize the chapter's contents in as few words as possible.
3. You can hardly escape the emphasis in I John 3 on loving one another, Using the letters in the word *love*, write an acrostic (a sentence using these letters) that expresses love.

L  
O  
V  
E

**FIFTH DAY:** Read I John 4

1. Circle or underline in your Bible or note on your lesson sheet every reference to God as you scan I John 4.
2. Give a brief title to this chapter.
3. Even in this brief overview of I John 4, we're awed by God's love for us. Express in writing thanksgiving and praise to God for His love for you in sending Jesus Christ, His Son, into the world. Such love!

**SIXTH DAY:** Read I John 5

1. Reading through I John 5 be on the lookout for words that are repeated. Underline or circle these as before.
2. Summarize this chapter as briefly as possible.
3. Complete this Overview by printing I John 5:20. Focus on the words *understanding* and *know*.
4. So much of the news we hear or read today is depressing, infuriating, or unbelievably disheartening. What is the *good news* for you from I John? Choose just one item for your answer.

*O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,  
That He may touch my eyes and make me see:  
Show me the truth concealed within Thy word,  
For in Thy book revealed I see Thee, Lord.  
William F. Sherwin*