

1, 2 & 3 JOHN

for growing believers

18



1, 2 & 3 JOHN ***for growing believers***

Bible Study Guide

From the leadership development ministry of

FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH MISSIONS

Acknowledgments

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Progression Toward Maturity

- **Phase 1 – Relationship with God** – (Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 1:9) – Call of God is first to Himself - “Creation to Christ” - (Foundation for salvation)
- **Phase 2 – Position with Christ** (1 Cor. 1:30a) New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17) – “Positioned in Christ” and “New Birth Explained” – (Foundation for Sanctification)
- **Phase 3 – Dependence upon the Spirit** – (2 Cor. 3:17-18) – (Holy Spirit is the Spirit-of-Truth – John 16:13-14) – **Introduction of the Church** - (Church is the Pillar and foundation of Truth – 1 Tim. 3:15) - “Acts for Growing Believers”
- **Phase 4 – Practical sanctification** - **Identification with Christ/Co-crucified with Christ/ Conformed to image of Christ** – (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:28-29) – Romans to Revelation for Growing Believers, “Principles of Spiritual Growth”, God’s Masterpiece the Cross,” and “Looking unto Jesus” lessons
- **Conclusion – Recommended order of study**

Detailed Explanation of Each Phase

Phase 1 – Foundation for Salvation - (“Creation to Christ”)

The Christian life is a relationship; therefore our desire is to lead our readers into a deep and intimate relationship with God. In order to grow into that level of relationship with God, there are foundational truths that must be clearly taught and understood. These foundational truths include the following;

- The attributes of God - His love, power, grace, omniscience, omnipotence, justice, immutability, hatred of sin, faithfulness.
- The sinfulness of man, his helplessness to save himself, and his need for a Savior.
- Only God can provide a way of salvation
- The Gospel.

Phase 2 – Foundation for Sanctification - (“Positioned in Christ” and “The New Birth Explained”)

The moment someone is born again, there is an immediate change of position that takes place in his or her life. At that very moment, one becomes a child of God, and is taken out of Adam and placed into Christ. All that Christ is, and all that Christ has, becomes ours. Therefore, before service to God is considered, one must be grounded in an understanding of who we are in Christ. Some important foundational truths that should be emphasized in phase 2 teaching, includes the following;

- Placed into Christ
- Justified (declared righteous) and accepted in Christ.
- Child of God
- Restored to oneness with God
- Eternally secure in Christ
- His Divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness through His finished work on the cross.
- Our part is to believe.

Phase 3 – Dependence upon the Spirit and introduction of the church – (“Acts for Growing Believers”)

The position change that takes place in every believer's life at salvation, is immediate and complete. The daily "living out" of that position, on the other hand, is a growth process. It is the progression of growth that the Holy Spirit is working all believers through in His process of conforming us to the image of Christ.

In order for believers to move on to maturity, we must learn to walk and depend upon the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our purpose in phase 3 teaching is to reveal the Holy Spirit's ministry, and His faithfulness to lead, guide, feed, and protect God's children, as well as to introduce the church. Some of the important foundational truths that should be emphasized include the following.

- The Holy Spirit's ministry to lead, guide, feed, protect, and establish us in truth.
- To emphasize the FAITHFULNESS of the Spirit to fulfill all that Jesus promised.
- To reveal the early church's dependence upon the Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is as faithful in our lives today, as He was to the early church in the book of Acts.
- Introduction of the church and her role.

Phase 4 – Practical sanctification; Identification with Christ; Conformed to the image of Christ – (“Romans to Revelation for Growing Believers,” Principles of Spiritual Growth, God’s Masterpiece the Cross of Christ,” and “Looking Unto Jesus” lessons.)

The Holy Spirit is teaching us to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit, with Christ becoming more and more the object of our hearts.

In phase 4, we will study through the epistles with the purpose of learning to rest in our identification with Christ and His finished work. As we, by faith, begin to appropriate identification truths, our co-crucifixion with Christ, our lives will become more and more conformed to the image of Christ, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

Some of the important truths that will be emphasized in Phase 4 includes the following.

- The believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Crucified with Him, and raised to newness of life)
- Sanctification is the process of walking less and less in the flesh and more and more in the Spirit.
- Our part in the process is faith in the finished work of Christ, and our identification with it.
- What it means to truly walk in the Spirit
- Putting off the old and putting on the new.
- Manifesting the life of Christ/ fruit of the Spirit.

Conclusion: Recommended Order of Study:

Being that there truly is a progression of growth that the Holy Spirit is taking all believers through, therefore our Bible lessons have been developed and arranged to line up with that work of the Spirit in our lives. Each set of lessons contain the foundational truths that must be in place in a person's heart in order to facilitate their growth unto the next stage of spiritual growth. Therefore, we believe that it is important to teach the lessons in the following order:

1. Creation to Christ
2. Positioned in Christ
3. *Acts for growing believers*

4. Romans *for growing believers*
5. Ephesians *for growing believers*
6. 1 Corinthians *for growing believers*
7. 1 Timothy *for growing believers*
8. Titus *for growing believers*
9. 1 & 2 Thessalonians *for growing believers*
10. Revelation *for growing believers*
11. Galatians *for growing believers*
12. Colossians *for growing believers*
13. 2 Corinthians *for growing believers*
14. Philippians *for growing believers*
15. Philemon *for growing believers*
16. 2 Timothy *for growing believers*
17. 1 & 2 Peter *for growing believers*
18. 1, 2 & 3 John *for growing believers*
19. Hebrews *for growing believers*
20. James *for growing believers*
21. Jude *for growing believers*
22. The Old Testament *for mature believers*
23. Acts through Revelation, verse by verse *for mature believers*

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 1

A. Introduction

- John wrote this book to emphasize what he and the other apostles had taught from the beginning of their ministry after Jesus had ascended and gone back to His Father. John makes it clear in the first chapter of this letter that the man Jesus, who he knew so well, was the real Christ come down from heaven. For three years, John, along with the other apostles, had lived in very close companionship with Jesus. They watched Him, heard Him speak, and were in close contact as they walked with Him day by day. They ate together, rode with Him in boats and lived with Him in all types of situations. Keep in mind that John appeared to have a closer relationship with Jesus than the other disciples. It was John who laid on Jesus' breast. It was John who Christ said He loved; it was John to whom Jesus entrusted His mother when He was on the cross.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)” I John 1:1, 2



- What would we say if someone asked, “Is your brother a real person?” We would probably answer, “I know he is a real man because I have been with him all my life. We have played, eaten, slept, fished, and hunted together since we were children; he is a real person!”
- John answered in a similar way. For three years, day and night he had lived with Jesus. Therefore, he knew that this person, who was the child of Mary was the eternal Son of God who came from God the Father.
- John refers to the Lord Jesus as “the Word of life” (**John 1:1 & 14**). He is called “the Word” because all that God wants to communicate to man He communicates through the Lord Jesus His Son (**Hebrews 1:2**).

- When God spoke to man He not only did so through His written message the Bible, He also spoke through His Son. Jesus is God's voice and God's letter to us. Consider, **John 14:7-11**.



- The Lord Jesus is the Word of life because He is eternal and it is through Him and through His Word that we receive His life, eternal life. **John 11:25, 26**
- John assured believers that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God and therefore they could be certain that through Him they had eternal life. (**I John 5:13**).
- Although we have not seen, heard, or touched the Lord Jesus, we have the written account of the apostles who actually did. As we believe the record that God has given us through the apostles, we, too, receive His life eternal.
- **I John 1:1**, *“That which was from the beginning which we have heard...”* Keeping in mind that John lived and traveled with Jesus for three years, so he did hear Him. *“Which we have seen with our eyes;”* He did see Him. *“Which we have looked upon...”* There is a difference between seeing someone and having actually looked upon (observed) them. *“And our hands have handled of the Word of Life.”* The disciples walked and talked and lived with Jesus.
- What John is communicating here is a true relationship with Jesus Christ; our lives in touch with His life; not just knowing about Christ, but truly knowing and abiding in Him. (**John 20:29; I Peter 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:16**).

“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)” **I John 1:2**

- Again, John's emphasis is on truly knowing Jesus. It would appear that John had a closer/deeper relationship with Jesus than the other disciples. It was John that leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper and made reference to the fact that Jesus loved him (**John 21:20**). It was John to whom Jesus entrusted His mother (**John 19:26-27**).
- In this first letter, John is communicating to his readers that he truly knew Jesus; his great desire is that all experience a similar relationship with Him.
- Take note again of John's comment, *“the Life was manifested and we have seen it and show it unto you.”*

B. Fellowship and Joy

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” I John 1:3, 4

- Because the apostles had such an awesome relationship with the Father and the Son, they wanted others to hear about Christ and believe. Then, they, too, would have a similar relationship with God, the Father and His Son (**John 17:21**).
- Notice John’s purpose is that we may have fellowship one with another, however, even beyond our fellowship with one another, John says, “



“truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ;” a relationship/fellowship that is centered in Christ.

- All Christians were once in darkness and alienated from the true and living God and His Son. But, God wanted us to share in the wonderful joy of being one with Him. When we heard and believed the message of Christ’s death and resurrection, we, too, were brought into a right relationship with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and were also brought into a family relationship with all the members of the church of the Lord Jesus, those throughout the world and those in heaven. (**John 17:3; 21-23**)
- Notice John’s purpose for writing “these things”; (everything that has been said in verses 1-3): so that our joy may be full.
- Jesus often spoke of joy; a constant overflowing “life in all its fullness.” (**John 15:11; 16:22-24; 17:3**)
- It’s interesting to consider that Paul wrote the book of Philippians from prison, and the theme was “joy” which appears approximately 16 times in the epistle (**Philippians 1:4; 2:16-18; 3:1**).
- Keep in mind that joy is the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace), and fullness of joy comes from a true knowledge of Christ. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and the Holy Spirit reproduces the life of Christ in us, the outcome will be the fruit of the Spirit; “joy.”

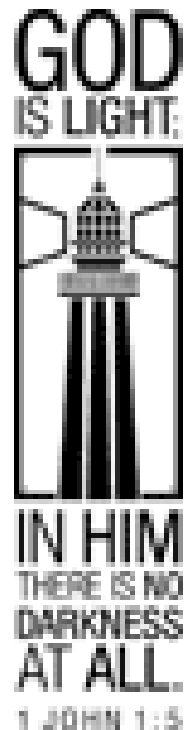


- ***That our joy may be full.*** The more disciplined believers become, the more intimate their relationship with Christ becomes, and the more He is reproduced in them, the more we will be filled with joy.
- Obviously, there are still many people in all of our lives who don't know Christ as their Savior, let alone walk in fellowship with Him; there is much evangelism and discipleship to be done. (**Acts 26:15-18; Romans 1:14-16; 2 Timothy 2:10**)
- John now points out some of the characteristics of those who have fellowship with God the Father and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Characteristics of Those Who Have Fellowship With God

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” I John 1:5

- Although John said this is the message that Jesus taught them, there is no mention in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John's gospels where these words were actually spoken. But we do know John is speaking truth by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (**2 Timothy 3:16**); and therefore we must conclude that Jesus did teach that *“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”* This means that God is perfectly holy and everything He does is completely righteous.
- ***“God is light.”*** There's no darkness at all in God. Going back to **John 3:19-20**: ***“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”*** Everyone who does evil wants God out of their lives and they won't come to God, neither will they be drawn to Him lest their deeds should be exposed. ***“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*** John 3:21



“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:” I John 1:6

- Because “God is light,” he cannot tolerate sin and He will not have fellowship with those who are walking in darkness, (the flesh). Any believer who is walking in the flesh and refuses to acknowledge his sinfulness before God and lives according to the sinful desires of the flesh and this world, is living in darkness.
- Keep in mind John’s comment, *if we say that we have fellowship with Him...*” John is not saying that we are actually having fellowship with Him; we’re just saying that we have fellowship with Him, but we’re really walking in darkness. Let’s stop a moment and ask, when are we walking in darkness? The answer, when we are walking in the flesh. So, if we say we have fellowship with Him, but we’re really walking in the flesh, “we lie and do not the truth.” In other words, we are deceiving others. We are acting out a lie.

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” I John 1:7

- *Believers who “walk in the light.”* Who are they and what does it mean to walk in the light?
- If we are abiding in Christ and if Christ is living His life in and through us, then we are walking in the light as He is in the light and the outcome is that we will have fellowship one with another.
- However, if we have been walking in darkness (in the flesh), and we’re feeling a bit guilty, in this verse 7 is the remedy for that guilt; *“the blood of Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness.”*
- In Leviticus 17:11, we read: ***“Life is in the blood and I’ve given you blood to make payment for your soul.”*** God is the one who set down the penalty for sin- death; and the payment; blood. So, whenever we sin, the payment is the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Our part is merely to believe this truth and rest in the blood. Give some thought to this: God is totally satisfied with the blood of His Son on our behalf, but oftentimes, we’re not satisfied; we sin and we confess it and we feel guilty and so we confess it again and we still feel guilty and so we confess it again and we still feel guilty, etc. Sometimes it goes on for days, weeks, months, and possibly for a lifetime. But when we, by faith, rest in what Christ has done for us; His blood has made payment for our sins, then **Hebrews 10:19** states that we can boldly approach the throne of grace because of the blood of Christ. So here in **I John 1:7** the thought is; *“If we walk in the light as He is*

in the light, we have fellowship one with another;” however, if we have been walking in darkness, then look to Him, because the blood of Christ has cleansed us from all sin, even walking in the flesh (**Ephesians 5:11-21**).

- Describe a believer’s walk in the light. We reckon upon our co-crucifixion with Christ in Romans 6, which frees us to walk in the Spirit. As we do so, the fruit of the Spirit will be more and more manifested through our lives, and we will be conformed more and more to the image of Christ. **I Thessalonians 5:5-8**.

D. Confession

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” I John 1:8

- In verse 6 we read, *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him but walk in darkness, we are lying to others.”* It’s interesting to watch the progression in verses 6, 8, and 10; we start out by lying to others but now here in verse 8 we’re believing our own lies. We’re actually deceiving ourselves.
- **I Corinthians 2:14** reads as follows; ***“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned.”***
- This verse speaks of unbelievers, but also could apply to those Christians who are walking in darkness (the flesh).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9

- When we trusted in Christ for salvation, we confessed our sinfulness before God and He forgave all our sins; past, present, and future. **Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; I John 2:12**.
- Because our sins have been completely forgiven, we are no longer condemned by God and we will never face the judgment of God for them. All the punishment that our sins deserved was paid by the Lord Jesus on the cross and God accepts us fully and completely because of the Lord Jesus Christ. **John 5:24; Romans 5:1; 8:1**



- Thinking back to verse 8 we read, *“if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us,”* now John makes this comment in verse 9: *“However, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* So, fellow Christian, if we happen to be in a situation where we are deceiving others by saying that we’re walking in fellowship with Him when we’re actually not, or if we’re deceiving ourselves into thinking that we really have no sin and all of a sudden the Holy Spirit convicts us that this is what we are doing, then here is God’s remedy; just confess it to the Lord, acknowledging and trusting in the blood of Christ, and He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness (**Hebrews 10:19**).
- Even though the penalty for our sin has been once and forever paid, and we have been made positionally righteous and holy before God, we still have the flesh residing within. When we walk under its influence and control, we are capable of committing the very same sin that we committed before we were saved. Even though all sin is forgiven, sometimes we still struggle with the feelings of guilt, John is saying, *“Yes, all sin has been paid for and when we do sin, confess it as such and rest in the blood of Christ that was already shed on our behalf.”* To not do so is to walk in unbelief.
- But, even though the punishment for our sins is forever settled and God will never reject us as His children, He still wants us to admit our wrong. Consider our relationship with our children: when they disobey, we would never think of throwing them out of our family. Even when they are rebellious and displease us, they are still our children. Of course, we want them to admit their wrong and to put right whatever they have done. If they refuse to admit their wrong and change their ways, then we discipline them.
- Those who acknowledge their sinfulness and agree with God their Father regarding their sins are restored to fellowship and are accepting His provision to be cleansed from all unrighteousness. If we refuse to rest in the blood of Christ and reckon upon our co-crucifixion with Christ and go willfully living in the flesh, the Holy Spirit is grieved and our Father may discipline us. **Ephesians 4:30; I Corinthians 11:31, 32**
- God our Father does not discipline us as punishment, but rather to perfect us; to reveal our fleshliness and return us to walking in the Spirit. **Hebrews 12:5-11**

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” I John 1:10

- Thinking back to verse 6: *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness,” we’re actually lying to others. Verse 8: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” We’re now believing our own lie; notice how far we can go with this in verse 10: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar and His Word is not in us.” We start out by lying to others, then we believe our own lie and now we’re trying to make God a liar. We’ve deceived others; we’ve deceived ourselves; now we’re trying to deceive God.*
- Those who hide their sins and refuse to acknowledge them to God are not walking in the Spirit, not walking in truth. They are calling God a liar and are not living according to the truth that is in His Word. Therefore, they cannot enjoy oneness with God. **Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 32:1-6**

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 2

A. The Blessings and Evidences of Those Who Know God

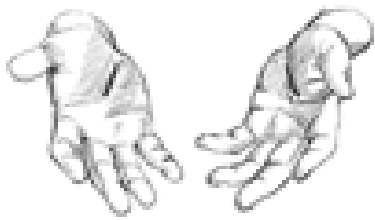
- Christ is the believer's defender and satisfactory offering to the Father. In chapter 1, John writes that there isn't any child of God who has not sinned.
- Because John said that we all sin, he is concerned lest some conclude that it doesn't really matter how we live our lives. Therefore, he further explains in the first verse of chapter two that he is writing so believers will not sin ***"My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not."***
- Because God is light (perfect), He wants His children to live holy lives. **I Peter 1:15, 16**
- Of course in our own strength, we are unable to live the way God wants. But, as we walk in the Spirit, resting in our co-crucifixion with Christ, Christ will reproduce and live His life in us and through us. **Galatians 5:16, 22, 23**

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" I John 2:1

- Although it is God's desire that we do not sin, it is inevitable that we will. Therefore, one of the ministries of the Lord Jesus is to be our "advocate" in heaven. He is the One who, when we do sin, stands before the Father in heaven and speaks in our defense. It is very important that we understand just what this means lest we come to some very wrong conclusions.
- First, we must remember that although believers sin, they will always remain God's children, much like our own children; though they may displease us at times and we may discipline them, they remain our children. So is our relationship with God; He remains our Father, even when we sin.
- Second, when John wrote that the Lord Jesus speaks to the Father in our defense, we must not think that the Lord Jesus is more sympathetic or gentle than God the Father; not so. Although the Father and the Son both hate our sin, they both love us equally and unconditionally. In order that man would not be condemned for his sin, the Father sent His Son to be our Savior and has appointed the Lord Jesus to be our intercessor, speaking in our defense in heaven. We must not think that when we sin, the Lord Jesus immediately runs to the Father on our behalf, reminding the Father of the sacrifice that He made

on the cross, and that if He didn't the Father would punish us for our sins. The Father never forgets that on the cross, Jesus' blood has paid for all our sin once and forever. When the price for sin had been fully paid, Jesus cried, "*It is finished.*" **Hebrews 7:24-27; 9:11, 12; 10:11, 12**

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." I John 2:1, 2



- What John is communicating to his readers is that even when we sin, we cannot be condemned because the Lord Jesus, whom God accepts as our perfect and all-sufficient Savior, is there at the Father's right hand, day and night. His hands and feet still bear the nail

marks and in his side the wound where the soldier thrust in his spear. These are the signs of the payment the Lord Jesus made on our behalf. So, even when we do sin, the Father remembers the payment has been made.

- It is interesting in chapter 1 and verses 6, 8, 10 that John is exposing man's sinfulness; verse 6, deceiving others; verse 8, deceiving ourselves and verse 10, calling God a liar; immediately following each of these verses we find God's remedy. Verse 7, it's the blood; verse 9, it's confession, and now here in chapter 2, verse 1, the remedy is Jesus Christ.
- "If any man sins we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." **Romans 8:34** reads as follows: **"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died. Yea, rather that is risen who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"**. So



here's the situation: if we find that we have sinned and we are actually living in darkness and feeling very guilty and wondering how a Holy God could ever forgive a wretch like me/you; remember the blood, admit to God the fact that it has happened and remember Jesus Christ is our advocate. He is on our side; He is always before the Father pleading our cause. **Romans 8:1**

- The reason God doesn't punish us for our sins and can have fellowship with us is because of the Lord Jesus who suffered all the wrath of God which we deserved.

- Notice this verse clearly states that Christ's death was sufficient for the sins of all people.
- Although Christ's death was sufficient payment for all, it doesn't mean that all will be saved. Only those who hear and understand the gospel and put their trust in Him will be saved from the judgment of God. In a similar way, Noah preached to the people and the ark was provided as God's way to escape the flood. But, only those who believed and entered the ark were saved from God's judgment.
- So, in verse 1, Jesus is our "advocate" and now here in verse 2 He is our "propitiation" or substitute or satisfaction. God is totally satisfied with His Son's substitutionary work on the cross.

B. Obey His Commands

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." I John 2:3

- John continues on teaching his readers how they can know that they are children of God and enjoy fellowship with the Father and with the Son.
- There are many today who are confused by this verse, and would interpret it in this way: "I will know that I am truly saved if I keep His commandments." However, we must first remember the purpose of this book, and secondly, remember John's close relationship with Jesus. The knowing Him that John speaks of goes beyond salvation to a much deeper relationship than just being saved and trying to live the Christian life. In verse 3, John's point is, "*Hereby we do know*(we can be certain that we truly have a close, personal relationship with and are abiding in) *Him if we keep His commandments.*"

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." I John 2:4

- Thinking back to verse 3, "Hereby, we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." So the natural follow-up would be verse 4, "*He that says I know Him, (one who is born again positioned in Christ, and truly has an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and is abiding in Christ) and does not keep His commandments, is acting out a lie, attempting to deceive others*" (I John 1:6).

“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” I John 2:5



- In **2 Corinthians 5:14**, Paul writes, “*the love of Christ constrains (compels/controls) us;*” not our love for Christ, but Christ’s love for us. And here we have, “*who so keeps His Word in Him truly is the love of God perfected.*” Let’s give some thought to God’s love being perfected in us. **John 3:16**, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes...*” so salvation came because of God’s love. Not only did Jesus go to the cross for us but He also took us to the cross and we were crucified with Him; and it’s all because of God’s love. Therefore,, when His life is being lived through us, when we are living in the truth that we are crucified with Christ, when we’re abiding in Christ, when we’re occupied with Christ, and when He is being reproduced in us, then it is no longer I but Christ (**Galatians 2:20**); His love is being perfected in us and we will keep His Word. He continues on in this verse, “***Hereby know we that we are in Him...***” That we are abiding in Him; that we are living in our position in Christ; because we are keeping His Word not through our effort or because we’re forced to, but because of our life source, because we are abiding in Christ and because He is living His life through us.

C. Live As Christ Lived

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” I John 2:6

- We can be confident that we are children of God and are walking in the light if we live as Christ lived.



- In this verse John gives us another proof of our right relationship with God; we will be conformed more to the image of Christ.
- The Word of God tells us that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins. When we became convinced of that truth and accepted it by faith, it resulted

in our salvation. Likewise, the Word of God says that we have been co-

crucified and co-resurrected to new life with Christ (**Romans 6:3-5**). As we rest in this truth by faith, we will abide more in Christ, walk more in the Spirit, and the Spirit will conform our lives more to the image of Christ, thereby, *“walking in the light as He is in the light”*. **I Peter 2:21-23**

D. Love Fellow Believers

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” I John 2:7-8

- What John is communicating here is that he is writing nothing new that has not been from the very beginning (to obey God’s commandments), however, he is writing a much deeper truth which is only true “in Him” and “in us” as we see ourselves positioned in Christ and as Christ is being formed in us. *“Which thing is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passed and the true light now shines.”*
- Although this was not a new command, it was like a new command to many of the people to whom John was writing. When they were the children of Satan, they hated others and knew nothing of the wonderful love of the Lord Jesus for others or His command that they should love one another. (**Titus 3:3**)
- For the believers to whom John was writing, these were new and deeper truths that were only possible for those who abide in Christ.



“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.” I John 2:9

- Again, what John is communicating here is the hypocrisy of Christians who are living a lie. He that says he is abiding in Christ, living in his position in Christ, is occupied with Christ and Christ is being formed in him, and yet hates his brother; he really is not abiding in the light. He is in darkness; he is operating in the flesh.

- The next few verses highlight the contrast between light and darkness, love and hate, God and the world. The two contrasts cannot co-exist. For instance, one cannot have light and also be in darkness at the same time. One cannot love and also hate the same person. One cannot have God and also hang onto the world system. These verses teach that a person who claims to be in the light should then also be filled with love. In John's writings he stresses the centrality of believers showing love to one another. **John 13:34; 15:17; I John 3:11; 3:23; 4:7; 4:11; 2 John 5**

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” I John 2:10

- This verse 10 is the flip side of the previous verse; verse 9, stated, *“He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness.”* And now verse 10 is clear, he that loves his brother is abiding in Christ; he is occupied with Christ. It's interesting to give thought to the fact that our love for one another reaches beyond the community of believers and actually is observed and draws unbelievers in. In **John 13:35**, we read, ***“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples...”*** notice it says, ***“all men shall know”*** – believers/unbelievers – ***“that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.”***
- Moving on to the last part of this verse: *“He that abides in the light, there is no occasion for stumbling in him.”* The thought here is that we are abiding in Christ; and if we are abiding in Christ, we are abiding in the light, and seeing clearly, and nothing will stumble or trip us up.

“But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.” I John 2:11

- We could paraphrase it this way: *“But he that hates his brother is not walking in the light; he is walking in the flesh and when one is walking in the flesh he will not have any idea where that flesh will lead him. His eyes have been blinded by the flesh and he is basically wandering in spiritual darkness; he has lost all sense of direction because the darkness has blinded him.”*
- Back in **Ephesians 4:17**, Paul is speaking to the church at Ephesus and he makes this statement: ***“Walk not as the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened.”*** To “walk in the vanity of our

minds” is to pursue worthless things that have no eternal value. Once we begin pursuing fleshly desires/worthless things, there is a downward spiral of sin that takes place; which then leads to having our understanding darkened. As we go back to **I John 2:11**, we are told that the darkness has blinded our eyes; spiritual understanding is now gone and it comes from walking in the flesh.

- Let’s sum up John’s point here in verses 9-11; Christians who claim to love God, but hate their brother are really wandering in spiritual darkness and stumbling through life in the flesh.

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 3

A. Stages of Growth

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.” I John 2:12

- John seems to change the focus of his teaching from loving one another to warning believers against worldliness; one cannot love God and love the world.
- In this verse, the apostle includes all who have been born into God’s family. We became children of God through faith in the Lord Jesus and God forgave all our sins, past, present, and future. He did this because Christ’s blood paid for all of our sins. If there was but one sin left unpaid by Christ, we would still be condemned to hell. Adam and Eve sinned once and were put out of the garden. In the next two verses, John addresses God’s children as three different groups.

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” I John 2:13-14



- These three groups, “fathers,” “young men,” and “little children,” could be seen as three stages of growth in the family of God. Much like any normal human family. There are grandparents, middle-aged parents, and young children. Of course, our position in God’s family is not dependent on our physical age or whether we are male or female; it is all dependent upon our spiritual maturity. When we are newborn children in God’s family we are spiritual babies. And, like human/physical babies, we know very little. But, as we learn more truth through



God's Word and walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit, we begin the process of becoming conformed to the image of Christ and then grow into middle age and on into the position of "fathers". (**I Peter 2:2; Ephesians 4:11-16**)

- John begins with the most mature in God's family; the "fathers."
- "Fathers" refers to those who, because they are growing into Christ-likeness, rest solely upon the finished work of Christ. As a result, they are living the "Christ-life," and their lives are godly examples. They teach and encourage others as grandparents often do in the human family.
- "Young men," in physical life are usually strong and able to go to war. In the time when John lived, there were many wars between various nations and it was usually the strong, young men who were sent out to battle. "Young men" in the Christian life are also faced with many enemies. They are Christians, in whom Christ is being formed, are able to stand firm against spiritual enemies. Satan, the world, and the evil desires of the flesh are the enemies against which those called "young men," must stand firm in the faith.
- The word "overcome" is in reference to the evil temptations and desires that "young men" face daily. It's through God's Word (both the living Word and written Word) that we know and understand the deeper truth of our co-crucifixion with Christ and can trust and rest in that truth, thereby receiving daily deliverance from the desires and lusts of the flesh and ultimately overcome the evil one. **Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20**

B. Those Who Have Fellowship With the World Cannot Have Fellowship With God

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." I John 2:15

- Going back to **James 4:4**, we read, ***"You adulterers and adulteresses. Know you not that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."*** Notice that James refers to people who make friendship with the world as "adulterers" and "adulteresses." We could say they are committing spiritual adultery. John's exhortation in I John 2:15 is directed to all groups of Christians (little children, young men, fathers), ***"Love not the world, nether the things of the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."***

John's point is that those who love the world's things, the love of God is not being perfected in them and they are committing spiritual adultery; they are pursuing other gods.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” I John 2:16

- Thinking back to Genesis 3 when Satan, through the serpent tempted Eve, he used these same three worldly temptations; *“lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life.”* In **Genesis 3:6**, he stated that the fruit on the tree was good to eat (lust of the flesh); looked good to the eyes (lust of the eyes); a fruit to make one wise (pride of life). Turning now to Matthew 4 when Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, he had not eaten in 40 days and the devil asked him to *“turn the stones into bread”* (lust of the flesh); *Look at all these kingdoms that are mine; I'll give them to you if you bow down and worship me* (lust of the eyes); *“Cast yourself down, and make yourself a hero, Jesus”* (pride of life). Again, John writes (paraphrased): *“Don't love the world or the things that are in the world because all that the world has to offer is merely the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and this is not from the Father, but is from the world.”*

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” I John 2:17

- The implication here is that the world is temporal as well as our desire for it, but doing the will of God has eternal value. Keep in mind when John speaks of the world he is speaking of the world system which is based on Satanic principles such as power, greed, lust, etc. It's interesting to think that those of us who live chasing after worldly desires find those desires unfulfilled. We're focusing on a world that is already passing away. No matter what it is that we are living for in this world; money, possessions, or any other worldly thing it will not satisfy. Indulging in this world never satisfies because it is all passing away. The workaholic will never be satisfied because everything he is working for is passing away (cars rust, houses burn down, clothes wear out). The party-goer will never be fulfilled because everything he lives for is passing away.

- ***“But he who doeth the will of God abideth forever.”*** What is the will and work of God? To believe on Him whom He has sent. **John 6:28-29**

C. Beware of False Teachers Who Deny Christ

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”

- The term, “last time” or “last hour” is used only in the New Testament and refers to the last days or the end times; the time between Christ’s first and second comings. The first century readers of I John lived in the last days as do we today. John’s use of the phrase “as you have heard” refers to the teachings from the apostles that the antichrist is coming. Paul wrote of this in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-10**; the antichrist will be completely against Christ (anti-Christ).
- The person called “antichrist” is perhaps the same as the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 or “the beast” in Revelation 13:1-10. It’s dangerous to label any person as the antichrist and try to predict Christ’s return based on those assumptions. John mentioned that the antichrist is coming not so that believers would try to identify the person, but so that they might be ready for anything that may threaten their faith. John also mentions that already such persons who would fit that description have come; “even now are there many antichrists.” These are merely ones that come before the “one antichrist”.
- All throughout history, there have been individuals who were evil and hostile to everything for which Christ stands, and we could definitely refer to them as antichrist. They’ve lived in every generation and will continue to work their evil. During the last times, these antichrists and false teachers who pretend to be believers and who lure weak Christians away from Christ will continue to be active, just as they were in John’s day.



“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” I John 2:19

- This is John's first direct statement about those who had left the churches. The false teachers, the antichrists were not total strangers to the churches. They had been in the church community, fellowshiping with John and other believers; however, when their teachings were not accepted by the Christians and those in leadership, they left and began promoting their false teachings about Jesus elsewhere. John explained that they never really were a part of the body and when they left, it revealed that they did not belong to the Christian community. If they had been true believers who were abiding in Christ, they would have remained.

“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” I John 2:20

- In contrast to these people who left the church because they would not accept the truth about Christ, all true believers have been anointed by the “Holy One,” that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. The “anointing” we have received refers



to the Holy Spirit who is given to all God's children the moment they put their trust in the Lord Jesus as their Savior. During Old Testament times, certain people and even things such as the furniture in the tabernacle, were anointed with oil (oil being an Old Testament physical picture of the Holy Spirit). This ceremony signified that person or thing was dedicated, consecrated, or separated to God alone for Him to use for His glory. **Exodus**

28:41; 30:23-38; 2 Samuel 2:4; I Kings 19:16

- After the Lord Jesus returned to heaven, He sent His Spirit to indwell His children and separate them for Himself and to teach them all truth. **I Corinthians 6:19,20; John 14:16, 17; 16:12-14**
- In verse 20, when John writes “you know all things,” he doesn't mean that we know or understand everything God knows or even has written in His Word, but that we have the ability to learn all God wants us to know because of the Spirit of truth that is living in us. **I Corinthians 2:11, 12**

“I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” I John 2:21-23

- The great truth is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who came in the flesh to die for sin. Apparently the antichrists in John's day were claiming faith in God, while denying and opposing Christ. To do so, John states, is impossible because Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah. To deny Christ rejects God's way of revealing Himself to the world. However, those who accept Christ as God's Son, accept God the Father also; the two cannot be separated. Many cultists today call themselves Christians, but they deny the deity of Christ. Some churches, such as the Unitarian Church, deny the status of Christ as the Son of God. Remember, those who reject the Son can never know the Father since the Father is known only by the Son. **Matthew 11:27; John 14:6-9**
- Simply stated, denying Jesus means denying God and then the opposite is also true; anyone who confesses the Son has the Father, also. God wants all believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and deepen our understanding of these basic truths about Christ through study in the scriptures. Jesus will always be God's Son and His sacrifice for sins is permanent. No truth will ever contradict this basic teaching in the Bible.

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.” I John 2:24

- John is warning that his readers must cling to the truth that the apostles had taught from the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost. We, too, must be aware of people who claim to have some new insight or revelation not found in the Word of God. There is no “new” truth. All the truth that God has given to man is found in the scriptures.



“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” I John 2:25

- *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16* God has promised that those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will have life eternal; our part is only to believe, to rest in the character of God who made this promise, and trust that He will fulfill it.

“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.” I John 2:26

- John tells us why he is writing these things: “*“I have written these things to you so that you are aware of those who want to lead you astray.”* The false teachers were attempting to lead people astray by moving them away from the basic gospel that had been taught in the beginning. John wrote to warn Christians of those who desired to lead them away from Christ.

“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” I John 2:27

- John states that “the anointing,” which is the Holy Spirit, remains in them. The Holy Spirit will never leave a person who has been born into God’s family. When John said that they didn’t need anyone to teach them, he wasn’t implying that we don’t need godly teachers to guide us in understanding the scriptures. If that were so, then God would not have sent the apostles to teach and He would not have given the gift of teaching to some in the church.
Ephesians 4:11-14
- John meant that they didn’t need to be taught by those who claimed to have additional spiritual knowledge not found in the scriptures.

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 4

A. We Know Christians By the Way They Live

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” I John 2:28



- The whole idea of abiding is acknowledging, trusting, resting and depending just like the branch in the vine of John 15. There is no *doing* connected to the word abide; it is a *being* word. The branch does not hold onto the vine, but rather the vine holds onto the branch. The deeper truth here is that all we need to abide in Christ and live the “Christ-life” has been provided through the finished work of Christ and our identification/co-crucifixion with Him. If we fail to walk in the Spirit and abide in Christ, but rather live life in the flesh as if nothing has been done for us by Christ, we will meet Him with embarrassment and shame at His appearing.

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” I John 2:29

- The word “if” could also be translated, “since.” John argues that God is righteous, therefore, He is the source of our righteousness. The thought here is that if a person is living a holy and righteous life, it is because he or she acquired this righteousness from God. We are told in Isaiah 64:6 that all of our righteous deeds are as filthy rags. Instead of believing or teaching that people become children of God by doing right, John is saying that doing right is the sign that people are born of God. This verse does not say that everyone who is born of God continually lives righteously. We know that believers can walk in the flesh and sin. It is saying that righteousness provides visible proof of actually being a Christian. Godly living cannot produce salvation, but it is proof that true faith is actually present. We could look at **James 2:14-18**; the bottom line to this scripture is verse 18, *“I will show you my faith by my*

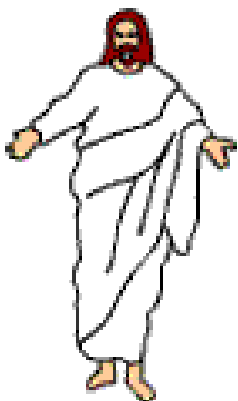
works.” If you want to know what I really believe, then look at my life. **I Corinthians 4:14-17; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Colossians 1:28; James 3:1**

B. The Hope of Christ's Return

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” I John 3:1

- The Greek word behind the English expression, “how great” or “behold what manner” actually speaks of something that has come from another country; something rather exotic, something beyond human understanding. The translation actually could read, “Behold what awesome, exotic love the Father has poured out on us.” The love of God comes from another world. It seems foreign to the human race. This love has been lavished on us, poured out on us as shown by the fact that God allows us to be called His children.
- When the Lord Jesus came into the world, the people of this world did not recognize that He was God, their Creator. And the Jews, who had the Old Testament, did not recognize Him as the One who had come in fulfillment of all God’s promises in the Old Testament. **John 1:10-11**
- Just as unbelievers did not know who the Lord Jesus was and hated Him, so they often hate Christians and are not able to understand that we have been born again and are now the children of God. **John 15:18-21**
- Having rejoiced that we are now the children of God, John’s mind turns to the future and what we will be when the Lord Jesus returns.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” I John 3:2



- John seems to be reinforcing his statement in verse 1, saying again that we are now children of God; not some time in the future, not when Christ returns, but now. John further explains; it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. Something inconceivably wonderful is awaiting God’s children, even more glorious than what we now possess. We Christians have been born into God’s family and we presently enjoy God’s kindness and blessings through Christ,

but in the future we will also fully share in His glory. We're looking through a smoked glass dimly and we don't yet know exactly what it's all going to be like because it hasn't been revealed to us yet, but we do know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him;

- When the Lord Jesus returned to heaven after His crucifixion and resurrection, He didn't leave His body as Christians do when they die. The Lord Jesus returned to His Father in His resurrected body. John doesn't mean that when we get to heaven we will all look just like the Lord Jesus in His resurrected body. We will all have our own bodies. **I Corinthians 15:37-44**
- Although we will not all look alike, we all will be "Christ-like."

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
I John 3:3

- Every Christian has this hope that one day we shall be like Him. How will that happen? **2 Corinthians 3:18:** as we look at Christ, we are changed into that same image and it's done by the Spirit of the Lord. We have this hope in Him. As we are living in our position in Christ, and occupied with Christ, the Holy Spirit changes us into His same image and therefore, we are being purified, even as He is pure. If Christ is being formed in me and it's no longer I, but Christ, then what will come out is Jesus Christ and it will be pure.

C. Righteous Lives

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." **I John 3:4**

- So in verse 4, after defining purity in verse 3, John defines sin, presenting negatively the same truth he just expressed positively in verses 1-3. Since Christ's purity in us demands our occupation with Christ, then a life of sin or continual lack of purity demonstrates that one is not abiding in Christ or occupied with Christ.
- To go on living life in the flesh rather than in the Spirit through faith, is to live a sinful life.

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." **I John 3:5**

- Jesus' death enabled God not only to forgive sin and take away the penalty for sin, but it also made it possible for believers to stop living a life of sin. He came to abolish sin's power and dominion and He does this as we trust in our co-crucifixion with Christ (**Romans 6:6**).
- Peter goes on to say that, "in Christ is no sin." Now we know that positionally, we are in Him, and conditionally He is in us. Therefore, if we are resting in our position by faith and abiding in Him moment by moment, day by day, we will discover that we are free from sin's power. The next verse makes this clearer.

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." I John 3:6

- Two words for us to ponder: "abiding" and "knowing." These two words are the key to understanding this verse. Let's begin by looking at the phrase, "*whosoever abides in Him sins not.*" The idea here is that we are abiding in Him, we are occupied with Him and resting in Him. When we are so taken up with Jesus that we're abiding in Him and His life is being lived out through us the result will be that we will not sin. He goes on to say, "*whosoever sins hath not seen Him, neither known Him.*" Again, an indication of a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, a deeper occupation with Him. In Matthew 14,



actually rise above his circumstances and walk out across the water; he believed Jesus and was totally taken up with Him. But when he saw the wind, and he became aware of his uncontrollable circumstances, his focus faded from Christ to his circumstances and down he went. Here in this verse 6 we read "*whosoever sins has not seen Him.*" In other words, he's not really occupied with Him, "neither does he know Him." So we're back

to what we talked about earlier regarding knowing Him. It's not knowing about Him; it's knowing Christ. It's that intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Many Christians claim to have a special relationship with God; that they're walking in fellowship with Him; that they're abiding in Him despite

their sinful conduct. Remember, *“Though a man may say he is walking in fellowship with Him, but he’s walking in darkness; he lies” (I John 2:6).*

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” I John 3:7

- Oftentime, we meet Christians who claim to know God, yet they are living unrighteous lives. John is warning his readers not to be deceived by this. When people do what is right, it is because they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous; meaning that doing righteousness does not make people righteous, but rather any righteousness they may have is coming from Christ in the same way that a tree bearing good fruit is evidence that it’s a good tree. The fruit doesn’t make the tree good, the good fruit just merely shows that the tree is good. In the same way, when a Christian’s life is manifesting righteousness, it is an indication of the righteousness of Christ. **Romans 3:21-22** Christ in us.



“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” I John 3:8

- In verse 7, *he that does righteousness is righteous and that righteousness is coming from Christ.* In verse 8, *he that commits sin is of the devil.* Thinking back to Isaiah 14, when God had created the angels, Lucifer being the most wise and beautiful became proud. The five “I will” statements that he makes in Isaiah 14 culminate with him saying, *“I will be like God.”* In other words, he wanted to be his own god; he wanted to be in control of his own life; he didn’t want anyone telling him what to do. That same Lucifer mindset was transferred to man in the Garden of Eden when Lucifer, who entered into the serpent, tempted Eve with the same thought. *“If you eat from this tree, you’ll be like God (Genesis 3:5).* She ate from the tree, as well did Adam, and not only were they separated from God, but they also received the Lucifer mindset; *I want to be my own god; I want to be in control of my own life; I don’t want anyone telling me what to do.* It’s interesting that once we come to Christ, God’s ultimate purpose in all of our lives is to mold us into the image of Christ, to have the Christ-like mindset that Paul speaks of in Philippians 2, *“Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus who thought it not*

robbery to be equal with God.” In other words, He stripped Himself of the majesty of being God. Lucifer wanted to be God, Jesus gave up being God. Lucifer also wanted to be in control of his own life. Jesus said, *“I didn’t come to do My own will, I came to do the will of the Father.”* Lucifer didn’t want anyone telling him what to do. Jesus said, *“I only do what the Father tells me to do.”* In verse 8, we read, *“He that commits sin is of the devil.”* A good definition for sin is anything man does that is contrary to God’s will, contrary to His desires. Again, this comes from the Lucifer mindset. John wrote, *“He that commits sin is of the devil.”* When we are functioning contrary to God’s will, that’s coming from the Lucifer mindset; it’s coming from the flesh, which has its root and origin in Satan. John states here that the devil has sinned from the very beginning and goes on to say, *“For this purpose the Son of Man was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* The word “destroy” does not mean to annihilate or to eradicate; rather it means to break down, to undo, to render ineffective. Though it would have made more sense, humanly speaking, for Christ to have annihilated or obliterated Satan, He didn’t. Instead, Christ came to undo Satan’s work and therefore, free people from sin and all of its horrible consequences.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” I John 3:9

- At first glance, these words appear to contradict what John had said earlier: *“If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves...”* this passage states that those who have been born of God do not sin. So, do Christians sin, or don’t they? Let’s try to answer that question by examining this verse a little more closely. John begins the verse by saying, *“Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin...”* and then he gives us the reason why: *“...because His seed remains in him.”* The thought here is that Christ is being reproduced in us. Remember, godliness is not man imitating God; it’s God reproducing Himself in a man. Christ-likeness is not man imitating Christ; it’s Jesus Christ being reproduced in a man. John says, *“Whosoever is born of God does not sin because His seed (Jesus Christ) remains in him (or is being reproduced in him).”* Give some thought to this: when we were born again, a new life was born inside of us (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). We Christians have this new life; we are born of God. **I Corinthians 1:30** tells us that we were positioned in Christ. As we rest in our position in Jesus Christ and Christ is formed in us,

it's no longer I, but Christ. And if Christ is the one who is being reproduced and living His life in and through us, we will no longer practice sin.

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” I John 3:10

- Depending upon how we live our lives; will reveal the source of our life; either the flesh or the Spirit.

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 5

A. Love For One Another

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” I John 3:10



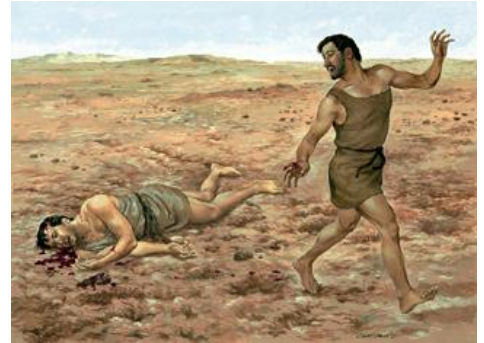
- The righteous life of a child of God is, first of all, evidence of his new birth, and secondly, evidence that he is walking in the Spirit. In chapter 1, John said it is those who walk in the light who have fellowship with God. In chapter 2, he pointed out that those who know God and are in the light obey His commandments, live as Christ lived and love their fellow believers. (2:3-6, 9, 10)
- For Christians to love one another is obviously very important because, although John wrote about it in chapter 2, he re-emphasizes it here in chapter 3 and later again in chapter 4.
- The love that we are to have for fellow believers and for all people, is not a natural love, but God’s love flowing through us. Unsaved people and carnal Christians cannot love others with God’s love, but believers can if we walk in the Spirit. Keep in mind that the fruit of the Spirit is love. **Galatians 5:22**
- There are many different gifts or abilities, which the Holy Spirit has given to God’s children, but regardless of what our particular gift may be, we are all to love others with the same love that God has loved us. When writing to the Corinthians, Paul told them that above everything else, love is most important. **I Corinthians 13.**

“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” I John 3:11

- From the beginning of their ministry, the apostles emphasized the importance of love. Jesus had commanded them to love one another and told them that this would be the sign to the world that they were His disciples. **John 13:34, 35**

“Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.” I John 3:12

- It wasn't Cain's actions that made him evil, but rather he committed murder because he was evil. Even though we are Christians, the outflow of our lives will be determined by whether we are walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit. If we walk in the flesh, our daily living will be filled with evil thoughts and actions (**Galatians 5:19-21**). But, if we are walking in the Spirit, our lives will produce the fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23**



“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” I John 3:13

- *Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.* Jesus had given His disciples the same warning and in the same context. After telling the disciples to love one another (John 15:18-19), He reminded them that the world would hate them. Again, the world being the world system, is hostile toward God and hates Christians. The world would prefer that Christians were like them.
- Because believers are different, the world hates them. (**I Peter 4:3, 4**) Why do unbelievers respond so negatively toward people who want to live for God? There are a couple of reasons; the same reasons that Cain wanted to kill



his brother. First, we Christians make them feel uncomfortable regarding how they are living in the present. Our lives act as lights that expose the impurity in their lives, producing guilt and shame, and then they lash out. Christians also make them

uncomfortable about what will happen in the future. They don't like thinking about their future destiny and in fear, they attempt to silence Christians. **John 15:18-21; Romans 8:7**

B. Children of God Love One Another

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” I John 3:14

- It's interesting that John first tells his readers that the world will hate Christians, and then tells them us that Christians are to love Christians. Love for fellow believers is an indication that a Christian has passed from the realm of death to life. Keep in mind that our love does not cause us to earn eternal life; instead, our love is merely evidence that we have already obtained eternal life. There is a deeper meaning in this verse. *"He that loves not his brother abides in death."* In other words, a Christian who does not love his brother is abiding in the flesh; in death.



"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." I John 3:15



- Again, John uses the word, "abide." If anyone hates another Christian, he is really a murderer at heart. It's as if he is wishing that he were dead and the Lord sees the inner desire as equal to the outward act that would result from it.

• (Matthew 5:21-22) It's interesting that he ends this verse by saying, ***"you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him,"*** or we could say ***has the life of Jesus Christ abiding in him. The Holy Spirit is reproducing the life of Christ in us; any thought of hating my brother is not coming from Christ; it's not coming from the Christ-life.***

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." I John 3:16

- To understand real love, believers need only to look at Christ as the example; He laid down His life for all people. Christ's example reveals that real love involves dying to self. Keep in mind that dying to self (denying self) is not something that can be consistently done in our own strength. In Luke 9:23, we read, *"If you want to follow me then deny yourself."* Most of us have tried denying self and we have failed. But Luke tells us how; by taking up HIS cross daily. In other words, by trusting and resting and depending on our co-crucifixion with Christ; knowing and believing that the old man has



been crucified, then we can deny self or die to self and follow him; then we can lay down our lives for one another (**Romans 6:6**).

“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” I John 3:17-18

- These verses give an example of how the Lord would have believers lay down our lives for one another. This parallels the teaching of **James 2:17-18**. As Christ lives His life out through us, believers will respond to God’s love by loving others; putting other’s needs before their/our own (**Philippians 2:3-4**). Anyone can claim to walk in the Spirit, but if his or her lifestyle remains selfish and worldly, then what good are the words and the speech? Truly, if Christ is living His life through us, then our lives will manifest love toward one another (**2 Corinthians 5:14-15**).

C. Love and Obedience Give Confidence in Prayer

“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” I John 3:19-20



- As we progress in our Christian lives, it happens that our hearts (the heart/soul is the seat of our emotions; the conscience included) will accuse us. These accusations may come either from the Holy Spirit or from the accuser of the brethren working through the flesh, which may cause an overactive conscience. An interesting comment by John is that God is greater than our heart. John understood that it is common for believers to be guilt-ridden. In light of God’s high and holy desire for us to love one another as Christ has loved us, believers may not love a brother or sister and therefore feel like terrible failures or even hypocrites at times. This kind of self-condemnation should be met by the truth that God is greater than our hearts. In other words, the all-wise God is aware that true believers, even though plagued by fleshly inconsistency, still have an underlying desire to do His will and the point of this passage is; we must not be overly hard on ourselves and let guilt overwhelm us. Instead of focusing on our failures, we’re to focus on the Father who knows our deep desire to do His will, and by

God's grace, *"He will give us the power and desire to do His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." I John 3:21

- Christians who are guilt-ridden and unsure of their standing with God will not want to draw near to God, but instead they will turn away from His presence (John 3:20). John's point is that when believers are assured of truth, they can boldly approach God. In I Timothy 1:18-19, Paul sent Timothy out to battle with nothing more than faith and a good conscience. Faith and a good conscience are inter-dependent upon one another. If our conscience is unclear, then our faith leaks away, but faith in the blood of Christ produces a good conscience. We read in Hebrews 10:19 that we can approach the throne of grace boldly because of the blood of Christ. Therefore, when we're resting in the blood and believing that it has cleansed us of all unrighteousness, we have a clear conscience and can boldly and confidently come to God.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." I John 3:22

- The idea here is that if we Christians are keeping His commandments and doing those things which are pleasing in His sight, we are walking in the Spirit.
- As we live our lives in the Spirit and Christ is formed in us, God's will and desires become our will and desires, thereby enabling God to grant whatever we ask because in the Spirit my asking will be according to His will. However, the opposite will be true in the flesh. In the flesh, we want what WE want, and we will seek to beg and manipulate God to give us our desires.

D. Faith and the Witness of the Holy Spirit

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." I John 3:23

- God's will for His children is that we believe in "the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Not only that He died for us, but also we must continue to reckon upon our co-crucifixion with Him, and that we've been co-resurrected to

newness of life with Him. We must by faith, look to Christ every moment of every day of our lives, realizing that without Him and His finished work, we can do nothing. **John 15:1-5; Colossians 2:6-10**

- We cannot produce love or any of the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives, but only as we walk in the Spirit will that fruit be manifested.

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” I John 3:24

- Once again John clearly states that we keep his word only through the reciprocal union of our abiding in Christ and Christ reproducing Himself in us.
- John then goes on to say that we can know He abides in us by the Spirit which He has given to us. Keep in mind that it is the Holy Spirit that produces the life of Christ in us (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 6

A. Determining True or False Teachers

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” I John 4:1

- In 2 Peter 2:1, we read, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you who shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”* So here in I John 4, we read, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God (is it the Holy Spirit or the flesh?).”* John says, *“Test those spirits whether they be of God (or of the flesh) because many false prophets are going out into the world.”*

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” I John 4:2-3

- John reminded his readers that the teachings of those who present a false Christ are really antichrist; they are against the Lord Jesus (2:18-19).

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” I John 4:4

- Believers have been born into God’s family and God’s Spirit, who is greater than Satan, now lives in them. Therefore, even if believers are not well educated or wise in the things of the world, they are able to stand against the arguments of all false teachers (**Acts 4:13**).
- An interesting thought to consider: we Christians don’t have to overpower false teachers to conquer them. Rather, we can overcome by recognizing them and refusing to follow their teachings. Yet our victory is not to be flaunted, nor is it something that we have done on our own. We only have

this victory because of God's Spirit within, because *He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.* (2:20, 26, 27). **I Corinthians 1:18-29; 2:6-16**

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” I John 4:5

- “They” refers back to the false teachers, the antichrists, who belong to this world and not to God. As mentioned before, the term “world” describes the world system of beliefs which are based on satanic principles such as power, greed, and lust. Keep in mind that the world system opposes God and therefore we could translate this verse in this way: *“these false teachers belong to the world, so they speak from the world’s viewpoint and the world listens to them.”* John is warning Christians who faithfully teach God’s Word that they will not win popularity contests in the world. A false teacher, however, will be well received by non-Christians. To sophisticated, educated people, the gospel seems foolish; God becoming a man, an invisible world beyond this world doesn’t make sense. Christian beliefs also seem crude and offensive to worldly-enlightened men and women; a bloody cross to satisfy a holy God’s wrath; only one way to heaven; how archaic and narrow-minded can people be? Keep in mind as we attempt to communicate the gospel to this generation, we are dealing with a captive audience; captive in the sense that they are blind to God’s truth and taken captive by the god of this world. **2 Corinthians 4:4**

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” I John 4:6

- Only those who have been born again by the Spirit of God and who are walking in the Spirit have ears to hear and can understand the teachings of the apostles. **John 10:24-28; I Corinthians 2:12-13**
- John makes it clear that this is how we can know what is true and what is false. Whatever is according to the writings of the apostles is the truth but anything that is different or has been added, is error.

B. Determining True or False Teachers

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” I John 4:7

- John again returns to the theme of love. He repeats his exhortation for all Christians to continue in love toward one another. It's interesting to give thought to the fact that God is the source of all love; therefore, love comes from God. Keep in mind that true, biblical love does not come naturally for humans. (**Titus 2:4**) We are not born with it, neither can we learn it. The phrase, "*Anyone who loves is born of God*" means just that; only those who have experienced the new birth are able to have the love described here. In addition to this, John says, "*Anyone who loves knows God.*" This speaks of a continual growing in Spirit-given knowledge of God. In **I John 4:19**, John writes: "***We love God because He first loved us.***" As we grow in our knowledge of God, we realize how much He loves us and the natural response to that love is to love Him in return as well as His children. We could simplify this by saying everyone that loves has come to a saving knowledge of Christ and is abiding in Christ.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." I John 4:8

- John has already described God's nature as life and light and here he describes Him as love. Anyone in whom God dwells reflects His character. To claim that we truly know God while failing to love others is a false claim. It is just as false as claiming to know God who is light and yet still living in darkness. Biblical love is holy and just and perfect, just like God. Those who truly know God will love as He does. John ends this verse with the phrase, "*for God is love.*" Love is God's very essence. It is not one of God's many activities. Instead, all of God's activities are filled with love. When he disciplines, for instance, or teaches He does so with love. And conversely, because He loves, He disciplines and teaches. Because He is love, He can do nothing without love. The next verses clarify the meaning of *God is love*.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." I John 4:9

- This verse declares all the wonderful truth found in **John 3:16**. It, like no other, seems to encapsulate the basic message of the gospel. It is the good news in a nutshell. God showed how much He loves us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. The great proof of God's love is that He sent His only Son, who is life, so that we by grace through faith could live the Christ-life.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” I John 4:10

- God expressed His love in dying; He sent His Son as a sacrifice. *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* This verse speaks of an unconditional love, compassion, unselfishness; and this kind of love is characteristic of God and motivated Him to send His Son into the world to die for undeserving sinners. Notice again what John says, *“This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.”* The love relationship was initiated by God. People have nothing to do with it. How could we? All people are born dead to God. **Ephesians 2:1** states that we were dead in trespasses and sins. We were separated from Him. He loved us even though we were totally unworthy of His love. He loved us so much that He sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. The supreme manifestation of God’s love was demonstrated in sending His Son to die in order to take away the sins of all who believe. Oftentimes, couples debate about who loved whom first. But John makes it clear that when it comes to our relationship with God, there is no question about who made the first move. God loved first. He initiated, not in response to our movement toward Him; not because we were lovable or deserving; in fact, the opposite is true. The Apostle Paul observed while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (**Romans 5:8**). This is the mystery of mercy, the miracle of grace. God chose to love a race of rebels and prodigals and it is this kind of love that believers are called to share with the world; a love that actually pursues evil doers until they stop running and then blesses them.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” I John 4:11

- Because we believers are born of God, we should resemble our Father who is love. As we grow in an understanding of God’s love for us, our love for Him and for others will grow, as well. 2 Corinthians 5:14 states that *“The love of Christ constrains us, (or compels us).”* In **Ephesians 3:17-19**, we read, *“Being rooted and grounded in love, may we be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passes all knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.”* The idea here is that as we begin to understand and know

God's sacrificial, unselfish, complete, unconditional love, we will be compelled and motivated to love Him in return, as well as others.

“No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” I John 4:12

- Let's give some thought to John's statement, “no one has ever seen God.” In **John 1:18**, we read, “no man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” In **Exodus 33:20**, Moses asked to see God's glory, but God explained no human can see God and live. In **John 6:46**, Jesus said, “no one has seen the Father except he who is of God, this one has seen the Father.” Now, if no one has ever seen God, then how can people ever know Him? Back again to **John 1:18**: *Only the Son who is Himself God, has seen God and can communicate His glory to humanity.* Keep in mind what we read in **2 Corinthians 5:14**; His love for us motivates us to return love to Him, as well as love one another. Back to **I John 4:12**: *“If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us.”* Through the Holy Spirit, God lives in Christians today. When we love one another, the invisible God is revealing Himself through us, and His love is then perfected in us.

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” I John 4:13-15

- Once again John is referring to his testimony and the testimony of the apostles that the man Jesus was God's Son who had been sent by the Father into the world and that He, the Son of God, had died and because the Savior of the world.
- In addition, at the moment of salvation, when a person believes and in his heart confesses that Jesus is truly God's Son, there is this immediate, reciprocal union; we are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ (“God dwells in us and we in God”).

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” I John 4:16

- To the degree that we don't know God, we'll trust in other things. John says, *"we have known the love that God has for us and therefore we believe it."* The picture here is of a Christian who truly knows how much God loves him and therefore he is able to trust and rest and depend on that love. *"God is love and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him."* It's interesting to give thought to the fact that the love God has, is not only for His people, but also works through His people producing a love response back toward Him and also toward other Christians. When a believer truly knows that God loves him, it totally changes his life. God is love and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. To say that God is love does not mean that God merely possesses an unusually great quantity of love. It means rather, that God's very nature resonates love. Everything God has done and will do from eternity past to eternity future overflows with love. Practically speaking this truth means that as we relate to God we can always know that we are being treated with perfect, unconditional love. Our circumstances may be difficult, but behind it all and through it all, God will accomplish His best in our lives because of His great love for us.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." I John 4:17

- Because of this mutual indwelling; God abiding in believers and we abiding in Him; and because this relationship is grounded in God's perfect love, then God's love is made perfect or complete in believers. Why? Because it's actually God's love that's flowing in and through us. This complete, mature, perfect love will produce believers who have a confidence on the Day of Judgment. Of course, confidence means the opposite of fear. Living with Christ and growing more perfect in His love is going to develop a confidence in our relationship with Him. John goes on in this verse, *"...because as He is, so are we in this world."* The idea here is that because He is abiding in us and we are abiding in Him, we have boldness to come before the throne of grace in the Day of Judgment for the simple reason that *"it is no longer I, but Christ"* – *"as He is, so are we."*

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." I John 4:18

- Thinking back to verse 17, because believers are becoming like God, they need not fear Him or fear any other thing. The fear that John is speaking of is based on consciousness of guilt; anticipating deserved punishment, which causes a person to suffer because they are thinking of that future punishment. But, perfect love cannot co-exist with fear. Believers cannot approach God in love and at the same time hide from Him in fear. Keep in mind what John is saying here; fear has to do with punishment, therefore it cannot be part of a Christian's experience. He or she has been forgiven because Jesus already took the punishment. An interesting verse to consider would be **Romans 8:15**. We believers ought never to be afraid of the future or eternity or God's judgment because we know that God loves us perfectly. **Romans 8:38-39**

"We love him, because he first loved us." I John 4:19

- The thought here is that a believer's love, whether it be for God or for others, is based on God's love for us. God's love is the source, the initiator. People cannot love on their own. When we believers abide in God, who is love, and thus abide in love, then God's love fills us and overflows from us. This love which comes from God, then becomes the characteristic of God's people, and we can love as He loves.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." I John 4:20-21

- Occasionally we hear the question, "If I do not love my brother or sister in Christ, does that mean I am not saved?" Why would that question arise in someone's mind? Often it's because of what they have read right here in **I John 4:20-21**. This is a great example of how people are not accurately handling the scriptures. Let's consider the book of John and the book of I John. The gospel of John was written to tell us how we can be certain of eternal life. John acknowledges this in **John 20:31**: ***"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*** Thus, the word "believe" is used 98 times in the gospel of John. John wants us to know that we obtain eternal life simply by believing and trusting in Christ alone to save us. However, I John

was written to tell us how to be close, or how to have a relationship or fellowship with the One in whom we have believed. We saw that back in **I John 1:3-4**, *“That which we have seen and heard, we declare unto you that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. These things we write to you, that your joy may be full.”* For this reason, John uses the word, “abide” 26 times in the book of I John. We know Christ by believing. We get close to Christ by abiding, walking with Him day by day and depending on Him to live His life through us. Now the meaning here of **I John 4:20-21** becomes clear. You can know God for salvation and hate your brother. How many Christians do we know who struggle in this area? But we cannot love God and hate our brother. If we love the Father, we will also love His family. As **I John 4:21** states, *“He who loves God loves his brother also.”* It is not one’s salvation that John is addressing here; it’s a close, intimate, abiding relationship with Him.

I JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

LESSON 7

A. Those Who Are Born of God

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” I John 5:1

- All who have been born again have put their trust in Christ, the One who was anointed by God to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. (**Matthew 16:15-17**) As Priest, He offered Himself as a sacrifice to God for our sins (2:1). As King, He is over all and will return to rule and reign. (**Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 19:11-16**)
- To discern whether a person is a true Christian, one needs to look at what that person believes about Jesus Christ. The true believer believes that Jesus is the Christ. Of course, to believe means to put one's trust and confidence in and to be convinced of the truth. So what is the truth? The truth is that Jesus is the Christ, which means that He is God's Messiah and He was anointed by God's Holy Spirit to die on the cross for sin and be raised from the dead to become the Savior of the world. Now belief that Jesus is the Christ and a love for God that comes from Him as we abide in Him, will produce love; not only for God, but for fellow Christians.

B. Obey His Word

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” I John 5:2

- Just as believers' love for their brothers and sisters is the sign and test of their love for God; so now their love for God which comes from God, is the only basis of their love for Christian brothers and sisters. John was not contradicting what he had written in 4:20-21. Rather, he was insisting that love for God and love for fellow believers cannot be separated. Christians cannot truly love God without loving their brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's think about what the verse says again. *“By this we know, that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.”* Thinking back to what we have already



studied in 2:3 – *Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.*” Therefore we can conclude when we truly know God, we will love Him, we will keep His commandments, and we will also love His children. What would John think of Christians who claim to love God while viewing a fellow Christian as an enemy? To John, such an idea would be unthinkable. Love is not something that we can muster up; that we can measure or parcel out. It cannot be compartmentalized; we can love here and not there. Love is all-encompassing. John wrote that one way to show love for our invisible God is to love our visible brothers and sisters.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” I John 5:3

- This echoes what Jesus said to His disciples as recorded in **John 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31** and **John 15:10**. Jesus had one commandment for them; love one another. (**John 13:34, 15:17**) This one command is not grievous or burdensome because it originates from God’s love, which is flowing in and through us. Notice again the beginning of this verse, *“For this is the love of God,”* (not our love for God)...but God’s love flowing through me.

C. Victorious Over the World

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” I John 5:4

- In **Galatians 6:14**, Paul writes, *“God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”* As I by faith, rest in my co-crucifixion with Christ (**Romans 6:6**), I find that I will have victory and overcome the world; the world will have no power over me; I will have no desire for the world. *“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith”* Faith in the truth that we’ve been crucified unto the world and the world has been crucified unto us.

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” I John 5:5

- This verse confirms verse 4 with a triumphant statement. The ones that believe that Jesus is the Son of God are the only ones who will win this battle against the world. The verse explains John's numerous warnings against worldly thinking and living. What exactly did he mean when he spoke of overcoming the world? Basically, he meant doing the will of God in a culture that is bent on doing it's own thing. The world, or world-system as we mentioned before is based on satanic principles of power, greed and lust. As we, by faith, believe that Jesus Christ is God and that He not only died on the cross to pay for our sins, but He also took us with Him and there in the sight of God, we were crucified with Him, and now we are able to overcome the lure of this world. As mentioned before, the world will have no power over us; we'll have no desire for the world.



D. Witnesses to the Reality of Christ

“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” I John 5:6

- At the close of verse 5, John commented that *“Jesus is the Son of God.”* Now in verse 6, John states that the Son of God *“came by water and blood.”* By “water,” John may be referring to the baptism of the Lord Jesus and by “blood” to His death for sin on the cross. His baptism was the beginning of His earthly ministry and the giving of His blood was the conclusion. John's probable purpose in pointing to these two is to combat the evil teaching of a particular group of false teachers. Some false teachers said that the man Jesus was not the Christ, but that at His baptism He was indwelt by the Spirit of the Son of God. And that, before He was nailed to the cross, the Son of God left the body of the man Jesus. But John was emphasizing that the man Jesus who began His ministry by being baptized in “water” was the Son of God and that He was the same One who gave His “blood” on the cross for our sins and completed His work. (**John 17:4**) When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down on Him in the



form of a dove. Later, through the apostolic preaching and writings the Holy Spirit testified that it was the Son of God who was baptized in the River Jordan and gave His blood on the cross. The Holy Spirit speaks the truth because He is the Spirit of Truth. **John 16:13-14**

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” I John 5:7-8

- Verse 8 has to do with those three critical phases in Jesus’ life where He was manifested as God incarnate, the Son of God in human form. This was made evident at His baptism, the water; His death, the blood; and His resurrection, the Spirit. At His baptism, Jesus was declared to be God’s beloved Son. (**Matthew 3:16-17**) In His resurrection, Jesus was designated the Son of God in power. (**Romans 1:3-4**) This three way testimony is unified in one aspect: each event demonstrated that the man Jesus was truly the Son of God.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.” I John 5:9

- According to the Jewish law, the testimony of one person is not a valid witness. Truth or validity has to be established by two or three witnesses. (**Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15**) Since people believe human testimony when validated by two or three witnesses, John explained that surely they could believe the testimony that comes from God. The gospels twice record God’s clear declaration that Jesus is God’s Son. At His baptism (**Matthew 3:16-17**) and at His transfiguration (**Matthew 17**). John said if they believe testimony from people, then they can surely rely on the three-fold witness of God in **I John 5:2**. The three witnesses described in 5:8; water, blood, Spirit, are united because God Himself is behind them. All three form a single testimony from God that Jesus is the Christ.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” I John 5:10

- When people become God’s children, God’s Spirit, which is alive in their spirit, witnesses to the fact that everything Jesus said and did was true. In fact, that is the primary function of the Spirit; to testify and reveal Jesus to every believer. **John 14:25; 15:26; 16:7-13** However, those who do not believe the testimony that God has given concerning His Son, should realize that by rejecting what God has so plainly said, they are basically calling God a liar. John was rebuking the false teachers who claimed to know God, but did not believe what God Himself had said concerning His Son.



“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” I John 5:11-12

- Eternal life is a gift. It is not something that we can earn. This gift is a person; Jesus Christ. We receive eternal life not only from Christ, but in Christ. He who has the Son has life, not just life, but *the* life; the life which is life indeed – eternal life. **John 14:16-18; Colossians 3:1-4; John 6:35; 11:25-26**

E. Things We Know

- *That we have eternal life.*

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” I John 5:13

- John wanted his readers to have no more doubt, that they truly had eternal life. This wording closely parallels **John 20:31**, a verse that provides John’s reason for writing what he did in his gospel. But these two parallel verses are slightly different in the original text. The gospel of John, which was written to unbelievers, encouraged them to come to faith in the Son of God as the means to enjoying the divine life. This letter of I John was written to believers who had been unsettled in their faith, therefore John encouraged them to continue in the faith and to be firm in their possession of eternal life. In both cases, John wanted his readers to know, to be sure that they had eternal life. Of

course, this security is the basis for the other aim of John's letter, that they would abide, have fellowship, have a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

- *That God hears prayer.*

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” I John 5:14-15



- It is one thing to know that Jesus is God and that we are God's children, but what about the needs and problems of daily life? As believers approach God, we can have confidence that He listens to our prayers and will respond. ***“And this is the confidence that we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us and if we know that He hears us whatever we ask we know that we have that petition that we desired of Him.”*** Notice that the key here is ***“according to His will.”*** **John 15:7** also sheds some light: ***“If we abide in Him and His Word abides in us, we can ask whatever we want and it will be done for us.”*** The basis for answered prayer is abiding. If we abide in Him; if we are occupied, trusting and resting in Him and His Word is abiding in us, then we can ask whatever we want and it will be done for us. And the reason is; if we're abiding in Him and His Word is abiding in us, then our will becomes His will and therefore, whatever we ask will be done for us.

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” I John 5:16-17

- This example describes the kind of petition that God will answer. Because believers have love one for another, it follows then that they will care enough to intercede with God in prayer. Intercessory prayer forms a vital part of the fellowship of the church. The question in this scripture is what is the difference between sinning in a way that does not lead to death and the sin that leads to death? John's readers apparently understood the difference since John did not elaborate further. One has to wonder if John had any idea how much discussion and controversy his comments about sin that leads to death

would spark. Who can say with full assurance and authority exactly what these words of John mean? Perhaps he was referring to the truth that God has at various times in history brought a judgment of physical death on his sinning people. (**Leviticus 10:107; Numbers 16; Joshua 6, 7; I Corinthians 11:30**) Maybe he was referring to the spiritual death that comes to all who reject Christ. Whatever the case, it is not our place to become sin-hunters. God has not commissioned us to monitor the lives of others and rank their wrong acts, but we are to be concerned enough to pray for them.

- *That those born of God do not continue in sin.*

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” I John 5:18

- There is little or no security in believers attempting to keep themselves secure. Rather, it is God’s Son who securely holds believers. This verse continues on, *“the wicked one cannot touch them.”* Peter’s experience with Satan helps us to understand this truth. ***“Simon, Simon, Jesus said, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brother.” Luke 22:31-32***

- *That believers belong to God.*

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” I John 5:19

- The false teachers and all who followed them were of this world of which Satan is god. Let us never forget that this world system is under the control of Satan. That is why those who belong to God are told to come out of the world and be separate. **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.**

- *That the Son of God has come.*

“And we know that the Son of God is come,” I John 5:20a

- The false teachers were wrong. It was the Son of God Himself who came down from heaven and was born as a baby through Mary. The apostles knew Him intimately and were His witnesses. (1:1-3).
- *We know Christ.*

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” I John 5:20

- When Adam and Eve sinned and turned away from God, their minds were spiritually blinded so they could no longer know God. As children of Adam, we, too, were without God and ignorant of truth. But when we put our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit brought us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. He “is the true God, and eternal life.” The Jesus the apostles believed in and knew as a man is God. **Matthew 1:23** We who have been born again share in His life; eternal life (5:11-13).

F. Conclusion

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” I John 5:21

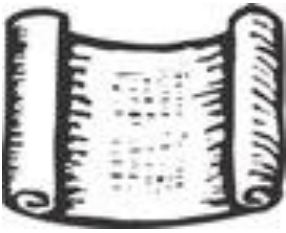
- John concluded his letter by reminding his readers to keep themselves from anything and anyone that would take God’s rightful place in their lives. Whatever takes His place in our lives is an idol (**Matthew 22:37-38**).

2 JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

A. Greetings

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;” 2 John 1

- Unlike 1 John, the writer of this letter does not give his name, but because of the similar content to I John, it has been generally accepted as another of the Apostle John’s letters. John introduces himself as “the elder.” This may refer to his age or to his position as an apostle or overseer in the churches.



- It is not clear to whom John wrote this letter. Some think it was to a particular Christian lady and her children. Others believe that it may have been written to a well known church which John addressed as “the elect lady and her children.”

One reason why many believe this letter could have been sent to a well known church is because John wrote the “elect lady is loved by all they that have known the truth.” No matter to whom it was written, the main thing to remember is that it is God’s Word to all who are “elect” and are now “His children.”

“For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever.” 2 John 2

- Believers love one another “because of the truth” which is in their hearts. Christ, who is “the Truth” (**John 14:6**) is being reproduced in His children by the Holy Spirit. Unbelievers do not know the truth and therefore have not God’s love controlling their lives.
- Believers who hold to the same Christ-centered doctrine sense a closeness, a sweet fellowship because of Christ (**I John 1:3**).



“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” 2 John 1:3

- God's grace, mercy, and peace have been given to us "in truth and in love." Jesus said in **John 14:6**: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me."* And in **John 14:8** he commented: *"He that loves not has not known God; for God is love."* So, the statement, "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in truth and love," implies that, as long as we are walking in the Spirit, abiding in Christ, living in communion with God, we will experience God's grace, mercy, and peace in our lives.

B. Live According To the Truth

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father." 2 John 1:4



- John may have either met some of the members of this church somewhere and observed their lives, or he had heard about them from someone. Again, notice the connection; John said that they were walking in truth, and remember Jesus said that He is the Truth. Therefore, we can conclude that these believers were abiding in Christ, and that resulted in lives that knew and believed and walked in truth.

"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." 2 John 5

- As has been emphasized many times before, love is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and it is impossible to biblically love one another if we are living in the flesh. In the flesh, we are self-centered and care more for ourselves and therefore, true Biblical love will not be a part of our lives. John's encouragement to love one another is really the foundation for all of our relationships and everything we do. If we are walking in the Spirit; manifesting the love of God, relationship problems will cease. True love will also compel and motivate the church body to freely minister one to another. Love will



produce unity, oneness, forgiveness, understanding, service, and humility. If a church is walking in these things, its ministry will be God-orchestrated and effective.

“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”
2 John 6

- We know that the fruit of the Spirit includes love, therefore, to be walking in love is to be walking in the Spirit. The more we walk in the Spirit, the more conformed to the image of Christ we will become and the more love will flow from us. Many Christians today are attempting to live the Christ-life by simply imitating Christ. One may be able to produce a facsimile of the life of Christ for a time, but the source of the true Christ-life comes from Christ within, as the believer appropriates his identification with Christ by faith, and the Holy Spirit reproduces the life of Christ.

C. Avoid Those Who Distort the Truth

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 7

- John’s challenge to his readers was to see what these teachers were saying about Christ. Did they accept His incarnation? Did they believe in or reject the deity of Christ? If they rejected it, then they were deceivers; they were anti-Christ. What is it today in our churches that teachers focus on and emphasize; the finished work of Christ or man’s responsibilities? If we want to know the value of any teaching, we must ask, “What about Christ and His finished work?” **I John 2:22-23; 4:1-3**

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” 2 John 8

- “Full reward” – John is speaking of the blessing; the joy that one has when those they have taught and disciplined go on to walk in truth. All of us want to see our children grow up and become godly and responsible adults. If some wicked person was to lead them into a life of ungodliness, it would break our hearts. We would feel that all of their training and upbringing had been in

vain. More than anything, we want to see them continue walking in truth and we trust the Lord for His protection from those who will lead them astray.

Philippians 2:14-16

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” 2 John 9

- Christianity centers on Christ and His finished work. He is God, whose death alone provided our salvation. Positionally speaking, all that we have and have become, we have received from and through Him. What determines our daily walk as Christians is our identification with Him. To turn away from these truths and depend upon our own strength or anything other than Christ and His finished work, is to deviate from the truth and our hearts have departed from God. **Jeremiah 17:5**

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John 10-11

- When false teachers such as those who belong to the cults of our day come to our homes, it may seem difficult not to invite them in because they appear very loving and kind, but God’s Words through John are clear: ***“Receive him not into your home.”*** John is not saying that neighbors, friends, or relatives who belong to such groups must not be allowed into our homes. These verses are speaking of those who come to our homes or church gatherings for the purpose of teaching their evil doctrines.



- In this day and age, there is a real spirit of ecumenicalism in the church and to stand firm in what John writes here could label us as “intolerant,” or divisive.



Quite often today, Christians are more focused on how people feel than on the importance of preserving truth. Heresy is poison, and it is very important that we withstand those who are promoting and proclaiming it. Church leaders must stand strong and protect the church from such false teachers.

D. John's Concluding Remarks

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.” 2 John 12-13

- Again, “the children of thy elect sister” may refer to Christians who are sending their greeting to the church or to the children of the Christian lady to whom John wrote this letter.

3 JOHN FOR GROWING BELIEVERS

A. Greetings

“The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.” 3 John 1

- This is now the third letter written by the Apostle John. He refers to himself as “the elder.” He may be referring to his age or possibly his position as an apostle or overseer in the churches. This letter was sent to a believer named Gaius. In **Acts 20:4** and in **Romans 16:23** the name Gaius is mentioned by both Luke and Paul, but there is no way of knowing if this is the same Gaius.
- John expressed his love and appreciation for Gaius, his Christian brother, and wrote to encourage him. We also should appreciate the love, faith, good works, and service of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and communicate that appreciation as an encouragement to them.



“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” 3 John 2

- We may assume from this verse that Gaius’s physical and financial health was not as good as his spiritual health. We must not be quick to judge a person’s spiritual life by their physical circumstances. Some think that if a Christian has bad health, or financial problems, etc., then he or she is lacking in faith or that the Lord is disciplining that believer because of sin. While it is true that the Lord does at times allow sickness to discipline His children, it doesn’t mean that all God’s children who are sick have known sin in their lives. Oftentimes the Lord permits a sickness in believers’ lives to mature them, or to strengthen their faith, or increase their love for the Lord and their dependence on Him. **Romans 5:3-5**
- It might be good to keep in mind that we are living in a fallen and sin-cursed world, in bodies that have death and sickness reigning in them. We all get old, sick, and die. Getting sick and dying is a natural part of living in this world. **I Corinthians 11:30; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; I Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20**

B. John Rejoiced

“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” 3 John 3-4

- It’s apparent that John had spent significant time with Gaius; he may have led him to a relationship with Christ, as John refers to Gaius as his child.
- John may have also discipled him and then apparently at some point they parted ways. Later, others who knew Gaius, visited John and reported that Gaius continued to walk faithfully in truth. John mentioned that there was no greater joy than to hear that his spiritual child walked in truth.
- If we are living life in the flesh, we will never understand that our self focus robs us of the joy experienced from delighting in the growth of others. But, in the Spirit, our values will be eternal, and whatever is Christ-centered will become the occupation of our hearts (**2 Corinthians 4:5**).

C. John Praised Gaius

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.” 3 John 5-8

- John praised Gaius because of his help to the Bible teachers who traveled from church to church teaching the Word of God. There is nothing in this letter to indicate that Gaius himself was a teacher of the Word, but it is evident that he lived according to truth and assisted those who were teaching truth. John mentioned that these Bible teachers were receiving nothing from the Gentiles or from the unbelievers to whom they were ministering, and to give them assistance as Gaius had done, was to participate in their ministry. This should be a great encouragement to those who often think they are of little importance in the church because they are not teaching the Scriptures publicly. Remember, every child of God has been gifted and given a particular work to do in the body of Christ and it is for this work that the Lord

gives us the power and desire as we abide in Him. **Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-26.**

- We are told that it was “for his name’s sake” that these teachers traveled to distant places. **Acts 5:41**
- Because of Jesus’ obedience to the Father in dying on the cross for sinners, God exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above all other names. **Philippians 2:9-11**
- These Bible teachers that John refers to in verse 7, taught others so they would recognize that Jesus was Lord and come to trust, love, and obey Him.
- These traveling Bible teachers were not depending on the gifts of the “Gentiles” (the unsaved), but on the Lord. Therefore, God’s children such as Gaius, were given an opportunity to help them meet their daily needs. This, also may be our part regarding Bible teachers that give their time and effort to make known God’s Word. **Acts 13:1-3**
- The Lord desires that we live our lives in the Spirit. In the Spirit, God’s desires will become our desires and we’ll be willing to give ourselves to the things of the Lord, either by going ourselves or giving to and praying for those who He is sending. **Acts 13:1-3**

D. John Denounces Diotrephes

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.” 3 John 9

- It appears that Diotrephes was a leader in the church of which Gaius was a member. Instead of humbly taking his place as one of the elders and faithfully serving God’s children, Diotrephes exalted himself, took a place of preeminence and ruled over the church. It would seem from John’s comment that if anyone disagreed with him, he rejected them. It appears he also rejected John. Diotrephes’ attitude was contrary to the biblical conduct of elders. **I Peter 5:1-4**

“Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” 3 John 10

- The things that Diotrephes was doing weren't only against John, but were affecting the whole church. Therefore, John intended to confront him openly and speak to the church about him. It is very difficult to publicly confront people about their sinful attitudes, but when the problem is one that affects everyone, it should be dealt with openly. **I Timothy 5:19-21**
- Diotrephes had rejected believers whom he did not agree with and banned some from coming into the assembly. It would be interesting to know if this church had more than one elder, but in some way Diotrephes was carrying this out on his own. This authority should never be given to one person even if he is an elder. It is the work of the plurality of elders and should be in fellowship with the members of the church. **I Corinthians 5:4-5**

E. John Instructs Gaius

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” 3 John 11

- In Gaius' church there may have been those who were young or weak in faith. Possibly Diotrephes was a charismatic and decisive leader; one who commanded respect when in the presence of others. It could be that there were many who looked up to Diotrephes and considered him a great leader.
- Today, we have a similar situation in the world and in the church. What the



world calls a good leader is the opposite of biblical servant leadership that we see in the Word of God (**Mark 10:42-45**). Many churches today have leaders who are functioning more like worldly leaders than godly men. Therefore, John encourages Gaius not to imitate the evil actions of others, such as Diotrephes; rather, he should do what is good and right. **I Timothy 4:12; I**

Corinthians 4:14-17

- The desires and works of God's people will show the source of their lives. Are we walking in the flesh or the Spirit? In the flesh, the deeds of the flesh will characterize our lives (**Galatians 5:19-21**); in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit will be manifested (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

“Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.” 3 John 12

- We have no other information in the Bible about Demetrius. Apparently, he was a believer who intended visiting the church where Gaius lived. John knew that Diotrephes would probably reject Demetrius, so he wrote to Gaius and entrusted the delivery of the letter to Demetrius. Demetrius was coming to Gaius highly recommended. First, all who knew him spoke highly of him. Secondly, the truth that he believed was evidence of his Christian character. Third, John and his companions also testified to Demetrius’ godly life.
- In our homes, communities and churches, are we known by our fleshly deeds, or are we characterized by the fruit of the Spirit?

F. John’s Closing Remarks

“I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.” 3 John 13-1



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