



John's Epistles

**Confidence in Christ Alone!
Right Belief + Right Love +
Right Conduct = Fellowship
with God Through His Grace**

Exton church of Christ
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Studying through 1st, 2nd & 3rd John

Nine Lessons

Lesson 1: Introduction – key themes, author, date, purpose of these letters.

Lesson 2: Some background on Gnosticism, it's relevance to these letters and to us today.

Lesson 3: True Fellowship (1st John 1 - 2:2)

Lesson 4: Staying in Fellowship with God (1st John 2:3-29)

Lesson 5: Conduct Befitting Fellowship with God (1st John 3)

Lesson 6: Conduct Befitting Fellowship with God...continued (1st John 4)

Lesson 7: Conduct Befitting Fellowship with God...continued (1st John 5)

Lesson 8: The Truth...and Nothing but The Truth; Fellowship Between Believers (2nd John)

Lesson 9: "Extending the Right Hand of Fellowship" (3rd John)

A number of resources were consulted and used in compiling this study including:

- 1) Womack, M.W. (1998). The College Press NIV Commentary 1,2,3 John, College Press Publishing Company
- 2) Akin, D.L. (2014). Christ Centered Exposition / Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John, B&H Publishing Group
- 3) Smith, J. (2001). Letters Of Love - Studies From 1st, 2nd and 3rd John
- 4) Spears, D.R. (1987). A Study of New Testament Epistles
- 5) [WWW.Bibletools.org](http://www.bibletools.org) - Gnosticism

Lesson 1 – Introduction to 1st, 2nd, 3rd John

Read through 1st John in its entirety.

The Author:

Although John never names himself, or claim authorship of these epistles, we have a high degree of confidence the Apostle John wrote these three letters. Below are just a few of the external evidences that support John's authorship:

- Irenaeus attributed the authorship to John (Against Heresies III, 16, 5 & 8). a.k.a....*The Detection and Refutation of What IS Falsely Called Knowledge*...a treatise against Gnosticism.
 - Lived from ~ 130-202 AD. A “bishop” in France; originally from Smyrna in Asia Minor and a student there of Polycarp...who was a disciple of the Apostle John.
- Clement of Alexandria wrote this in one of his manuscripts... “John...in his larger Epistle” taught in these words...and then gave a near verbatim quote from 1st John 5:16-17.
 - Also known as Titus Flavius Clemens. Lived from ~ 150-215.
- Polycarp, Papias, & Justin Martyr, some of the “early church fathers,” quoted from John's works:
 - Both Polycarp and Papias were identified as John's pupils
 - They both wrote in the 2nd century.

1) What “internal evidence” (within the scriptures) can you identify to show that the same John who authored the Gospel of John, also authored these letters? Look for any common themes, phrases, or common terms used in the gospel account and in these letters.

- a. Consider (Jn. 1:1) ...see anything familiar in 1st Jn. Ch.1?
- b. Consider (Jn. 20:30-31; 1st Jn.5:13)
- c. Consider 1 Jn. 1:1-3...what is significant about this claim?
- d. Can you find common terms used in the Gospel of John and these letters?
 - 1 Does John 13:34-35...sound familiar to 1st Jn 2:7 & 2nd Jn. 5?
 - 2 Does John 15:11, 16:24...sound familiar to 1st Jn. 1:4 & 2nd Jn. 12?
 - 3 Consider how 1 Jn. 2:1 compares to some phrases used in 3 John...

2) Drawing on your knowledge of scripture, what are some things that we know about John? (Name and provide a reference for as many “facts” as you can...e.g., relatives, secular occupation, reputation, friends, work as an evangelist, how he describes himself...etc.)

- 3) **Reflect and comment on John’s life, his work and his diligence. Consider some of what Mike Sullivan discussed about the “value of work” in our recent gospel meeting. How does honest work, coupled with considering everything we do “as for the Lord” impact us both secularly and spiritually? How might it have impacted John? (Think about Luke 9:57-62; Col. 3:23)**

Approximate date and location of writing:

With John the apostle established as the author, most historians place the writing of these letters towards the end of his life (approximately 90-94 AD). They advocate that an “elder” John wrote them pointing to 2 Jn. 1 and 3 Jn. 1. In the 2nd and 3rd letters, he refers to himself as “the elder”. Most believe the reference is to him being “chronologically older”, (aged) rather than his noting that he served as a “shepherd”/“elder”. The fact that John refers to his readers as his “little children” seems to be an indicator and in support of this perspective (see 1 Jn. 2:1; 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 5:21 and 3 Jn.4). Yet, there are some who believe that the date could be closer to 70 A.D.

We know that John was eventually banished to the isle of Patmos (believed by the Roman emperor Domitian), from where he was directed by the Spirit to write Revelation (Rev. 1:9). It is commonly believed that he returned to Ephesus to live out the rest of his life, and that it was from there, where he wrote these three epistles as well as the Gospel of John. We can’t be sure of the exact date the letters were written, or the exact location where they were penned. Agreement on the exact location and timing of the writings is not necessary to learn the deep doctrinal messages these letters contain.

- 4) **The purposes of the 1st letter: John gives at least four reasons for writing 1st John. See how many you can identify. Cite the verses referencing them.**

- a. *One is in 1st Jn.1*
- b. *One is in 1st Jn.2*
- c. *A second is in 1st Jn. 2*
- d. *One is in 1st Jn. 5*

- 5) **Having read 1st John, what key themes (main thoughts) did you identify in the letter?**

- a. *1 Jn. 1:6-7*
- b. *1 Jn. 2:15-17*
- c. *1 Jn. 3:6-8*
- d. *1 Jn. 3:14-16*
- e. *1 Jn. 4:1*

6) Beyond these themes, there are several “spiritual contrasts” we see addressed in 1st John that Jesus himself teaches on as well...what are they? See if you can locate Jesus’s teaching in the Gospel of John that parallels these passages and how they compare.

a. *1 Jn. 1:5*

b. *1 Jn. 2:9-10; 1 Jn 4:20*

c. *1 Jn. 3:10; 3:8*

7) Thought question:

a. Above we noted four “purposes” John mentioned for writing the 1st letter. Of the four...which do you think gives the most complete context/purpose for this letter? How did you arrive at your conclusion?

Lesson 2:

Some background on Gnosticism, it's relevance to these letters and to us now.

1) Thought exercise:

Re-read 1st John. Try using a different translation than you may have used in your first reading. Now, with the letter fresh in your mind, put yourself in the shoes of the author and think about what he was facing, as well as what he might be feeling when he wrote these letters. Each of John's three letters are written from a very personal perspective. In each he makes a very impassioned plea to his readers. We can see from his writing that John was very concerned about the false teaching that was entering into the 1st century church (most agree this was Gnostic doctrine which we will be discussing in class).

Consider his relationship with Christ, and his relationship with the other Apostles that were martyred...all the suffering he and they endured together in helping establish the first century church. As we noted, it is believed by most, that John wrote these letters sometime toward the end of his life. It's fairly well established (through the writings of 2nd century historians) that John was the last living Apostle...the last living "witness" of Jesus! **Given that building and establishing the church had been his life's work, can you imagine the state of his emotions as he wrote these letters? Think how you might have felt in his shoes.**

2) Writing exercise:

Try writing a brief paragraph as if you were reviewing the book of 1st John from a literary perspective...almost as if you were being asked to write a forward to the book. As you complete your column on this literary work, consider all of the above facts in describing the author, his mindset and the subject of his writing... (use the back of your lesson sheet for more room).

3) **Gnosticism:** Do a little outside research on Gnostic doctrine...summarize the key points you find. There are many resources available; *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* has a pretty good high-level summary. For a much deeper analysis you can look at:

<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/66/Gnosticism.htm>

Note: The above site is maintained by the "Church of the Great God". That aside, it is a relatively scholarly explanation and summary of Gnosticism and its principles.

- 4) While he does not call the Gnostics specifically by name, John does “call out” those spreading falsehood using several different expressions (descriptive names). What are they...there are at least three?
- a) *1 Jn. 4:1*
 - b) *1 Jn 2:22-25; 2:18; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7*
 - c) *2 Jn 2:7*
- 5) John warns his readers about the serious and degenerative nature of this teaching. How does he characterize the impact this doctrine would have on their relationship with God the father in 1st Jn. 2:22-23 and 2nd Jn. 9? Also, how does he instruct his audience to “treat” or “react” to those teaching this heretical doctrine in both 1st and 2nd John?
- 6) In order to combat these heresies, John provides proof of the reality of the Lord and his incarnation.
- a) *What method does he use in 1st Jn 1:1? Why is it so effective?*
 - b) *in 1st Jn. 5:6-8 he names three witnesses of Jesus.*
 - i. *What/who are they?*
 - ii. *How do each of them witness Jesus?*
 - iii. *Can they provide witness today...how?*
- 7) In 1st John 3 he makes some key points to refute the notion that sinful activity can be indulged in without consequences. Can you locate them?
- 8) It seems Paul was also battling Gnostic doctrine in his writings. Can you point to any evidence of this in 1st Corinthians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus?

- 9) John uses several words frequently in these letters, two are “manifest” and “know”. What do they mean? How do they support the points John is making about Christ in relation to gnostic doctrine? Can you locate them in the Gospel of John?

Thought questions for lesson 2:

- **Why is it worthwhile to develop an understanding of Gnosticism? How might it be useful/relevant to us today? Also, comment on the mindset that underpins the Gnostic view and the fundamental challenges it brings.**

- **The word love (or its derivatives) is mentioned over 62 times in these letters. What are some of the different contexts in which it appears and why is it such a central theme?**

Lesson 3: True Fellowship (1st John 1 - 2:2)

John begins his writings with “the basics”. In fact, so foundational (so core) are the principles he lays out in the first four verses, that denying them, short circuits the gospel.

1st Jn. 1:1-4 is the introduction. It is here where he lays out his credentials. He “introduces” Jesus, elevates him, and identifies him (Jesus), as the conduit to true fellowship with God.

1st Jn. 1”5- 2nd Jn2:2 John provides five (5) keys (essentials) to having fellowship with God. All religions claim some sort of a connection or fellowship with God...or a god. Here John tells us right out of the gates what’s involved with having communion with the only true God. Spend some time studying the term fellowship and what it means in the bible.

1 John 1:1-4 – The introduction:

- **Who is John speaking about? What approach does he take in describing his understanding of Him? Again, why might he use this approach under the circumstances in which he writes?**

- **What other books (New and Old Testament) begin in this way?**

- **What do you think choosing the expression “the Word of Life” emphasizes? He could have more simply said “Jesus”, “The Christ”, “the Son of God”. Again, consider the context. (See 1 Jn.5:11-13). Also read Jn. 6:35 & 48; 8:12, 14:6 to see what Jesus had to say on the subject of life.**

- **In Ch.1 Vs. 3 John wants the audience to understand that he, they, and God all share something...what is it? What connects them and what can we learn about that connection from this verse? Contrast the feeling this gives, compared to the feeling they’ve gotten through the messaging provided by those among them teaching falsely. Ch 2:18-19**

- In Vs. 4 he concludes his introduction with the statement...“ we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete!” Some versions might read “your” joy. (Look at Jn. 15:10-11; Jn. 17:3; Jn. 10:10). What’s the source or basis for the joy he speaks of?

1st John 1:5-2:2 – Here John provides the essentials for true fellowship as he outlines several “truths” in reference to obtaining fellowship with God.

- What is the first truth in verse 5? How is light used to include/exclude fellowship in Eph. 5:6-11? What strikes you about this passage in Ephesians? (Consider also 1 Pet. 2:9; Eph. 6:12; Col 1:13-14).
- What is the second truth in vs. 6-7? What’s necessary to be in fellowship with God (Jn.8:12)? Two types of people are described in vs. 6-7...what did fellowship with God cost?
- What is the third truth outlined in vs. 8-9? How does this truth relate to the one above? What is the result of a mindset that claims to have no sin? Finally, what inures to the one who freely confesses their sin? (See Prov. 28:13)
- What is the fourth truth about fellowship in vs. 10? Look at Romans 3:23 and explain how denying our sin makes God a liar?
- Despite what John says about our past sinfulness, what is the fifth truth in Ch 2:1, that he felt compelled to mention? What is he trying to say with the statement... “but” or, “and” ...” if any one does sin”? Said differently, what is another wording you could use to convey his meaning?

- **What is Jesus' role with respect to our sin according to Ch.2:1?**

- **What term does John use to refer to Jesus in Ch.2 vs. 2? How does this shed light on God being "faithful" and "just" towards us in Ch. 1 vs. 9.? Think also in the context of parenting...how are we "just" with our children?**

Thought Questions:

- **What key take-aways from this passage will you incorporate into the book summary (book review) you will prepare at the end of this study?**

- **What is the doctrine of "continual cleansing" ...what can we glean about it from this passage?**

- **What is the relevance of the "Incarnation" to the Gospel...what importance does it play in the salvation of mankind?**

- **How/why is it (the Incarnation) a stumbling block for so many?**

- **It is a fact that we have all sinned. It is also true that even as children of God, we stumble from time to time. What does John say about Jesus that gives us hope, knowing that we are sinners?**

Lesson 4: Staying in Fellowship with God (1st John 2:3-29)

The previous lesson covering 1 John 1:1-2:2 centered on what was necessary to gain fellowship with God. In this passage, John logically begins to address that which is necessary to maintain fellowship with God. He also discusses some tests of fellowship.

The tests of fellowship:

- 1) What is the first test of fellowship laid out by John (Ch.2 vs. 3-6)? Compare this to Jesus's teaching as recorded by John in his gospel (John 14:23-24).
- 2) "By this we know that we have come to know him." What does this mean? Do you think it coincidental John would choose to use the word "know" in vs. 3?
- 3) What is meant by John in vs. 5 with this statement... "by this we may know that we are in him?" Who does the "him" refer to in vs. 3-6? How should this impact a Christian's mindset?
- 4) John says we need to "walk" as Jesus walked if we claim to live in him. What does that mean? What are some examples of how Jesus walked that you find challenging? (See 1 Pet 2:21-23).
- 5) What is the second test of fellowship John lays out in 1 Jn. 2:7-11? Several different words are used in addressing these saints within the different translations (NIV...Dear friends; KJ...Brethren; ESV...Beloved). What is John implying with this language?
- 6) How do you explain John's presentation of the "commandment" he speaks of in vs. 7 & 8? First, he says it's not new, but old. But, then in vs.8 he says... "it is a new commandment".
- 7) John returns to a familiar metaphor in vs. 8-11; what is that (See Ch.1:5-8)? What is the true light that is already shining?

- 8) In this chapter, John provides us with the two “tests” of fellowship, or said differently...how to “ensure one maintains fellowship” with God. What false teaching does this seemingly contradict? Does it remind you of Gnosticism in any way?

- 9) John uses the phrasing...I am writing to you, or I write to you...five or six times throughout the book of 1 John (1:4; 2:1, 8, 26; 5:13). It’s clear he is showing a personal interest in his audience...a deep personal concern for why he is writing. What do you make of these groups of people and his overall message to each?

Pitfalls to fellowship:

- 10) Earlier in this chapter we discussed “conditions of fellowship”. Now it seems that John warns of what we might call two “pitfalls” of fellowship. What are they... (hint - the first is in vs. 15-17; the second is in vs. 18-24)?

- 11) What OT passage does vs. 16 cause you to think of? Why is loving the things of the world foolish (vs. 17)? What does “loving the world” mean in this context?

- 12) What typically comes to your mind when you hear the term “Antichrist”? In what two ways does John define the Antichrist in this chapter? (vs. 19; 22-23). When is the last hour (vs. 19)?

- 13) What are these readers reminded of as their protection from Antichrist? (Vs. 20-21; 27). What do you suppose the anointing is he speaks about? How does God protect us today?

- 14) Vs. 27...What did John say was key in not being overcome by those who might deceive?

- 15) How will our confidence be manifested in judgement (vs. 28)? How do we obtain this confidence (vs. 29)?

Thought questions for Lesson 4...

Q1 - What key takeaways from this passage will you incorporate into the summary (book review) of 1st John you will prepare at the end of this study? What encouragement do you see?

Q2 – What groups, or what sins, were thought of as evil and “demonized” by the Jews during Jesus time? Are there any sins or groups that religious people view in a similar way today? What are the risks to Christians, the church, if we inappropriately view the sins of others?

Q3 - How would you explain to your friends that obedience, as the Bible describes it, is not an oppressive idea? Also, how can God be loving if he commands obedience from his people?

Q4 - How does truly knowing God lead to obedience of his commands?

Q5 – John argues that the pleasures of this world are fleeting. Can you see this in our culture today? How have you been successful in defeating some of the sinful desires you have faced?

Q6 - What do you think is likely to be the cause of the biggest threat to the church today? Where will it come from?

Lesson 5: Behavior Befitting Fellowship with God (1st John 3)

In many ways you can analogize the construction of John's writing with that in some other epistles...like Ephesians. The book of Ephesians "splits" very neatly into two parts between chapters three and four. In many ways, 1st John can also be viewed as "splitting" between chapters two and three. In chapters one and two, John lays out what fellowship with God is based on, and how it is maintained. In the last three chapters, he describes behaviors "befitting", or examples "worthy", of fellowship with a Holy God. This is not to say we are ever "worthy", or that we should consider ourselves as such. But, this text does give us a picture of God (who is love), and how our character and love should exemplify his. There are essentially four sections in the third chapter:

- Vs. 1-3...How God views us (actually begins back in Ch. 2:)
- Vs. 4-9...Our behavior toward God
- Vs. 10-18...Our behavior toward the brethren
- Vs. 19-24...Our heart condition

- 1) What great blessing of God does John start by describing (which actually starts back in Ch. 2)? What "harsh reality" may/will this blessing lead to? (See 1st Jn 2:28 – 3:1; John 15:18-19; John 17:14-19).
- 2) What should the fact that God considers us as his children mean to us? Knowing God's blessing and promises...how should our hope impact our behavior?
- 3) What simple definition of sin does John provide in vs. 4? What did Jesus do for the problem of sin (vs. 5)?
- 4) John gives us a fundamental and timeless truth about God, sin and man in Vs. 6-9...what is that? He again uses the term abide in this text. Considering the text and John 15:1-8, what is the thought he is conveying with this term?
- 5) Looking at Ch. 3 vs. 9-10...is this passage saying Christians (those born of God) can't sin? Explain.

- 6) Besides not sinning...how else are those who are in fellowship with God to behave? How can they be identified? (See vs. 10-11). Where else do we see similar instruction, and who records it?

- 7) Look at vs. 14- 15. What is said about the one who does not love his brethren? What does our passing out of death into life mean? Does vs. 15 shed any light on, or help you think more deeply about Mt 5:28?

- 8) Look at vs. 16-18. Who taught us how to love and by what action? How is this example to influence us toward our brethren? Do you personally know any that have died for their brethren? How can we practically apply this in our lives?

- 9) How are our hearts assured before God...how can we have confidence in our Christian walk? (vs. 19-20)

- 10) In the sermon on the mount (beatitudes), Jesus talks of the blessing of a pure heart. How does John weave that in vs. 19-22?

- 11) John closes this chapter in vs. 23-24 with a reference to two commandments which serve well as a summary of our behavior when in fellowship with God. What are they? Finally, what is a proof of our abiding in God...having fellowship with him?

Thought questions for Lesson 5:

Q1 - What key takeaways from this week's lesson will you incorporate into the summary (book review) of 1st John which you will prepare at the end of this study? What encouragement do you see?

Q2 – What does it mean for the world to not know Christ? How will that affect our relationship with the world?

Q3 – It appears that the example of Cain is the only Old Testament example that John references in this letter. Why do you think he chose that particular account to bring to our attention?

Q4 – How does knowing that God deeply loves us impact us?

Q5 – What healthy habits (such as meditating, prayer, etc.) have you developed? What things might you need to focus on increasing in your life, in order to uproot habits of sin? Think both interims of actions...as well as mindsets to develop (e.g., The Beatitudes). If willing, please share in class.

Q6 – “When our delight is in the love of God, our desires will be in the will of God.” What does that mean to you?

Lesson 6: Behavior Befitting Fellowship with God...continued (2)

(1st John 4)

In this chapter John continues his discussion of behavior that befits fellowship with God. He closes chapter three with saying that we know God “abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.” That is our assurance, our confirmation of God’s presence. In the opening verses of Ch. Four, he warns of different “spirits”, or different religious doctrines, that men of the world have devised. Believers need to be cautious to discern the differences between the “teachings” and identity of these spirits and the truth of God. In vs. 1-6 he outlines some tests for establishing the veracity of the spirits. Then he returns to his exhortation of following God’s love as our model for loving our brethren (a behavior befitting fellowship).

- 1) What do you think is meant by the phrase to “try” or “test” the spirits in Ch. 4:1? Look at Prov. 17:3; 1 Pet. 1:7; Lk. 14:19; 2 Cor. 8:8.

- 2) What is the end goal / end result of any false spirit, or teacher? See 2 Pet. 2:1-3.

- 3) Who is John instructing in 1 Jn. 4 to do this testing...or trying of the spirits? How might the “religious world” be impacted, if all seeking to serve God today were to follow this admonition?

- 4) What is the “first” test of the spirits John mentions in vs. 1-6? How might this help one qualify some of the “religious teachings” of today?

- 5) Is there a modern-day application for this warning against the “spirit of the antichrist” contained in vs. 3, or is it specific to the gnostic doctrine and teaching? (see 2 Tim.4:2-4.)

- 6) He offers a “second test” to qualify the spirits in these first six verses...what is it? What is the source of the Apostles doctrine (2 Pet. 1:16-21)? How did those seeking the light receive the Apostles teaching...how should we receive the teaching of the apostles (1 Thes. 2:13)?

- 7) In vs. 7 – what is shown by loving the brethren? What is the type of love John is addressing in these verses...what does it look like? Explain John’s choice of words in vs. 8 in light of his concerns with these false teachers.

- 8) Thinking about Vs. 9...what does this infer about the timing of receiving eternal life? How does John emphasize the depth of God’s love in vs. 10...and what is the source of true love? Vs. 11 tells us that God’s love should have a certain impact on us...what is that?

- 9) According to vs. 12 & 13...if someone truly loves the brethren...what type of relationship will they have with God, and how assured should they be in that state? Is this confidence any different for us today?

- 10) Looking at vs. 14-15...Upon what else does fellowship with God stand? And, how does John tie these two themes of fellowship together in vs. 16?

- 11) When we abide with God and he in us...what is the outcome (vs. 17). If we live in fear (a fearful life) ...what does that indicate (vs. 18). What does John give in vs. 19 as the perfect reason for loving God?

- 12) John summarizes his thoughts in vs. 20 – 21...what is the logical conclusion he comes to?

Thought Questions for Lesson 6: 1 John 4

Q1 - What key takeaways from this week's lesson of Ch. 4 will you incorporate into the summary (book review) of 1st John which you will prepare at the end of this study? What encouragement do you see?

Q2 – What does the phrase “God is Love” really mean?

- It has been said that love does not define God...rather God defines love.
- Light is a symbol for holiness in the bible. When scripture describes God as light, it is referring to His holy nature.
- God is both love and light; therefore, His love is a holy love and his holiness is expressed in love.
- All that God does expresses everything that he is...even in regard to his judgements, which are measured out in love and mercy (Lam.3:22-23).
- This is why love is a valid test (and the key identifier) of a Christian's faith.

Q3 - How is God's love for us related to our loving one another?

Q4 – John makes a number of appeals in 1Jn. 4 for brethren to love brethren...which is a theme he carries through the whole book. In fact, he ends Ch. 4 with verse 21, by saying loving one another is a commandment of God. Why were these all these admonitions to love one another so necessary in the 1st century? What is relevant about this for us today...what can we learn from this?

Lesson 7: Behavior Befitting Fellowship with God...continued (3)

(1st John 5)

At the end of chapter 4, John explained the importance of our being a people of love. Our love should not just be for God, but also for the brethren. As he closes this letter with this chapter, he continues the theme that he started in 1 John 3...providing a picture of the behavior that is befitting (appropriate, or worthy) of fellowship with the God of heaven.

- In vs. 1-5 of this chapter he emphasizes the “closeness of family” and that love for God involves both keeping his commandments, and loving His children (the “moral” and “social” tests, as we have called them). He goes back to the principal he started in 4:7...” whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” Again, knowing God is more than just awareness of who he is, it is a deep and committed relationship.
- In vs. 6-12, he underscores the importance of belief in Him and His Son and describes several “witnesses” he has provided to direct and influence our belief (the “doctrinal” test).
- He closes the book (vs. 13-21) with some exhortations and the assurance (confidence we should have) of eternal life in heaven.

Our love for God:

- 1) Immediately as he begins Ch 5 in vs. 1, John takes the reader back to his closing thought of Ch. 4:20-21. What is the proof he points to that one is “born” of God, and what will be the outcome of our love for the Father?
- 2) In Vs. 2 of Ch. 5, John makes clear that loving God and our brethren is more than just an emotional experience. What is the evidence will show our love of the brethren?
- 3) What does John mean that God’s “commands are not burdensome?” Does this mean they are never difficult? Consider Heb 11:17 as you answer...
- 4) What further proof in vs. 4 & 5 is evidence that God’s commands are not burdensome? How has faith’s power been illustrated in scripture (see...Mt. 17:20; Heb. 11:19, others...)? And finally, at what point in time does our faith bring about victory?

The “Witnesses” and/ or, the testimony of God:

Vs. 6-12 describe the “witnesses” provided to us that Jesus is the Son of God. John began his epistle with the subject of “witnesses” and his “testimony”; now he brings it to a close with the very same subject.

- 5) What is meant by the statement that Jesus came “by water and the blood?” John then emphasizes...” not with water only, but with the water and the blood.” (See. Mt. 3:15; Jn. 19:34) What error would this truth refute?

- 6) In vs. 7 he mentions there is a third witnesses in addition to the water and the blood...who is the third and how does he witness? Where else in scripture are the need for two or three witnesses discussed?

- 7) Notice the witnessing (testimony) going on here is referred to in the present tense. How do these three witnesses testify that Jesus is the Christ perpetually? Also, what error do these witnesses refute so strongly and how?

- 8) John tells us whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself...what is that testimony? (Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:9; Gal 4:6; Col. 3:16)

- 9) What’s the result if one doesn’t believe in God’s witnessing of his son? What are we saying about him...what is the impact on our salvation?

- 10) What else serves as a witness to verify God...and when is that testimony received? (See vs. 11). What did Paul have to say about this in Col. 3:3-4?

- 11) John says there is a nexus (a connection) between the promised life and the Son...how does he do that? (See also 1 Jn. 2:25 and Mk. 10:29-30).

John's concluding remarks and assurances (5:13-21):

12) John winds down this letter by reminding his readers why he wrote to them...what's his "overall" stated reason in vs. 13? (See. Also Jn. 20:30-31). In vss. 14 and 15 he gives the reader an additional source of comfort and confidence...what is that?

13) Vs. 16 & 17 are some of the more "troublesome" in this epistle to understand. What specific example does John point to in this passage where we are to apply our privilege of prayer? What kind of sin does not lead to death? What will God do when we make a petition about this type of sin? What is a "sin leading to death" and what are we not to do regarding this?

14) John closes with three things these readers (**those born of God**...and we as well) can KNOW (have assurance of). What are they? Explain.

Thought Questions:

Q1 – What are the key messages and thoughts from this chapter you plan to include in your summary of the book you will complete at the close of our study?

Q2 - Have you ever doubted or lacked confidence in a situation, even after you may have prayed about it? Can you find in scripture where Jesus acts as our example in prayer...where he displayed his complete trust when petitioning the Father? How is it he could do that?

Q3 - John ends his first epistle (Ch. 5:21) with an admonition to "abstain" / "keep" from idols. Does that seem odd given his whole thesis seems to have been about refuting the Gnostic doctrine of denying the deity and incarnation of Jesus? This is really his first mention of idol worship...or is it? Explain.

Q4 – Complete the first draft of your summary of 1st John...your "literary forward" to the book. We will share those in the next lesson as we review this first letter.