

Survey of 1 John

Let's notice first the reasons John gives for writing this epistle. This should help us to see what we need to get out of the epistle.

1. "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things **we write** to you that your (NASV—"our") joy may be full" (1:3-4).
2. "My little children, these things **I write** to you, so that you may not sin" (2:1).
3. "These things **I have written** to you concerning those who try to deceive you" (2:26). Read 2:18-22; 4:1-6 to see what these deceivers (or antichrists) were saying. Note also the passages that begin with "if we say" (1:6, 8, 10); "he who says" (2:4, 6, 9); and "if someone says" (4:20). These passages further show what John was opposing in this epistle. What they were teaching had a great effect on such basic doctrines as love, sin, and obedience.
4. "These things **I have written** to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..." (5:13).

Outline of 1 John

- A. Introduction: 1:1-4
 1. "Fellowship" is a key word. The concept of fellowship is described in various ways throughout this epistle (knowing Him; being in Him; abiding in Him; He abiding in us; being of the truth; being of God; abiding in Him and He in us).
 2. How can we know that we have fellowship with God? How can we have confidence that God hears and answers our prayers (3:22; 5:14-15)? How can we know that we have eternal life (5:13)? How can we truly have confidence in the day of judgment (2:28)?
 3. This book emphasizes three ways we can know—three conditions of fellowship.
 - a. If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - b. If we love one another.
 - c. If we walk in the light (also called keeping His commandments—2:3-4; 3:22, 24; 5:2-3, practicing righteousness—2:29; 3:7, 10, keeping His word—2:5, doing the will of God—2:17, doing those things that are pleasing in His sight—3:22, walking as He walked—2:6).
 4. You can see why the New English Bible gives the following heading for 1 John: "Recall to Fundamentals." This book deals with the fundamentals of faith, love, obedience, and sin. Again, this was necessary because of the false teaching being circulated.

Notice how each of these three conditions are emphasized in the following sections of the epistle:

B. 1:5-2:28

1. Practicing righteousness (1:5-2:6).
2. Loving one another (2:7-11).
3. Belief in Jesus as the Son of God (2:18-28).

C. 2:29-4:6

1. Practicing righteousness (2:29-3:12).
2. Loving one another (3:13-24).
3. Belief in Jesus as the Son of God (4:1-6).

D. 4:7-5:21

1. The *connection* or *relationship* between these 3 conditions of fellowship (4:7-5:5).
2. Evidence that Jesus is the Son of God (5:6-12).
3. Conclusion (5:13-21).