

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson One- 1 John 1:1-4
“The Word of Life”

Once upon a time. . . .

Remember how exciting those words used to be? They were the open door into an exciting world of make-believe, a dream world that helped you forget all the problems of childhood. Then “*pow*” You turned a corner one day, and “Once upon a time” became kid stuff. You discovered that life is a battleground, not a playground, and fairy stories were no longer meaningful. You wanted something real. The search for something real is not new. It has been going on since the beginning of history. Men have looked for reality and satisfaction in wealth, thrills, conquest, power, learning, and even in religion. There is nothing really wrong with these experiences, except that by themselves they never really satisfy. Wanting something real and finding something real are two different things. Like a child eating cotton candy at the circus, many people who expect to bite into something real end up with a mouthful of nothing. They waste priceless years on empty substitutes for reality. This is where the Apostle John’s first epistle comes in. Written centuries ago, this letter deals with a theme that is forever up-to-date: **the life that is real!** John had discovered that satisfying reality is not to be found in things or thrills, but in a Person, Jesus Christ, and the Son of God. Without wasting any time, he tells us about this “living reality” in the first paragraph of his letter. Most professing Christians seem to be interested in fellowship. They gather in fellowship halls, attend fellowship dinners (known as potlucks) and participate in well organized activities and groups. But what is it that makes genuine Christian fellowship possible? More important, how can we know that we have genuine fellowship with God? John begins this first letter with an introduction in which he presents to his readers the basis for fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, the Apostles and Christians in general.

Read 1 John 1:1-2. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. What contact did the writer and this body of believers have with the Word of life?

2. Compare the opening statement of John's letter to Peter's statement in 2 Peter 1:16. In what ways are these statements similar? What is your response when you read that John actually saw, heard, and touched Jesus?

3. What does it mean that Jesus is "The Word of Life?" How has Jesus changed your life so far?

4. How important are firsthand eyewitness testimonies, such as John's, to the second generation believers to whom he is writing? How about to you personally?

Read 1 John 1:3-4

The Greek word fellowship is *koinonia*, which means "to share in common, to partake, partner". We are partners in the light with Christ. Someone has said, "It's two fellows in the same ship!" Keep this in mind as you answer these questions.

5. John wrote so that his readers would "have fellowship" with him, with other Christians and with God. How is Christian fellowship different from merely spending time with people?

6. How is our fellowship with God related to our fellowship with other believers?

7. What blocks our fellowship with God and others?

8. What are some of the obstacles you have experienced to deepening your fellowship with others and with God?

9. What are John's reasons for announcing his message?

Pray and answer the following questions:

10. What will you do this week to better enjoy your place as a child of God?

11. How should the reality that God became a man affect your life today?

12. What specific steps will you take this week in order to deepen your fellowship with other believers?

Key Scripture

“And these things we write to you that your joy may be full” 1John 1:4

Note the following insights on the subject of joy. Take some time and look up the noted Scriptures. I have heard it said, if you keep the proper order from the word joy, that your “joy will be full” **(J)ESUS first, (O)THERS second, (Y)OURSELF last.**

Home Group Study
 Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
 Lesson Two- 1 John 1:5-10, 2:1-6
 “Walking and Talking”

Every form of life has its enemies. Insects have to watch out for hungry birds, and birds must keep an eye on hungry cats and dogs. Even human beings have to dodge automobiles and fight off germs. The life that is real also has an enemy, and we read about it in this section. This enemy is sin. Nine times in these verses John mentions sin, so the subject is obviously not unimportant. John illustrates his theme by using the contrast between light and darkness: God is light, sin is darkness. But there is another contrast here. The contrast between **saying** and **doing**. Four times John writes, “If we say” or “He who says” (1 John 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4). It is clear that our Christian life is to amount to more than just “**talk**”; we must also “**walk**,” or “**live**,” what we believe. If we are in fellowship with God, our lives will back up what our lips are saying. But if we are living in sin “walking in darkness,” then our lives will contradict what our lips are saying, making us hypocrites.

The New Testament calls the Christian life a “**walk**.” This walk begins with a step of faith when we trust Christ as our Savior. But salvation is not the end, it’s only the beginning. “Walking” involves progress, and Christians are supposed to advance in the spiritual life. Just as a child must learn to walk and must overcome many difficulties in doing so, a Christian must learn to “walk in the light.” And the basic difficulty involved here is that of sin. Of course, sin is not simply outward disobedience; sin is also inner rebellion or desire. For example, we are warned about the desires of the flesh and of the eyes and about the pride of life (1 John 2:16), all of which are sinful.

John was an eyewitness of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was a disciple, a student of Jesus. He was even one of the select group of twelve, an apostle. He had a commission from Jesus Christ to speak and to write with His authority. We are studying the words of a man who knew Jesus intimately, personally. He walked with Him, ate with Him, and listened to Him as He taught. What John has written is inspired by God and without any error at all.

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Those who claim to have fellowship with Him must walk in the light. The question is, are you walking in the light? To walk in the light is to live your life in such a way, that no matter who is watching, you never have reason to be ashamed

of what you are doing. Are you letting your light shine before men in such a way that they see good works and glorify God?

Read 1 John 1:5-7. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. What do you think the terms “light” and “darkness” represent? (*For additional reference see John 3:19-21*)

2. How can we “walk in the light”?

3. What warning signals might you experience when you begin to walk in the darkness of sin?

4. What two promises do we receive if we walk in the light as God is in the light? How does walking in the light make it easier for us to have fellowship with other believers?

Read 1 John 1:8-10. Pray and answer the following questions:

5. What happens when we confess our sins?

6. Why do we need to confess our sins if Christ has already paid for them with His blood?

7. Some people who have been forgiven by God struggle with receiving that forgiveness or forgiving themselves. Is there an area in your life where you are experiencing this struggle? Why do you think we have trouble believing and receiving God’s grace?

Read 1 John 2:1-2. Pray and answer the following questions:

8. What do you learn about John's attitude toward us by his use of the words "*My little children*"?

9. If we do sin, Jesus will speak to the Father in our defense. The Greek word describing Jesus is "*parakletos*", meaning "advocate, comforter, intercessor". What picture does this description of Jesus bring to mind?

10. What is Jesus doing right now for us? How does that truth affect the way you live?

Read 1 John 2:3-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

11. According to John, how can we tell whether we truly know Christ or merely claim to know Him?

12. Practically speaking, what does it mean to "Walk just as He walked?"

An Insightful Word by Jon Courson

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" 1 John 1:9-10. For a number of years in my own walk, this passage kept me in bondage. You see, somewhere along the line, I picked up the idea that if there was one unconfessed sin in my life, God would not hear my prayers. As a result, I would spend time at night on my knees by my bed trying to remember if there was any sin I hadn't confessed that would keep me out of fellowship. I knew I could be forgiven; I knew I could talk to the Father but only if I first confessed my sin. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it adds to

what Christ did on the Cross. And in so doing, it is heresy. How are we saved? How do we walk with God? How are we allowed to enter heaven? Cults answer, “Believe on Jesus Christ”, *or* “Believe on Jesus Christ and follow this teaching” or, “Believe on Jesus Christ and knock on door” or, “Believe on Jesus Christ and wear holy underwear...And I suggest sin falls into this category. When Jesus died on the Cross, He didn’t say, “To be completed.” He said, “*It is finished.* The price is paid. The veil is rent. The way is open. Am I suggesting we are no longer to confess our sin? Not at all. Confession of sin is a needful practice because in constantly confessing our sin to the Lord, we allow the Holy Spirit to readjust our thinking and set us free. Do I confess sin? Constantly not to earn forgiveness, but because I want to be free. And each time I confess my sin, I find myself celebrating, saying, “Thank You, Lord. As I talk with You about this sin, I’m even more amazed by Your finished work on the Cross of Calvary.”

Journaling

Compare your notes and Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts). Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Three- 1 John 2:7-11
“Something Old, Something New”

Words, like coins, can be in circulation for such a long time that they start wearing out. Unfortunately, the word love is losing its value and is being used to cover a multitude of sins.

It is really difficult to understand how a man can use the same word to express his love for his wife and his love for a good hot dog! When words are used that carelessly they really mean little or nothing at all. Like the dollar, they have been devalued.

As John describes the life that is real, he uses three words repeatedly: **life, love, and light**. In fact, he devotes three sections of his letter to the subject of Christian love. He explains that love, life, and light belong together.

In our present study (1 John 2:7-11), we learn how Christian love is affected by light and darkness. A Christian who is walking in the light (which simply means he is obeying God) is going to love his brother Christian.

John not only writes about love but also practices it. One of his favorite names for his readers is “Beloved.” He felt love for them. John is known as the “Apostle of Love” because in his Gospel and his epistles he gives such importance to this subject. Since the New Testament was written in Greek, the writers were often able to use more precise language. It is unfortunate that our English word love has so many shades of meaning. When we read in 1 John about “love,” the Greek word used is “**agape**” the word for God’s love toward man, a Christian’s love for other Christians, and God’s love for His church.

Another Greek word for love, “**philia**” used elsewhere, carries the idea of “friendship love.” The Greek word for sensual love, “**eros**,” from which we get our word erotic, is not used at all in the New Testament. In short, to love other Christians means to treat them the way God treats them, and the way God treats us. Christian love that does not show itself in action and in attitude is counterfeit.

There are other exciting truths in the rest of John’s letter, but if we fail to obey in this matter of love, the rest of the letter may well be “darkness” to us. Perhaps the best thing we can do, right now, is to search our hearts to see if we hold anything against a brother, or if someone has anything against us.

The life that is real is an honest life, and it is a life of doing, not merely saying. It is a life of active love in Christ. This means forgiveness, kindness, and long-suffering. But it also means joy and peace and victory.

Read 1 John 2:7-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. List two characteristics in this passage that will be seen in a person who is born of God.
2. What are some ways that Jesus demonstrated these two characteristics?
3. One characteristic of a person who is born of God is obedience to God's commands. List some of the commands you have read in 1 John up to this point.

Read 1 John 2:7-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

4. What did John say he was giving to his readers?
5. If the command to love is old, how is it also new?
6. John wrote of the command to love, "*which thing is true in Him and in you*" (1 John 2:8). Holiness can be seen as Christians show the love of Christ. In what ways have you seen Christians demonstrate genuine love?

Read 1 John 2:9-10. Pray and answer the following questions:

7. What does the way in which we treat other believers reveal about ourselves?

8. According to verse 9, what behavior should not characterize a child of God? Why?

9. According to verse 10, what can we do to mature in our walk with God? List some specific ways you could better love your brother or sister in Christ?

Read 1 John 2:9-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. What is the evidence that a person is wandering “in spiritual darkness”?

11. In view of the overall context of this passage, what does it mean to live in the light?

12. What particular areas of your life would you like to bring into the light? What obstacles do you face in doing so?

To abide in Christ means to be at home with Him, to dwell in Him, to have Him living in you. One characteristic of abiding in Christ is walking in love. The biblical idea of love is more than just an emotion, it involves meeting

Home Group Study
 Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
 Lesson Four- 1 John 2:12-17
 “The Love God Hates”

A group of first-graders had just completed a tour of a hospital, and the nurse who had directed them was asking for questions. Immediately a hand went up. “How come the people who work here are always washing their hands?” a little fellow asked. After the laughter had subsided, the nurse gave a wise answer: They are “always washing their hands” for two reasons: First, they love health; and second, they hate germs.

In more than one area of life, love and hate go hand in hand. A husband who loves his wife is certainly going to exercise a hatred for what would harm her. *“You that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps. 97:10). “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cleave to what is good” (Rom. 12:9).*

John’s epistle has reminded us to exercise love (1 John 2:7-11) the right kind of love. Now it warns us that there is a wrong kind of love, a love that God hates. This is love for what the Bible calls “the world.”

The New Family (vs. 12-14)

Like a loving father, John calls the saints “little children”; all of God’s children have been forgiven. But we ought to grow in the Lord, becoming strong young men and women in the faith and ultimately spiritual “fathers and mothers.”

The New Danger (vs. 15-17)

There is conflict between love for the Father and love for the world. By “the world” John means all that belongs to this life that is opposed to Christ. It is Satan’s system, society opposed to God and taking the place of God. If we love the world, we lose the love of the Father and cease to do His will. Anything in our lives that dulls our love for spiritual things or that makes it easy for us to sin is worldly and must be put away. John mentions three specific problems: the lust (desires) of the flesh, the lust (desires) of the eyes, and the pride of life. Is this not what the people of the world live for? But living for the world means losing everything in time, because the world is passing away. Lot suffered such loss. But if we live for God, we will abide

forever. There can be no true fellowship without love. Unless we love God and God's children, we cannot walk in the light and fellowship with God.

Read 1 John 2:12-17. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. After you became a believer, how long did it take you to become aware of the Spiritual battle in regards to, the world, the flesh and the devil. Explain?

2. Which of these three foes has proven to be the most challenging? Why?

Read 1 John 2:12-14. Pray and answer the following questions:

3. Why did John write to "the little children," "the fathers," "the young men"?

4. How are you encouraged by what John has to say to each of these groups of people?

5. What specific strengths and resources does John remind us that we have as children of God?

Read 1 John 2:15. Pray and answer the following questions:

6. What is the first reason we are urged not to love the world?

7. How does this realization lessen the appetite for worldly things in your life?

Read 1 John 2:17. Pray and answer the following questions:

8. What can we do to keep God, not the temptations of the world, as the focus of our life?

9. How can we enjoy life and the blessings God gives us and yet follow the command not to love the world?

10. How does our society encourage: The lust of the flesh? The lust of the eyes? The pride of life?

11. What do these following verses reveal about the world? (John 17:14-15, Romans 12:2, Titus 2:12, James 4:4)

12. Think of ways that the world tries to program our minds today. In what practical ways can we renew our minds?

How do Believers Overcome the Ways of the World?

1. They overcome by drawing near God and praying and asking for wisdom. (*James 1:5, 2 Peter 2:9*).

2. They overcome by using God's Word, quoting it over and over in their minds, to conquer the temptation. (*Luke 4:8*).

3. They overcome by learning and knowing that God allows temptation to teach endurance. (*James 1:2-3*).

4. They overcome by not yielding their bodily members to sin. (*Romans 6:13*).

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Five - 1 John 2:18-29
“Truth or Consequences”

“It makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you are sincere!”

That statement expresses the personal philosophy of many people today, but it is doubtful whether most of those who make it have really thought it through. Is “sincerity” the magic ingredient that makes something true? If so, then you ought to be able to apply it to any area of life, and not only to religion.

A nurse in a city hospital gives some medicine to a patient, and the patient becomes violently ill. The nurse is sincere but the medicine is wrong, and the patient almost dies.

A man hears noises in the house one night and decides a burglar is at work. He gets his gun and shoots the “burglar,” who turns out to be his daughter! Unable to sleep, she has gotten up for a bite to eat. She ends up the victim of her father’s “sincerity.”

It takes more than “sincerity” to make something true. You see there are many that are sincere, but unfortunately they are sincerely wrong. Faith in a lie will always cause serious consequences; faith in the truth is never misplaced. It does make a difference what a man believes! If a man wants to drive from Chicago to New York, no amount of sincerity will get him there if the highway is taking him to Los Angeles. A person who is real builds his life on truth, not superstition or lies. It is impossible to live a real life by believing lies.

God has warned the church family (“little children”) about the conflict between light and darkness (1 John 1:1-2:6) and between love and hatred (1 John 2:7-17). Now He warns them about a third conflict: the conflict between truth and error. It is not enough for a believer to walk in the light and to walk in love; he must also walk in truth. The issue is “truth or consequences”!

The main lesson is clear: **If Christians desire to have fellowship with Christ, they must obey the Word, love God’s people, and believe the truth.** Whenever sin enters, the Christian must immediately confess it and claim God’s forgiveness. We must spend time in the Word, learning the

truth and letting the truth take hold of the inner person. **It is not enough to talk about the Christian life; we must practice it.**

Read 1 John 2:18-19. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. All the New Testament authors viewed the first coming of Christ as the event that marked the beginning of the end, “the last hour.” What are some signs of the last hour?
2. Where did these antichrists (False Teachers) come from? What antichrists (False Teachers) are among us today?
3. According to verse 19, when someone claims to be a Christian then walks away from the faith, was he ever a Christian to begin with? Why would a person walk away from their faith?

Read 1 John 2:20-21. Pray and answer the following questions:

4. What did the readers of 1 John know?
5. Truth is the most effective defense against an onslaught of error. What is the “anointing” that gives us such knowledge of the truth?
6. What does “the Holy Spirit has come upon you” mean? How can you rely upon Him when dealing with antichrists (False Teachers)?

Read 1 John 1:22-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

7. Why do you think people are attracted to false teachers and their false teachings?

8. Some people might say to you, “I don’t believe as you do about Jesus, but I believe the same thing about God.” Why would John say that this is an impossible statement?

9. Why is it so important for Christians to review the basics of the Christian faith? What resources do we have as Christians that might help us know the truth better?

Read 1 John 2:25-27. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. What does the Bible reveal about eternal life? (See Matthew 25:46; John 10:28; Titus 1:2)

11. Why does John tell us to “abide” (Old English word signifying progressively to await, remain, lodge, sojourn, dwell, continue, and endure) in Christ and His Holy Spirit? What advice do you think John would give you as to how to do this?

Read 1 John 2:28-29. Pray and answer the following questions:

12. How can God’s children have “confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”?

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Six - 1 John 3:1-10
“The Pretenders”

The United States Treasury Department has a special group of men whose job is to track down counterfeiters. Naturally, these men need to know a counterfeit bill when they see it. How do they learn to identify fake bills?

Oddly enough, they are not trained by spending hours examining counterfeit money. Rather, they study **the real thing**. They become so familiar with authentic bills that they can spot a counterfeit by looking at it or, often, simply by feeling it.

This is the approach in 1 John 3, which warns us that in today’s world there are counterfeit Christians, “children of the devil” (1 John 3:10). But instead of listing the evil characteristics of Satan’s children, the Scripture gives us a clear description of God’s children. The contrast between the two is obvious.

The difference is that a true Christian knows God. A counterfeit Christian may talk about God and get involved in “religious activities,” but he does not really know God. The person who has been “born of God” through faith in Christ knows God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And because he knows them, he lives a life of obedience: he does not practice sin.

The key verse of this chapter is (1 John 3:10). A true child of God practices righteousness and loves other Christians despite differences. 1 John 3:1-10 deals with the first topic, and 1 John 3:11-24 takes up the second.

Read 1 John 3:1-3. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. The New Testament gives us two yardsticks of measuring God’s love. The first is the cross (Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:8-10), the second is the gift of sonship. How does the realization that we are God’s children help us grasp the greatness of His love for us?

2. What qualities would you expect to find in a person who claims to be a child of God? Would you expect perfection? Why or why not?

3. What does it mean to continue in Christ?

4. How does the hope of Christ's appearing serve as a purifying influence in your life? How should this hope affect the way you live?

Read 1 John 3:4-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

5. How does John's definition of sin in 3:4 compare with some of the viewpoints people have today?

6. What do verses 4-6 tell us about the seriousness of sin?

7. All people sin. How then does the life of a true believer differ from that of an unbeliever?

Read 1 John 3:7-10. Pray and answer the following questions:

8. Who are the children of God and the children of the Devil?

9. What did John say about the person who does what is sinful?

10. What evidence of struggle against sin is there in your:

a. Prayer life?

b. Interactions with your family?

c. Work Habits?

d. Use of free time?

11. What is the difference between living perfectly and living righteously?

12. What are some things you might need to change in your life to better reflect that you truly are born of God?

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Seven- 1 John 3:11-24
“Love One Another”

John’s letter has been compared to a spiral staircase because he keeps returning to the same three topics: love, obedience, and truth. Though these themes reappear, it is not true that they are repetitious. Each time we return to a topic, we look at it from a different point of view and are taken more deeply into it.

We have already learned about our love for other believer’s “the brethren” (1 John 2:7-11), but the emphasis in 1 John 2 was on fellowship. A believer who is “walking in the light” will evidence that fact by loving the brethren. In our present section, the emphasis is on his relationship with other believers.

Christians love one another because they have all been born of God, which makes them all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Obedience and love are both evidences of son ship and brotherhood. We have been reminded that a true child of God practices righteousness (1 John 3:1-10), and now we shall look into the matter of love for the brethren (1 John 3:11-24).

At this point in his letter John returned to the topic of love, specifically love for other Christians. By our love for others, we know that we belong to God. And what is love? Jesus gave us a standard, serving others. It’s easy to talk about love and to say we love certain people. But the true test of love is how we act toward them, working hard to meet their needs, to serve them, and to help them, even at our own expense. “To show them God’s love with skin on it!”

Read 1 John 3:11-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. In the following section write out what “we know”.

a. We know (3:15) _____

b. We know (3:16) _____

c. We know (3:19) _____

d. We know (3:24) _____

Read 1 John 3:11-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

2. What message had the readers of 1 John heard from the beginning?

3. What are some practical ways in which we can “love one another?”

4. How does the world show its hate for those who believe in Jesus? How have you been persecuted for your faith? How should Christian respond to spiritual warfare?

5. According to verses 11-15, why is our love for fellow Christians so basic to our assurance of eternal life?

Read 1 John 3:16-18. Pray and answer the following questions:

6. In what practical ways can we “lay down our lives for our brethren?”
7. How does John define love in verses 16-18? Give some specific examples of how this kind of love is seen in your daily walk.
8. What is the difference between, “love in word or in tongue” and “in deed and in truth”?
9. Why is it easier to love with words rather than actions?

Read 1 John 3:19-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. What promises are given in these verses? What are the conditions of those promises?
11. In what sense can we receive anything we request from God? (3:22) How should this truth affect your prayer life?
12. How do we know that God lives in us? How do other people know that God lives in you?

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts) Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

Note these different translations of 1 John 3:18. Spend some time praying in what God is showing you.

1 John 3:18 *“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth”*. NKJV

1 John 3:18 *“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth”*. NIV

1 John 3:18 *“Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.”* TLB

1 John 3:18 *“My children, let us love not merely in theory or in words, let us love in sincerity and in practice”*. J.B. Phillips

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
Lesson Eight – 1 John 4:1-16
“Getting to the Bottom of Love”

For the third time, we are considering the subject of love! This does not mean John has run out of ideas and has to repeat himself. It means that the Holy Spirit, who inspired John, presents the subject once more, from a deeper point of view.

First, love for the brethren has been shown as proof of fellowship with God (1 John 2:7-11), than it has been presented as proof of sonship (1 John 3:10-14). In the earlier passage, love for the brethren is a matter of light and darkness. Second it is as a matter of life or death.

In 1 John 4:7-16, we get down to the very foundation of the matter. Here we discover why love is an important part of the life that is real. Love is a valid test of our fellowship and our sonship because “God is love.” Love is part of every being and nature of God. If we are united to God through faith in Christ, we share His nature. And since His nature is love, love is the test of the reality of our spiritual life.

A navigator depends on a compass to help him determine his course. But why a compass? Because it shows him the proper direction. And why does the compass point north? Because it is so constituted that it responds to the magnetic field that is part of the earth’s makeup. The compass is responsive to the nature of the earth.

So it is with Christian love. The nature of God is love. And a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God’s nature. As a compass naturally points north, a believer will naturally practice love because love is the nature of God. This love will not be a forced response, it will be a natural one. A believer’s love for the brethren will be proof of his sonship and fellowship.

Read 1 John 4:1-4. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Why is there such a great need for Christians to be discerning? In what ways is this true for today?

2. What test does John give us for determining whether a person's teaching is from "the Spirit of God?"

3. What encouragement does John give in verse 4? How has this verse been a help in your life?

Read 1 John 4:5-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

4. What does verse 5 tell us about the spirits that are from the world? Give some examples of such spirits.

5. How should a Christian respond to someone who is teaching false ideas about Christ?

6. As you talk to friends, watch TV, surf the web, read books or magazines, what can you do to "test the spirits?"

Read 1 John 4:7-10. Pray and answer the following questions:

7. What is the difference between the world's idea of love and God's love?

8. How does the cross of Christ demonstrate the manner in which “God so loved us?”

9. How does God use Christians to show his love to the world?

Read 1 John 4:11-16. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. In this passage John emphasizes how important it is for believers to continually live out godly love. According to verses 8, 11, 12 why should Christians show godly love?

11. Verse 12 states that no one has physically seen God. In what ways can the world see God in us?

12. What three assurances does John give for determining that “*we live in Him and He in us*” (vs.13-16)?

Do we really love God? This is the test, the one sure way to measure whether or not we love God: Do we really love our neighbors, all of our fellow man? No matter who they are, do we love them? If we love our fellow man, this proves that we love God. Loving one another proves four things.

a. Loving one another proves that we are born of God and know God (vs.7-8).

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Nine - 1 John 4:17-5:5
“Love, Honor and Obey”

The prospective bridegroom was extremely nervous as he and his fiancée were discussing their wedding plans with their pastor. “I’d like to see a copy of the wedding vows,” the young man said; and the pastor handed him the service. He read it carefully, handed it back, and said, “That won’t do! There’s nothing written in there about her obeying me!” His fiancée smiled, took his hand, and said, “Honey, the word obey doesn’t have to be written in a book. It’s already written in love in my heart.”

This is the truth in view in this portion of 1 John. Up to this point, the emphasis has been on Christians loving one another; but now we turn to a deeper, and more important topic: a believer’s love for the Father. We cannot love our neighbor or our brother unless we love our Heavenly Father. We must first love God with all our hearts; then we can love our neighbor as ourselves.

The key word in this section is perfect. God wants to perfect in us His love for us and our love for Him. The word perfect carries the idea of maturity and completeness. A believer is not only to grow in grace and knowledge, but he is also to grow in his love for the Father. He does this in response to the Father’s love for him.

How much does God love us? Enough to send His Son to die for us. He loves His children in the same way as He loves Christ. And Jesus tells us that the Father wants the love with which He loved the Son to be in His children. In other words, the Christian life is to be a daily experience of growing in the love of God. It involves a Christian’s coming to know his Heavenly Father in a much deeper way as he grows in love.

Read 1 John 4:17-18. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. How should an awareness of God's love at work in our lives be seen?
2. What insights does verse 18 give us into why we sometimes fear God and others?
3. Explain the relationship between love and fear (See verse 18). Give some examples that prove the truth of this verse.

Read 1 John 4:19-21. Pray and answer the following questions:

4. What naturally follows God's love for us?
5. What naturally follows our love for God?
6. What will hinder, and even prevent us from loving God?

Read 1 John 5:1-2. Pray and answer the following questions:

7. What does it mean to be born of God?

8. How do you know that you are a child of God?

9. A person who is a believer shows faith, love and obedience. Based on our passage, explain how each of these leads to the next and than back again to faith. Next explain how you have experienced this cycle in your own life?

Read 1 John 5:3-5. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. Why is obedience to God's commandments not burdensome for believers?

11. How than can we explain the struggle we sometimes have, to obey?

12. What give us the power to overcome the world? Give an everyday example of how this might help deliver you from the temptation of sin.

13. How does faith (trusting God) make life easier?

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Ten - 1 John 5:6-21
“What Do You Know for Sure?”

“Nothing is certain but death and taxes.” Benjamin Franklin wrote those words in 1789. Of course, a wise man like Franklin knew that many other things are also certain. The Christian also knows that there are many certainties. Of spiritual truth, Christians are not afraid to say, “We know!” In fact, the word know occurs thirty-nine times in John’s brief letter, eight times in this closing chapter.

Man has a deep desire for certainty, and he will even experiment in the occult in his effort to find out something for sure. A businessman having dinner with his pastor said to him, “Do you see those offices across the street? In them sit some of the most influential business leaders in this town. Many of them used to come over here regularly to consult a fortune-teller. She isn’t here anymore, but a few years ago you could count up the millions of dollars in this room as men waited to consult her.”

The life that is real is built on the divine certainties that are found in Jesus. The world may accuse the Christian of being proud and narrow, but this does not keep him from saying, “I know!” Obedience, love, and truth are the key thoughts in this epistle. They are the evidence of salvation and the essentials of fellowship, the secret of true and abiding life.

Read 1 John 5:6-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. How did Jesus Christ come?

2. Why does the Spirit testify?

3. What does it mean that Jesus Christ “was revealed as God’s Son by His baptism in water and by shedding His blood?” Why is this important to your Christian faith?

In this next section, John clears up some of our confusion about faith. First and foremost, overcoming faith is centered in a correct understanding of who Christ is. In the following verses he once again sets before us the absolute necessity of believing the truth about God's Son for all who claim to be believers.

Read 1 John 1 5:9-12. Pray and answer the following questions

4. Why is God's testimony greater than man's testimony?
5. What do we have if we have Christ in us?
6. What does the promise of eternal life mean to you?

John concluded his letter with a clear statement about prayer. God wants to work through us, and one of the ways He does this is through our prayers. Of course, the purpose of prayer is to shape our will to His, not His will to ours. As we pray for His will to be done, He listens and responds to our requests. And we have assurance that when we ask for His will, particularly in the lives of other Christians, He will grant what we ask. Our Christian brothers and sisters need us to intercede for them. Every need in a fellow Christian's life is an occasion to pray.

Read 1 John 5:13-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

7. Verse 13 is a summary statement of the entire letter of 1 John. What are those "things" that assure you of your own salvation?
8. What promises does John give concerning prayer in verses 14-15? What condition is attached to this promise? What other conditions did he give in 1 John 3:22?

9. How is praying for others an important part of loving them?

Do we really believe in God? Are we living free of sin or not? If we live in sin, it is clear proof we do not believe in God. But if we live in righteousness, live a life that is free of sin, then this is clear proof that we do believe in God. The person who wants to be acceptable to God must live a life of righteousness. He must live for God. No person should ever think that he can live a life of sin and be acceptable to God. The test of whether or not we believe God is the test of sin: Are we living in sin or not? As John brings this letter to a close, he will discuss the great subject of how to live free of sin.

Read 1 John 5:16-21. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. What should we do when we see a Christian sin? Why? What do you think John meant by “sin that leads to death?”

11. In verse 13, John said we can “know” that we have eternal life. Here in verses 18-21 John says “we know” three more times. What truths can “we know” for certain in verses 18, 19 and 20?

12. How real to you are the “we knows” of verses 18-20? Record a few reasons for the certainty you have about them.

13. John told us all the things that we “can know” that are real. In this section he tells us to keep ourselves from illusions, and the idols of the world. List some of the illusions, lies, or idols that daily try to pull you away from the truths of God’s Word.

Home Group Study
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
Lesson Eleven – 2 John
“A Faithful Family”

The apostate teachers not only invaded the churches, but they also tried to influence Christian homes. Titus faced this problem in Crete (Titus 1:10-11) and Timothy faced it in Ephesus (2 Tim. 3:6). **As goes the home, so goes the church and the nation; thus the family is an important target in Satan’s war against truth.**

This brief letter was written to a godly mother and her children. Some Bible students have concluded that “the elect lady” refers to a local church and that “her children” are the believer’s fellowshipping in the church. “Thy elect sister” (2 John 13) would then refer to a sister church that was sending Christian greetings.

While it is true that John does address a group in this letter, it is also true that he addresses an individual. Perhaps the solution is that a Christian assembly was meeting in this home, along with the family of the “elect lady,” so that John had both the family and the congregation in mind. He was concerned that this godly woman not permit anything false to come into her house or into the assembly.

The leading feelings in this little epistle are those of friendship and joy, even though these are mixed with concern and warning. There are times when we must speak the truth generally and let the Holy Spirit make application specifically. But there are also times when, like John, we must speak the truth to people individually and personally. If you and I are to keep our homes true to Christ, then we must have the same characteristics as this family to which John wrote. The lessons seen in 2 John has great application to us congregationally, as families, and as individuals.

Read 2 John 1:1-3. Pray and answer the following questions:

2 John was written to warn believers about false teachers who were spreading anti-Christian propaganda in the first century. In this letter John was talking about specific people in a specific culture. But twenty centuries later John’s warning is still relevant, because false teachers are still with us.

And because of the advances in mass media, everyone can hear their lies. This study challenges us to be discerning and careful about what we allow to come in our minds, hearts and homes.

1. Circle the word “truth” whenever it is found in this passage. Why do you think John began this letter with the emphasis on truth? Do you think John would be as concerned about us today? Explain your answer.

2. In this brief address and greeting, notice how many times “truth” and “love” are mentioned together. What does it mean to love someone “in the truth”?

3. In what way does truth live in us?

Read 2 John 1:4-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

There are two equally extreme misconceptions many people have concerning what it means to be a Christian or to live the Christian life. One view says, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and loving.” The other one says, “It doesn’t matter how you live as long as you believe in the truth.” The reason why both views are wrong is because the Word of God binds both truth and love together. They are friends not enemies.

4. In verse 4 what gave John great joy?

5. What is the difference between “walking” in the truth and simply “knowing it”?

6. John placed a strong emphasis on truth in this letter. What advantages are there to living according to an absolute standard of truth?

Read 2 John 1:7-9. Pray and answer the following questions:

The traveling preachers in John's day relied on the hospitality of Christians for food and shelter. But John warned his readers not to open their homes to just any person claiming to be a Christian teacher. In fact, false teachers deserved no acceptance or hospitality at all. While we demonstrate our love to God by loving one another, we also demonstrate it by rejecting teachers who misrepresent Him and lead people astray. Accepting and welcoming false teachers only ignores their false teaching. Out of love for God and others who may be influenced by false teachers, we must be careful not to support those who teach wrong ideas about God and the Christian life.

7. Why are false teachers so dangerous?

8. What happens when Christians follow and support false teachers?

9. What would you do if a close friend became a member of a cult or began to follow a false teacher?

Read 2 John 1:10-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. How are believers to treat false teachers?

11. How can Christians be loving and kind while refusing to accept false teachers?

12. What specific changes will you make in your life as a result of John's warning in his second letter?

Home Group Study
 Books of 1, 2 and 3 John
“Love Letters from the Father”
 Lesson Twelve – 3 John
 “It’s the Truth”

The battle for truth and against apostasy is fought not only in the home (2 John) but especially in the local church; and that is where 3 John comes in. This little letter (the shortest New Testament epistle in the original Greek) gives us a glimpse into an early assembly, its people, and its problems. As you read this brief letter, you find yourself saying, “Times have not changed very much!” We have similar people and problems today!

One of the key words in this letter is witness or “testified.” It means not only the words that we say but the lives that we live. Each Christian is a witness, either a good one or a bad one. We are either helping the truth (3 John 1:8) or hindering it.

This letter was addressed to Gaius, one of the leaders of the assembly. But John also discussed two other men in these verses, Diotrephes and Demetrius. Wherever there are people, there are problems, and the potential for solving problems. Each of us must honestly face the question, “Am I a part of the problem or a part of the answer?”

Consider the three men involved in this letter and note the kinds of Christians they were:

Gaius

How we thank God for church members like Gaius. John uses the word “beloved” four times when referring to him. Verse 2 suggests that Gaius may not have been in good health or that he was just recovering from an illness. But this we know: he had a healthy spiritual life. Whatever the condition of the outer man, the inner man was prospering.

Diotrephes

This is the kind of church member we can do without. He wanted to be the “boss” of the church; he loved to have preeminence and be first in everything. Colossians 1:18 says that Christ alone deserves preeminence. “He must increase, I must decrease,” is the way John the Baptist put it (John 3:30).

Demetrius

How refreshing to turn from Diotrephes to Demetrius! He was the kind of person others could follow. He had a good report from the saints and from the Word itself. You could test his life by the Bible, and it passed the test.

Churches today need more members like Gaius and Demetrius, saints who love the Bible, the church family, and lost souls. We can do without those like Diotrephes!

Read 3 John 1:1-4. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Why must our love for fellow Christians be bound by the bond of truth? How have you seen this to be true in your own experience?

2. Why is Gaius a good example for us to follow in the Christian life?

3. What does it mean for us to be, “walking in the truth”?

Read 3 John 1:5-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

Imagine living in a world with no bed and breakfast homes, no hotels or motels. If traveling evangelists and teachers were to come to your town, you would have the privilege of inviting them into your home for the night and giving them supplies for their journey. Such was the world of John and his readers. Their hospitality was one of the clearest testimonies of their love for the brethren and obedience to God.

4. According to verse 6, how should we treat traveling missionaries?

5. In what ways do you think the world’s idea of hospitality differs from Christian hospitality? Are entertaining and hospitality the same thing? Explain.

6. The Greek word that has been translated “hospitality” in the New Testament means “lover of hospitality,” and “to entertain strangers.” What do these definitions teach you about God’s perspective of hospitality?

Read 3 John 1:9-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

John wrote this letter to his beloved friend Gaius because the members of Gaius’s church were refusing to show hospitality to some of the missionaries, such as godly Demetrius. The root of this problem was Diotrophes, a self appointed leader who dominated the church and refused to welcome the traveling brothers.

7. How was Diotrophes a danger to the church? What examples of this have you seen in the church today?

8. What steps should be taken against people like Diotrophes?

9. In what areas of your life do you need to do better at “imitating good” rather than evil?

Read 3 John 1:12-14. Pray and answer the following questions:

The problem in the church was severe, so severe that John planned to visit the church and to visit it soon. He would write no more. He had much to say to Gaius and the believers, but he needed to say it face to face, not in a letter.

10. What was commendable about Demetrius?

11. In contrast to Diotrophes, Demetrius had “a good testimony from all.” If those who know you best were asked about your love and hospitality, what might they say?

