

## **LESSON 1**

### **The Big Picture**

During the early days of the Church—following Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, the resurrection and ascension—Peter and Paul engaged themselves in taking the gospel to the ends of the world as it was known to them at that time. Their efforts were not carried out without opposition, however, especially among the Jewish hierarchy and the Roman government. As the followers of The Way multiplied in numbers and began to present a threat to “the establishment” of that day, resistance increased and the new Christians began to find themselves persecuted in a number of different ways.

We know from observing history that persecution has a way of polarizing the beliefs of a people, moving the “lukewarms” off dead-center and towards either extreme. Those with strong faith tend to cling to their beliefs with more determination than ever; those with lesser faith fall away entirely, or at the very least turn to a more palatable gospel that puts them at lesser risk from without.

Times of opposition then tend to be feeding fields for false teachers. Various alternative “faiths” that might provide an easier and safer position in the community are brought along side the true gospel. These “new” doctrines gradually eat away at the real thing; they are not easily detected because they employ all the right “buzz words” and contain just enough truth to make them convincing to those with limited discernment. Only those who are strongly versed in the entire counsel of God’s Word are equipped to recognize truth and defend themselves against the imitation.

The book of First John is written in such a time of opposition and the false teaching that accompanied that opposition.

#### **I. KEY WORDS**

1. Before we begin any Bible study, we must be sure that we are well girded in prayer. Take a moment now to ask God for the wisdom that will empower you to discern the truth as you study. Pray for protection from the evil one as God makes His wisdom available to you. Turn over to Him all your thoughts, feelings, and intellectual biases and ask Him to be your teacher.
  
2. Read through the entire First Epistle of John in one sitting at least twice before you begin working the lesson. As you read, jot down any questions you might have, as well as points of interest that grab your attention. Either list these on a separate sheet of paper or mark them in the text with an appropriate notation. For questions, I use three question marks (??); for points of interest, three exclamation points (!!!); but you should use any markings that make sense to you and will be identifiable in your study later.

3. Read through the epistle a third time; this time marking each of the following key words with an icon, highlight or underline in its own unique color. Be sure to include all forms of the word as well as its pronouns and synonyms.

- the life, eternal life
- abide(s)
- the devil, the evil one
- know
- love
- commandment(s)
- born of God/Him
- from the beginning

## II. HISTORICAL SETTING

1. There are no specific historical events mentioned in the text that would aid us in dating the writing of this book. We can, however, find clues as to what was going on in the Christian community at the time the letter was written. Read the following passages and record what *seems* to be happening in the background that would prompt John to use the kind of language he chooses to use in each passage.

- 1 John 1:1-2— [Focus first on what the verses tell you about Jesus, not the author. If the author is stressing these facts about Jesus, what does that tell you about what is probably being taught by others?]
  
- 1 John 1:1-2— [Now focus on what the same verses tell you about the author. What does knowing this tell you about the times in which he is writing?]
  
- 1 John 1:3—
  
  
- 1 John 1:5a—



2. Read the following passages from the gospel of John and note any similarities with the First Epistle of John. Be sure to include chapter and verse for the corresponding passage in 1 John.
  - John 1:1—
  
  - John 3:16—
  
  - John 1:4-5; 8:12—
  
  - John 14:15; 14:21; 15:10—
  
  - John 3:1-7—
  
  - John 15:1-10—
  
3. Also read **Revelation 1:1-3** and note any similar thoughts or teachings from 1 John.
  
4. **[Optional]** In addition to the references above, note any other similarities you can think of between the gospel of John, Revelation and the epistle of First John.
  
  
5. Based on your observations at this point in your study and ignoring the name man has given to the book, what thoughts do you have regarding who the author of the epistle of 1 John might be?

#### **IV. RECIPIENTS**

1. Read the following verses in 1 John and record what each tells you about the recipients of this letter.

- 1 John 2:1—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 2:14-14; 2:21—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 2:26—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 2:27—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 3:1-2
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 3:13-14—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 4:1—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 4:4—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 5:13—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 1 John 5:19—

- 1 John 5:20—
2. Review everything you learn from these references concerning the recipients of the letter and write a one sentence summary of who the recipient is.

## **V. THEME, PURPOSE, AND TITLE OF BOOK**

1. Mark every “I have written” or “I write” statement from the author in its own color highlighter.
2. Read though these statements and try to reduce all of them to one or two simplified statements.
  
3. [Optional] Now, using your statements in #2 above, and considering the circumstances you felt were taking place at the time of the writing of this letter, what would you say was the author’s purpose in writing? We will spend time on this in class, so do not worry if you do not see the author’s purpose clearly at this time. It will become plainer as we study the book.
4. [Optional] What do you see as the author’s theme in writing this letter; i.e., what is the main topic of his letter?
  
5. Considering the purpose and theme, determine the title you would give the book and record it on the chart “The Big Picture” found in the appendix at the back of the workbook.

## **VI. WRAPPING IT UP**

The Overview of a book of the Bible is the first step in the inductive process. When we use inductive reasoning (moving from the particular to the general) to interpret the Bible, we must first establish the over-all framework of the book. This insures that we do not carry the conclusions we draw further than God intended. We’re able to establish such boundaries by stepping back and looking at the book as a whole. Our objective is to determine the over-all theme of the book and why it was written in the first place.

This is an extremely important step on the road to accurate interpretation. While we may be tempted to rush through the process or ignore it altogether, taking the time to

do this right will reap great benefits in the long haul—AND help insure more accurate interpretation of the Word of God.



## LESSON 2

### Chapter 1 Overview

The author wrote this letter to believers of his day to give them the assurance of their eternal life. As a result of the spread of Christianity into more remote Gentile territories, the Gospel for some was being diluted with worldly philosophies and false teaching. The ground was therefore quite fertile for the introduction of alternative faiths and a straying of the believers from The Way.

In this first chapter of John's letter, the author reminds his readers that Jesus is real—He has been seen with the eyes, touched by hands, and heard by the ears of the people. A prevailing teaching of the day concerned the separation of the flesh which was evil and the spirit which was good. One of the popular beliefs of the day, then, was that Jesus (as Spirit) could not possibly dwell in human form; that He had merely a phantom body that only *seemed* to be real. John begins his letter by refuting this teaching, before then giving us the message that Jesus gave him to give.

In this lesson, we will overview the chapter and then begin a more in-depth look into Chapter 1. More than one lesson will be devoted to this chapter.

#### I. THE OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 1

1. Begin with prayer and then read through Chapter 1 several times before attempting the questions that follow. The chapter is only ten verses, so you should have no trouble finding time to read the entire chapter in one sitting.
2. Keeping in mind both the theme and purpose of the book (recorded on chart, “The Big Picture”), write a theme for Chapter 1 and record it at the top of the WordSheet for Chapter 1. Indicate also the verse(s) from which you base your idea of what the theme is.
3. Read Chapter 1 one more time and this time mark the following key words with its own an icon, highlight or underline color. Include pronouns and synonyms. After you have finished marking the key words, in the right-hand margin near the first usage of each key word, list everything you learn about that word.
  - fellowship
  - light [Also mark it in 2:8, 9, 10]
  - sin(s), sinned
4. Now mark every reference to God and Jesus with their own distinctive icon, underline or highlight color. Then, using the chart “What John Teaches about Jesus,” list everything you learn about Jesus from Chapter 1.

5. Read the ten verses again and this time mark each contrast. Here's a good way to mark contrasts but you can use whatever method works for you:
  - underline each side of the contrast with one color (use this same color underline for all contrasts you mark in the future)
  - Indicate that it's a contrast by the term "vs." somewhere above the line and between the two sides of the contrast.
  - Draw an arrow from the "vs." to one side of the contrast; and then another arrow from the "vs." to the other side of the contrast.

## II. WORD STUDIES

1. Some words we use without stopping to contemplate the full extent of their meaning. Some words are so important we cannot afford NOT to understand the full extent of their meaning if we want to understand what the passage is all about. *Eternal*—as in *eternal life*—is one such word. Look up the meaning of the Greek word translated *eternal* in 1 John 1:2 and record your findings.
  
2. Now look up the word *eternal* in an English dictionary and record its definition.
  
3. In addition to *eternal* above, determine the Greek words translated in the following manner and record what you learn about each.
  - fellowship (vv.3, 6, 7)—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - sin(s) [noun] (vv.7, 8, 9)—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - sinned [verb] (v.10)—



- John 6:39—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - John 6:50-53—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - John 11:26—
4. The Apostle Paul also uses the phrase in such a way that its definition becomes apparent. Look up Romans 6:22-23 and record what “eternal life” means in that context.

#### **IV. THAT YOUR JOY MIGHT BE COMPLETE**

1. **[Optional]** If you have access to a King James Version of the Bible (KJV), read 1 John 1:4 in that particular translation and copy the verse in the space provided below.
  - Compare this with the NASB (printed out in the WordSheets in the Appendix of your workbook.) What difference do you note?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - If you have The Complete Word Study New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates, look up the reference and check the definition of the Greek word translated “your.”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What would you understand v.4 to say if the correct translation is “*your* joy”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What about if it is “*our* joy”?

4. What does the phrase “these things” that the author writes about mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Compare this with the author’s stated purpose in 1 John 5:13

## **V. WRAPPING IT UP**

Because John’s primary purpose in writing this letter is to give his readers reason to know that they know that they know Jesus (and thereby can be assured of their salvation), we can expect to see many “proof statements” in this book. In other words, the author will be saying “If you have this, or if you do this, then you know that you are saved.” The reader who has or does what John is talking about can know without a doubt that he indeed has eternal life.

The first of such proof statements are found in Chapter 1. Identify these statements in Chapter 1 and record them on the chart “How We Know that We Know Him” found in the Appendix. We will continue building this chart as we progress through the book.

These are not blatant statements; you may have to reason your way through the text in order to see them. But give it a try. What is difficult for you now may become quite easy by the time the course is completed.



## LESSON 3

### Chapter 1—God Is Our Light

Ever since the days when Jesus walked among us on the face of this earth, false teachers have been trying to get us to believe many things about this Messiah—that He was just a man, that He was just a spirit, that what the Bible says about Him didn't actually happen at all; there was no virgin birth, no death and resurrection, no ascension and certainly no second coming. The list goes on and on. The lies expand and are substituted for Truth.

The New Testament then is filled with proofs of Jesus' existence, His deity and His humanity. As we read John's First Epistle, we are immediately hit squarely in the face with an argument of Truth. In the opening verses of the book, John adamantly avows that he has seen Jesus Christ the Son with his own eyes, he has beheld Him and touched Him with his own hands, he has heard His teachings with his own ears. John wants us to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus, the Son of God, was a real live human being that walked and talked among us—right here on planet earth. He also wants us to know that Jesus of Nazareth was not only all man; but He was all God as well.

It doesn't take much insight to quickly discern that obviously there is something going on in the background as John writes this letter. The author is addressing the false teachings that abound in his day. That's what makes this book so relevant today; we are being pounded on a daily basis with many of the same arguments: there was no virgin birth, no death and resurrection, no ascension and certainly no second coming, to name a few. So although John addresses his remarks to the believers of that day, we know that he was talking with you and me as well today.

#### I. JOHN'S FIRST "I WRITE" STATEMENT

1. Begin your study session with prayer, asking God to illumine your heart with the truths He desires for you to learn from the lesson. Keep in mind that Our Heavenly Father sent the Holy Spirit to be our teacher. Our illumination therefore must come from Him rather than our own efforts.
2. Read 1 John 1:1-10 at least twice before undertaking the questions in this lesson.
3. In the space provided below, record the first "I write" statement John makes in the book. [NOTE: The author actually uses "we" instead of "I" in this chapter, but for the sake of simplicity we will call it an "I write" statement.]
4. Now re-read vv.1-4 slowly and carefully to determine if there might be another "I write" statement that uses words besides "I" and "write" but essentially has the same meaning and intent. Record below.

5. Both of these statements express a motivation the author has in writing. Record that motivation for each by completing the statements below.
  - We proclaim to you also, [so] that...
  - We write, so that...
6. Compare the two statements of motivation and see if there might be a common thought between the two. If so, what is that thought?
7. In Lesson 1, you listed the key words of the chapter in the right-hand margin, along with everything you learned about the word from the chapter. Take a minute now to review what you listed for the word translated “fellowship” in vv.3, 6, 7. Then turn back to page 8 (which is located in Lesson 2) and review the definition of the word.
8. Now re-read vv.5-7 and answer the following questions concerning *fellowship*.
  - What must be true about those who have fellowship with Christ?
  - And if we walk in the light that Jesus walks in, what is true?
  - So we can conclude that, if we have fellowship with Jesus, we also have fellowship with *whom*?
  - And what was one of the reasons John said he wrote this letter according to v.3?
9. How important, then, would you say that Christian fellowship among brothers and sisters is for every believer?

## II. GOD IS LIGHT...

1. According to v.5, what is the message that John heard from Jesus that he is now announcing to his readers?
  - a)
  - b)
2. What contrast is being made here—between *what* and *what*?
3. Do you think the text is speaking in terms of God’s being a literal, physical source of ordinary light that shines forth and allows physical sight to become possible? Why or why not?

4. Read Genesis 1:3-4. According to these verses, what did God create?
  
5. Think about it: if God created light, He could not possibly be “it.” Therefore, when we refer to God as being light, we must be speaking of something beyond just ordinary light as we think of it in the physical sense. Look up the following scriptural references and record what each tells you about Jesus/God’s being “light.” [Be sure to read as much of the surrounding text as is necessary in order to understand the context in which the word “light” is used.]
  - Matthew 5:14-16—
  
  - John 1:4, 7-9—
  
  - John 3:19-21—
  
  - John 8:12—
  
  - John 9:5—
  
  - John 12:35-36—
  
  - John 12:46—
  
6. According to what you learned in the preceding exercises, when we read that God is light in 1 John 1:5, what does it mean?

### III. ...IN HIM THERE IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL

1. Now let's examine the word "darkness." Look up the following references and record what you learn about "darkness" from each. As always, be sure to read enough of the surrounding text to get a handle on the context.
  - Exodus 10:21-29—
  
  - 1 Samuel 2:9—
  
  - Job 10:18-22— [HINT: Read Job 9:1 to determine who is talking and to Whom.]
  
  - Matthew 27:45-50—
  
  - Luke 11:34-36—
  
  - John 3:19-21—
  
2. In light of what scripture tells us about "darkness," what do you think John means by the phrase "...in Him there is no darkness at all"?
  
3. But what about the believer and darkness? Read the following and record everything God teaches about darkness and the believer.
  - 1 John 2:8-11—
  
  - 1 Peter 2:9

- Ephesians 5:8-14—

4. Considering what you now know about “light” and “darkness,” how does knowing that God is “light” and not “darkness” comfort you?

#### **IV. GOD IS THREE, GOD IS ONE**

1. Many of the cross-references we used for understanding better the reality that “God is light” [II (5) above] actually referred to Jesus rather than to God the Father. Before we leave this assignment, we want to be sure we understand why we are free to substitute God the Father for Jesus in these specific verses.
2. “God” is **THREE**:
  - Read Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:16-17a, 26. Who do we see mentioned in these references?
  - Read John 6:27 and Romans 1:7. Who is called God?
  - Read 1 John 5:20. Who is called God?
  - Read Acts 5:3-4; Exodus 17:7 (with Hebrews 3:7-9). Who is God?
3. “God” is **ONE**.
  - Read Deuteronomy 4:35 and Deuteronomy 6:4. What is the commandment that God gives us here?
  - Read John 10:30. What does Jesus tell us about His relationship with the Father?
4. If the Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God, what does that tell us about the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

## V. WRAPPING IT UP

Jesus gave John the message He wanted John to relay to the believers. And this is that message: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. In a world overflowing with evil, this is indeed good news.

Without Jesus in our lives, we would be groping in inky blackness. With Him, our eyes are opened and we see clearly where we are headed.

His Word is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path.

*Psalm 119:105*

## LESSON 4

### Chapter 1—Confess, Be Forgiven and Cleansed

According to 1 John 5:13a, the recipients of John’s letter are believers and John is writing to assure them of the certainty of their salvation (5:13b). So, as early as the first chapter, John begins outlining a “proof” test that will help them to see for themselves that they are indeed saved. He doesn’t want anyone to doubt; but to look at his own life and measure his lifestyle against God’s standard and know that he knows that he knows.

In Chapter 1, John tells them that (1) if they walk in the light as Jesus does and (2) if they have fellowship with other believers, then they can know that the blood of Jesus has cleansed them from all sin; i.e., that they have eternal life. As the book progresses, we will see that John continues to build on his “proof” list so that by the end of Chapter 5 he has compiled a comprehensive test that proves one’s salvation to himself and thereby enables him to enjoy the full assurance of his salvation.

Although the true believer of Jesus Christ received forgiveness for all his or her sins at the point of conversion, the question of sin in one’s life continues to be a knotty issue. What happens when a person sins after he’s been saved? Is a person saved if he continues to struggle with sin in his life? As long as life is contained within the human body is it possible *not* to sin? And if it’s not possible, how can a person be held accountable for what he cannot help doing? These are the kinds of questions the false teachers of John’s day were pummeling the believers with. These are the questions that John addresses in the latter half of Chapter 1.

#### I. IF WE SAY WE HAVE NO SIN

1. Read 1 John 1:5—2:6. As you read, mark every word/phrase that refers in some way to our not telling the truth.
  - What is the main topic of this segment of the book of 1 John?
  - What is the new “I write” statement that is introduced in this segment (1:5—2:6)?
2. In Lesson 3, you looked at the contrast between light and darkness. There are three additional contrasts in the segment 1:5-2:6. List **all four** contrasts below. After listing these, examine as a whole to determine if there is any ground of commonality in the three. Record your insights.
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)

3. According to vv.6-7, what appears to be the main criteria for being able to refrain from sinning?
4. Within the context of this passage, what does the phrase “walking in darkness” mean?
5. There are three “If we say” statements in this passage. Record each of these below.
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
6. Looking at the consequences stated for each of the three “If we say” statements above, write one comprehensive statement that describes all three consequence statements. Also take into consideration what the author tells us in the “says” statement in 2:4.
7. In light of what you wrote in #6 above, read John 14:6. What do you conclude?
8. What importance do you think God places on our telling the truth and not lying?
9. What are some common examples of situations in which many people lie?

## **II. HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE**

1. Perhaps the most quoted verse from 1 John is found in chapter 1, verse 9. Read the verse again and mark each of the three action verbs contained in it. List these below. [HINT: “Is” is not an action verb.]
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)



- Based on what you read in the preceding references, answer the question: “Does God remember your sins?”
  - How does this fit with the old teaching of our mothers and grandmothers about forgiving and forgetting?
2. Consider the attributes of deity (eternality, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, etc.) Based on these qualities that God possesses, is it possible that He does not remember (i.e., He forgets) what you have done in sinning against Him?
3. The Greek word translated “forgive” in our 1 John text is *aphiemi*. Look up the following references that have the Greek word *aphiemi* in them and record how each is used. [If you cannot recognize the word *aphiemi*, that’s okay; we will discuss this in-depth in class.]
- Matthew 4:11—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Mark 1:18-20—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Luke 4:39—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - 1 Corinthians 7:11-13—
4. **[Optional]** If you have Greek word study tools and looked up the definition of the Greek word *aphiemi* in Question #2 of Section II above, answer this question: In what way does the usage of *aphiemi* in the preceding references (Question #3, Section III) add to the dictionary definition of “forgive”?

5. Using your own words, write a concise definition of the English word “forgive” in the space provided below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Considering what you now know the Bible says about “forgiving,” do you still think it means also “forgetting”?

#### **IV. FROM THE BEGINNING**

1. When you did the overview of the entire book of 1 John (Lesson 1), you marked a number of key words, which included the phrase “from the beginning.” Now we want to go through that list of “from the beginning”s and determine whether the phrase refers to the beginning of all time or the beginning of Jesus’ ministry here on earth. Note your conclusion as to which each reference refers.
  - 1 John 1:1—
  - 1 John 2:7—
  - 1 John 2:13, 14—
  - 1 John 2:24—
  - 1 John 3:8—
  - 1 John 3:11—
  - 2 John 6—
  
2. The author also uses the phrase “from the beginning” in the gospel of John. Look up the following references and note to which each refers—the beginning of all time or the beginning of Jesus’ ministry on earth.
  - John 6:64—
  - John 8:25—
  - John 8:44—
  - John 15:27—
  
3. What conclusions can you make from these observations?

4. In view of the false teachings of the *Gnostics* of John's day that had already begun to surface, what specific belief might John have been teaching against with his use of the phrase "from the beginning"?
  
5. Now that you have completed three weeks' study on the first chapter of John's First Epistle, what would you say is the most important teaching in the chapter?

## **V. WRAPPING IT UP**

As we conclude our study of Chapter 1, we are very much aware that John is writing to his beloved followers of Christ urging them to stand firm against the false teaching of that day. As a loving parent has concern for his children, John reminds them of what they have in Christ, but at the same time admonishes them to walk in the light they have already been given. The emphasis of his teaching is on truth, because he knows that there is only one truth and that Truth is in Jesus—Jesus the son of the carpenter who came from Galilee, and Jesus the Son of God who came through the heavens.

John's letter was written to the believers of that day so that they would know that they had eternal life. He accomplishes this by reminding his readers of the basics of their faith. This was a message Jesus wanted the people of that day to know, and to know well—it is a message that we need to know today as well.

As opposition mounts against the Christian faith in our age, it becomes increasingly important that we remember the fundamental tenets of our faith. The stronger our belief system, the stronger our faith and our ability to stand firm against the false teachings that abound in our day.

## **LESSON 5**

### **Overview of Chapter 2**

In light of the pressures from without that are impacting the believers of his day, John writes this letter so they can know for sure that they have eternal life. In every chapter of the book, he includes several “proof statements” that, when taken as a whole, become a comprehensive litmus test to let the individual know whether he is a true believer or not. In other words, if one is a born again believer there will be evidence of it in his every day life—certain things will be true about his or her lifestyle. We began a list of these “proofs” during our study of Chapter 1. We will continue to add to that list as we progress through the book. When completed, this list will prove an invaluable tool for our own self-evaluation.

It only makes sense that if John wants to assure his brothers and sisters in Christ of their eternal life, he will be reminding them in many ways who Jesus is and what He does and has done for them. This is one of the characteristics of all the writings we attribute to the Apostle John; each one is well-peppered with intimate truths about Jesus. As we read and study the First Epistle of John, we want to be sure to note every little detail that the author shares with us about the Jesus, the Messiah that he knows.

A strong theme of Chapter 2 is that of abiding in Christ. What better protection could any believer have against the false teachers of the world than continually abiding in the Father and in the Son? Chapter 1 stated it another way, but still saying the same thing: the true believer walks in the light just as Jesus walked in the light.

#### **I. OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 2**

1. Begin this new lesson with prayer, asking God to be your teacher and to open your eyes to the truth. If you are unable to complete Lesson 5 in one sitting, be sure to begin every session with prayer. Any study that is attempted without prayer might well include some of the false teachings that abound in our world today. Only when God is our teacher are our minds protected from that kind of teaching.
2. Read Chapter 2 in its entirety at one sitting. Be sure to read slowly and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read. This is not a race—but rather the most important step you can take in studying the Word of God: slow, meditative reading under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
3. Once you have completed your first read of the chapter, go back and read it again; this time marking the following key words, each with its own distinctive icon, underline or highlight color.
  - God
  - Jesus
  - lie, liar, deceiving, “truth not in us” or any similar statement [Look back and also mark the same term/phrase in Chapter 1, vv.6, 8, and 10]
  - antichrist(s) [Mark this term in 4:3 as well]

4. After marking the words on the WordSheets in the Appendix, list everything you learn about Jesus on the chart “What John Teaches About Jesus” (the one you began in Chapter 1.) List what you learn about the other key words in the right-hand margin of the WordSheet (beginning at the point where the word is first mentioned.)
5. Now mark the contrasts you find in Chapter 2 in the same manner in which you marked contrasts in Chapter 1 (see Lesson 2, Roman numeral I, question #5 for a refresher on how to mark contrasts.)
6. Re-read Chapter 2 one more time and this time take note of every “proof statement” contained in it. You may want to refer to Lesson 2, Roman numeral V for information about what a “proof statement” is. Add these from Chapter 2 to the list you started in Chapter 1.
7. Keeping in mind both the theme and purpose of the book (recorded on chart, “The Big Picture”), write a theme for Chapter 2 and record it at the top of the WordSheet for Chapter 2. Indicate also the verse(s) upon which you base your idea of what the theme of the chapter is.

## II. WORD STUDIES

1. **[Optional]** If you have Greek word-study tools, look up the definition of each of the Greek words that are translated in the following manner:
  - advocate (v.1)—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - propitiation (v.2)—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - perfected (v.5)—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - abide, abideth (vv.6, 10, 14, 17, 24, 27, 28)—



5. What does this tell you about the importance of your studying the Bible for yourself?

#### **IV. ABIDES IN YOU AND YOU IN HIM**

1. Before you begin this segment, review the definition of the Greek word translated *abide* in Roman numeral 2, question 1 above.
  
2. Look up the following references on the scripture printout on page 6 of this lesson. Record what the word translated *abide* appears to mean in each as used by authors other than John.
  - Matthew 10:11—
  
  - Acts 2:26—
  
  - 1 Corinthians 13:13—
  
  - Hebrews 10:34—
  
  - James 1:25—
  
  - 1 Peter 1:23—
  
  - 1 Peter 1:25—

3. John uses the Greek word *meno* for the English word *abide*) far more often than any other author. Look up the following references from the writings of John and record what the word *meno* appears to mean from the context of each.

- John 6:56—
  
- John 8:31—
  
- John 14:10—
  
- John 15:4-5—
  
- 1 John 2:6—
  
- 1 John 2:10—
  
- 1 John 3:15—

## V. WRAPPING IT UP

The major theme of this second chapter concerns obedience and abiding. Both add up to our being in the Word and the Word being in us. This cannot be accomplished by merely attending church services on Sunday mornings and listening to a preacher teach the Word. It requires daily reading, meditation, prayer and study.

John is writing this letter—he tells us—so that believers can know that they know that they have eternal life; in other words, that they have the complete assurance of their salvation. What applied to the reader of John’s day applies to the reader of our day as well. Before we leave this lesson, review the chart “How We Know that We Know Him” and measure your walk with Jesus in light of what John is telling us in this book so far. Then ask God to show you the areas in which He wants you to grow.



## LESSON 6

### Chapter 2—Right and Wrong Love

In Chapter 2, John reminds us that if we know God we will keep His commandments; and that if we don't keep His commandments, we are liars and there is no truth in us. This is a tough teaching. How are we to understand it? Is it saying that we have to be perfect in our obedience (which would mean we never sin in any way) and if we *do* sin then we are not true believers after all?

Clearly the Bible is not saying that we have to exhibit such perfect obedience. Only Jesus was able to do that. In fact, the author just finished telling us in Chapter 1 that if we *claim* to be without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. In other words, he's saying that everyone sins, including believers; so the issue isn't one of perfect obedience, it's one of trying *not* to sin. That means it's all about the condition of our hearts and our desire to obey and please God in all that we do.

John talks a lot about love in this first letter he writes. That topic is introduced here in Chapter 2 and then revisited again in Chapters 3 and 4, and the first part of Chapter 5. Obviously, eternal life has a lot to do with our capacity to experience love and that topic will be discussed in great detail in this lesson, as well as later ones.

#### I. LOVE YOUR BROTHER

1. Begin your study session with prayer, asking God to help you understand the true meaning of love and the importance it has in the life of every believer. Pray for discernment to recognize the false teachings that flourish in the Christian community today, just as they did in the days in which John wrote this letter. Pray for the enlightenment that comes with His truth, and not with man's.
2. Re-read 1 John 2 from beginning to end in one sitting. Read slowly so as to allow the Holy Spirit the opportunity to open your eyes to the truths He would have you to know from this chapter.
3. We established in the previous lesson that vv.1-6 of Chapter 2 deal with keeping His commandments as proof of our relationship with Jesus. Now in vv.7-8 the author talks about a commandment that is not new, but is old; and yet is new. This seems more like a riddle—something that's old, and yet new. Re-read vv.7-10 and answer the following questions:
  - What is the commandment that the author tells us is not new, but old; and is also new at the same time?

- What does the phrase “the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining” refer to?
4. Read Leviticus 19:18, John 15:12 and John 13:34. What commandment is given in these three texts?
  
  5. What do these commandments in Leviticus and John have in common and what makes them different from the one that John is giving in 1 John 2:10-11? [Some commentators will differentiate between the Old Testament commandment and the New Testament. Take note that we are differentiating between the one John gives us in his first epistle and all others that came before it.]
  
  6. According to our text in 1 John 2, what is true about the one who says he’s in the light but hates his brother?
    - What is true about the one who loves his brother?
  
    - To whom is the term “brother” referring in this context?

## **II. DON'T LOVE THE WORLD**

1. Read the passage vv.12-17 one more time. What three groups of readers is John addressing here?
  - a)
  
  - b)
  
  - c)
  
2. There are several different ways to interpret the author’s use of these three categories, so we cannot be dogmatic about any particular interpretation. Take a minute to think



8. What does v.17 mean to you?

### **III. REJECT FALSE TEACHERS**

1. Read 1 John 2:18-22 with 1 John 4:1-3. What does John call the false teachers of his day according to these passages?
2. Using an exhaustive concordance, look up the word “antichrist” and record every place in scripture it is used.
3. What do all these references have in common?
4. Using all the scriptures you located, list everything you learn about “antichrists” and false teachers.
5. Read 1 John 2:20-29 and mark every reference to an “anointing” with its unique icon, underline or highlight color. Before proceeding with the next question, refer back to Lesson 5, Roman numeral II and review the meaning of the Greek word that is translated “anointing” (NASB) or “unction” (KJV).
6. There are two popular interpretations for the “anointing” that John talks about in vv.20-29—either it’s the Holy Spirit or the Word of God. In your opinion, which of these is the more accurate explanation? Explain your answer.

7. Read 1 John 2:24 carefully. What is “that which abides in you from the beginning”? What does it do for the believer?

#### **IV. ABIDE IN HIM**

1. The idea of “abiding” was discussed to some extent in Lesson 5. Now here in vv.28-29, we have the command that we are to *what*?
2. And if we do this, what will be true for us?
3. What is true about the one who practices righteousness?
4. What does the phrase “born of Him” mean to you?
5. In Lesson 1, “The Big Picture,” you marked the phrase “born of God” and “born of Him.” Look up every use of the phrase in 1 John and record what you learn about each.

6. The only other place in the Bible where this phrase is found is in the gospel of John (which, of course, is written by the same author.) Look up John 1:12-13 and record what additional information you learn about being born of God.
  
7. Now read what the Bible has to say about being “born again” and record your insights below:
  - John 3:1-8—
  
  - 1 Peter 1:3—
  
  - 1 Peter 1:22-23—

## **V. WRAPPING IT UP**

Here in the second chapter of his first letter to the believers, John is trying to correct many of the problems that arose in the Church as a result of the early teachings of the Gnostics.

Those who possessed that special “saving knowledge” of which the Gnostics boasted held themselves to be superior to the ordinary Christian—hence John’s teaching on loving your brother. Certain sects within the Gnostic movement believed that since the body was evil it really didn’t matter what the body did—hence John’s teaching against loving the world and the things of the world. Because many of the false teachers were actually members of the early Church, John teaches how to differentiate between them and the true believer. And because the false teachers (John calls them antichrists) were introducing a different gospel into the Church, John exhorts the readers to hang on to the teaching they had heard from the beginning—the one true gospel.

Today, we live in a world in which a similar false teaching is growing by leaps and bounds. We are facing the same dangers as did the early Church following the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. If we are to have hope to withstand the attack in store for us, we will do well to listen to, and heed, the teachings of John.

## LESSON 7

### Chapter 3—The Overview

In the previous chapter, the author of 1 John reminds his readers of the commandment Jesus gave His followers—that they were to love one another. And he called it a “new commandment”—new, because they now had the Holy Spirit to enable them to apply the commandment in the way Jesus intended it to be. Now in Chapter 3, John readdresses the subject of brotherly love and takes the reader to a deeper level. Even then, he is not through with the subject and will come back to it again in Chapter 4 and the first part of Chapter 5.

With all this attention to the mandate that believers love one another, it is apparent that John considers the subject to be of grave importance to God. And since the purpose of his writing this letter is to assure his readers concerning eternal life, it would seem that there is a close connection between loving one’s brother and having eternal life. And that’s a connection we’ll want to observe further as we continue this study of the book of 1 John.

In addition to the topic of brotherly love that’s revisited in Chapter 3, John takes us deeper into several other subjects that were begun in earlier chapters as well. As we hit the mid-point of this letter, the author tackles for the second time some knotty issues concerning “sin,” “knowing that we know,” and “having confidence before God,” to name a few. All of this must be read in light of the attack his readers are under from the false teachers of that day.

#### I. OBSERVATION OF CHAPTER 3

1. As you have done in every other session, begin this one with prayer as well. Ask God to reveal Himself in the pages of the text and to give you the wisdom to handle the truths He wants you to see. Clear your heart and mind of the concerns of the day and give yourself over to Him to teach as He will.
2. Read 1 John 3 in its entirety in one sitting. As you read, mark every reference to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit with its own icon, underline or highlight color as used in previous chapters. Upon completion, record everything you learn about Jesus on the chart “What John Teaches About Jesus” found in the Appendix.
3. Read through the entire chapter a second time, looking for and marking any contrasts that you observe in the text. [See Lesson 2, Roman numeral I, #5 for detailed instructions on marking contrasts.]
4. Keeping in mind both the theme and the purpose of the book, write a theme for Chapter 3 and record it at the top of the WordSheet for Chapter 3. Indicate the

verse(s) from which you base your idea of what the theme is. Also record the chapter theme on the chart “The Big Picture.”

5. After deciding on a theme for the chapter, determine the theme of each of the chapter’s paragraphs as follows:
  - vv.1-3—
  - vv.4-10—
  - vv.11-18—
  - vv.19-24—
6. Modify your paragraph themes as needed to make them flow from one to the next and to make sense with your chapter theme. When you are satisfied with the titles you have come up with, transfer them to the chart “The Big Picture.”
7. Re-read Chapter 3 one more time and this time take note of every “proof statement” contained in it. You may want to refer to Lesson 2, Roman numeral V for information about what a “proof statement” is. Add these from Chapter 3 to the list you have made for Chapters 1 and 2 on the chart “How We Know that We Know Him.”

## II. WORD STUDIES

1. **[Optional]** If you have access to Greek word-study tools, look up the definition of each of the Greek words that are translated in the following manner:
  - love [verb] (vv.10-11, 14, 18, 23)—
  
  - love [noun] (vv.1, 16-17)—
  
  - purify, purifieth (v.3)—
  
  - seed (v.9)—

- know (vv.1, 6, 16, 19-20, 24)—

- know (vv.5, 14)—

2. Now look up each of these same words in an English dictionary and add any new insights to the Greek definitions above. Be sure to differentiate between Greek and English dictionaries so you'll know later what information came from which source.

### III. GOD'S GREAT BIG LOVE FOR US

1. According to v.1, how do we know the enormity of God's love for us?
2. What does it mean to you personally that you are entitled to call yourself a "child of God"?
3. In this same verse, what is the author's explanation as to why the world does not know us?
4. The Greek word *ginosko* (translated "know") is used twice in this verse. What does the word "know" mean **to you** in this particular verse?
5. This same Greek word is also used in John 1:10-11. Read John 1:10-11 and record how that passage seems to define the word *ginosko* (translated "know"). [For a better understanding of the word "receive," read v.12 as well.]

6. Hopefully, you marked the contrast in v.2 when you were noting all the contrasts of 1 John Chapter 3. If you did not, mark it at this time: “now we are” vs. “what we shall be.” Answer the question: “What are we now?”
  
7. Verse 2 tells us that “what we shall be” has not yet appeared; however, scripture gives us clues as to what it will be. Read the following and note for each anything it tells us about what you will be someday.
  - 1 John 3:2b—
  
  - Romans 8:17—
  
  - 1 Corinthians 15:51-55—
  
  - 2 Corinthians 3:18—
  
8. According to v.3, if one day you are going to be like Jesus, what should you be doing with yourself now?

#### **IV. ANYONE BORN OF GOD CANNOT SIN**

1. Re-read the paragraph 1 John 3:4-10, making sure that you have marked every form of the word “sin.”
  
2. This is a puzzling passage and Bible scholars cannot agree on how it should be interpreted. What do you see as the major difficulty as far as interpretation is concerned? [Try to isolate just one verse that presents the problem.]
  
3. In addition to what you wrote in #2 above, are there any other difficult issues presented in this passage? List below. [We will discuss these in class.]

4. How are the children of God distinguished from the children of the devil?
  
5. When you evaluate your own behavior, can you honestly claim that you *cannot* sin?  
And that you *always* love your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?
  
6. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Ephesians 4:24. In light of these verses, how do you understand the teaching in 1 John 3:9-10?

## V. WRAPPING IT UP

John wrote this first letter in the face of some very treacherous false teaching that was being thrown at the believers of his day. His stated purpose in writing the letter was to assure these believers that, regardless of what they were hearing to the contrary, they still had eternal life.

So, no matter how confusing and diverse the many interpretations of 1 John 3:9 might be, the one thing we know for sure is that the verse does *not* mean Christians will never commit sin in their ordinary day-to-day living; or that if they do, they will lose their salvation. Why? Because John is writing to assure them of their eternal salvation.

This is a comfort to believers everywhere today. We remember 1 John 1:8 that tells us if we *claim* to be without sin we are deceiving ourselves (in other words, believers *will* sin); and then v.9 that says when we confess that sin, God will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



## LESSON 8

### Chater 3—Practice Righteousness, Love One Another

Here at the mid-point of the book, we're beginning to see that the author is writing in sort of a circular or spiral pattern, introducing a topic in one segment and then returning to it again and again throughout the rest of the book. By the end of Chapter 3, he has already completed two such cycles, with two more to go before we reach the end. With this use of repetition, John is underscoring the importance of certain fundamental teachings, in hopes that his readers will better understand, remember and be equipped to withstand the attacks from false teachers.

For the same reason, John uses very absolute language to describe the standard by which readers are to evaluate their relationship with Christ. We're talking black and white here, with very little room for compromise. John tells the reader point-blank what must be evident in the life of a true believer. By reading and understanding the teachings in this book, anyone who calls himself a Christian is in a position to determine if he has the sound doctrine, absolute obedience, and love necessary to qualify him as a true believer. John is not claiming that something other than grace "saves"; he is saying that the saved person will exhibit certain godly characteristics in his day-to-day living.

As you work through the exercises in Lesson 8, keep in mind John's stated purpose for writing this letter—to assure the reader that, as a true believe, he has eternal life.

#### I. LOVE THE BRETHREN IN DEED AND TRUTH

1. Begin your study session with prayer to the One who gives all truth. Ask Him for wisdom and a heart that is receptive to the teaching He brings your way. Commit your mind to seeking His truth and to forsaking the frivolous teachings of man that you may bring into this study.
2. In order to refresh your memory as to context, re-read Chapter 3 in its entirety before answering the questions. Our text for Lesson 8 is 1 John 3:11-24, but in order to understand the text accurately we must read it in its context.
3. Go back and read the first segment in which the author discusses the "Love One Another" mandate for the true believer. You'll find it at 1 John 2:7-11. After reading this first teaching on love, record below everything you learn from the passage about loving the brothers.

4. Now that you're up to speed on what's previously been taught about loving the brethren, re-read 1 John 3:10-18. Use the T-chart below to list everything the passage tells you about those who love the brethren and about those who don't.

Those Who Love	Those Who Don't

5. What is the message that has been heard from the beginning?
6. In v.13 the author exhorts his readers not to be surprised if the world hates them. He gives no explanation here as to why they might be hated, but he does give a hint in v.1b. He also addresses the issue in his gospel. Read 1 John 3:1b and John 15:18 and record your findings as to why the world hates true believers.

7. Read v.15 carefully and write your own paraphrase of the verse. In your opinion, according to what John is saying here, can a believer commit murder? Can a believer ever hate another Christian?

## II. THIS IS LOVE, THAT WE LAY DOWN OUR LIVES...

1. Read v.16 and stop there. For now, do not consider the verses that follow; just read it *out of context*. Compare this with John 15:13; then record below what you believe these verses are saying as a stand-alone teaching.
2. Now read Romans 12:1-2 and record what Paul is commanding the believer to do.
3. How can we be a “living sacrifice” and lay our lives down for the brethren at the same time?
4. Jesus died a physical death on the cross on our behalf; however, He laid His life down for us a long time before the cross. Read the following and note how Jesus laid down His life for others.
  - Philippians 2:5-8—
  - Luke 22:39-44—
5. If—as Philippians 2:5 points out—we are to have the same attitude as Christ, what do the two verses above tell us about what our attitude should be?
6. In your opinion, which would be harder to do—die in the place of someone you love or sacrifice everything that you are for that person?

7. Now go back and re-read 1 John 3:16 in context with vv.17-18. According to the two verses that follow, how are we to understand the “laying down your life” of v.16?
  
8. Looking at v.18, how would you define Christian love?

### **III. BE CONFIDENT BEFORE GOD**

1. Read vv.19-24. What would you say the word “this” near the beginning of v.19 refers to?
  
2. In that same verse, what does it mean to you that “we are of the truth”?
  
3. Re-read vv.19-20 and answer the following “thought” questions.
  - In what way does your heart sometimes condemn you?
  
  - Do you ever doubt your own salvation and experience other insecurities concerning your relationship with Christ?
  
  - What does this passage tell you that would be helpful in overcoming such concerns if you have them?
  
4. What is the promise in this passage (vv.19-24) concerning answered prayer?

5. What conditions (if any) does the author place on having one's prayers answered?

#### **IV. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

1. One last thought before we leave Chapter 3. In v.21, John mentioned our having confidence before God. What do you think this phrase is referring to?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read the following and determine what each has to say about the believer and accountability?
  - 2 Corinthians 5:10—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Romans 14:12—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - 1 Corinthians 3:10-15—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Re-read 1 John 1:8-9 and explain its relation to the three verses in #2 above.

#### **V. WRAPPING IT UP**

At the beginning of this study on the book of 1 John, we discussed the issue of authorship and the fact that we cannot be dogmatic about who wrote the book as the author does not identify himself in the pages of the text. Tradition holds that the Apostle

John is the author and all three epistles have carried his name in their titles since the days of the early Church.

As we've studied through the first three chapters of the First Epistle of John, we are struck with the similarities in the teachings between the gospel and the epistles of John. The author of each pounds home the same subjects, again and again. Many words that are used in the Epistle are used no other place in scripture except in the gospel of John. The author of both books speaks in absolute terms throughout the text; both expound on what the life of a saved person must look like; both underscore the importance of loving one's brother and obeying Jesus' commands. The more we study, the more it appears that the gospel and the epistles are indeed written by the same author.

Regardless of the name of the human penman, however, the true Author of each is none other than God Himself.

## LESSON 9

### Chapter 4—The Overview

By the time we arrive at Chapter 4, we're already familiar with its major themes as John introduced us to them in previous chapters. This is all a part of the repetitious spirals he uses in order to pound home his point—that sound doctrine, obedience, and love for the brethren must characterize the life-style of anyone who claims to be born of God. And when they are, John tells his readers that they can be certain of their salvation and their claim on eternal life with the Father.

Like a parent to his child, John teaches the same thing over and over to insure that his readers not only understand, but *remember* these fundamental tenets of Christianity. He knows these believers are being bombarded by the treacherous false teachings of their day; and he acknowledges that the best defense against attack is a good offense. The better grounded believers are in the faith, the less likely they will be tempted to succumb to the antichrists who bring lies alongside the truth and dress it all up with a light coating of Christianity!

In order to detect the counterfeit, one has to be well acquainted with the genuine article. In his first letter to the believers, John is making certain that his readers are well-equipped to recognize the original.

#### I. OBSERVATION OF CHAPTER 4

1. As we do every time we sit down to study the Word of God, begin this session with a time of fervent prayer. Ask the Father for an extra measure of discernment that you may see truths in Chapter 4 that only He is able to see. Empty yourself of the cares of the world and trust this time entirely to Him. Commit your heart to an openness that sincerely desires to know the truth as God intended it to be known.
2. Read 1 John 4 in its entirety before beginning to answer any of the questions. As you read, mark each of the following key words with its own distinct icon, underline or highlight color. Be sure to include all synonyms and related pronouns. Upon completion, record everything you learn about Jesus on the chart “What John Teaches About Jesus.”
  - God
  - Jesus
  - Holy Spirit
  - false teachers, antichrist(s) [Use the same marking here in Chapter 4 as you used for antichrist in Chapter 2:18-22]

3. Read through the entire chapter a second time, looking for and marking any contrasts that you observe in the text. [See Lesson 2, Roman numeral 1, #5 for detailed instructions on marking contrasts.]
4. Keeping in mind both the theme and the purpose of the book, write a theme for Chapter 3 and record it at the top of the WordSheet for Chapter 4. Indicate the verse(s) upon which you base your idea of what that theme is. Also record the chapter theme on the chart “The Big Picture.”
5. After deciding on a theme for the chapter, determine the theme of each of the chapter’s paragraphs as follows:
  - vv.1-6—
  - vv.7-13—
  - vv.14-21—
6. Modify your paragraph themes as needed to make them flow from one to the next and to make sense with your chapter theme. When you are satisfied with the titles you have come up with, transfer them to the chart “The Big Picture.”
7. Re-read Chapter 4 one more time and this time take note of every “proof statement” contained in it. For a refresher on what we mean by a proof statement, refer to the instructions for Roman numeral V in Lesson 2. Add your new “proofs” from Chapter 4 to the list you made for Chapters 1, 2, and 3 on the chart “How We Know that We Know Him.”

## II. WORD STUDIES

1. **[Optional]** If you have access to Greek word-study tools, look up the definition of each of the Greek words that are translated in the following manner:
  - test, try (v.1)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - confesses, confesseth (vv.2, 3, 15)—

- listens, heareth (v.3, 5, 6)—

2. Using a regular English dictionary, look up the words listed in #1 above and add to the Greek definitions what you learn about each in the English. NOTE: If you did not do the Greek word-study, you should have at least the English definitions for each word.

### **III. TEST THE SPIRITS TO SEE IF FROM GOD**

1. In preparation of your study of 1 John 4:1-6, go back and review your definition of the word “know” (Greek *ginosko*) from Lesson 7, Roman numeral II.
2. Also re-read the article on *Gnosticism* found in the Appendix.
3. Now re-read Chapter 4, vv. 1-6. When you finish reading it yet another time, determine if you still give it the same title as you did in Roman numeral I, #5, of this lesson? Modify the original title as you deem appropriate.
4. What does the author give as the purpose for his readers to “test the spirits”?
5. From v.2, record the criteria the author gives for distinguishing whether a spirit is from God or not.
6. According to v.3, if a spirit is *not* from God, what does the author say that it is?
7. What do we learn about these false teachers (antichrists) according to the following references:
  - 1 John 2:18-26—
  - 2 John 7—

- 2 Peter 2:1-3—
  
  - Mark 13:22-23—
  
  - 1 Timothy 4:1-4—
  
  - Jude 4—
8. What other criteria does John give (according to 1 John 4:6) for determining whether a spirit is from God?
9. Are these two tests the only ones needed in order to tell if a spirit is from God? Relying on your knowledge of other parts of the Bible, what other tests might you think necessary or helpful?
10. Why do you think John just mentions the two criteria for evaluating the teacher at this point?
11. John assures his readers that they have overcome the false teachers (antichrists). What does he give as the reason that they are able to do this?

#### IV. LOOKING FURTHER AT TEST 2

1. Let's re-examine the second criteria John gives for determining whether a spirit is from God or not. The last half of v.6 says: "...he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." In your own words, what does this say about determining whether a teacher in your midst is from God or Satan?
2. Pay particular attention to the use of the word "us." To whom do you think John is referring with the use of this term?
3. According to v.5, what does John say these false teachers use as their standard; i.e., what is the resource they use and upon which their teaching is based?
4. In your opinion, how many jokes, stories, illustrations and life applications can a sermon contain before it ceases to be a preaching from "the Word" and becomes instead a teaching from "the world"? [There is no right or wrong answer to this question; rather it is a subject you need to think about, pray about, and let God illumine your heart with what He wants you to know.]
5. The entire counsel of God's Word (i.e., the Old and New Testaments in their entirety) is the sole resource from which all teaching must be taken. False teachers tend to either reject a portion of the teaching of God's Word or to add another dimension to it. Read the following references and indicate what each tells you about the importance of teaching the Word accurately.
  - Deuteronomy 4:2—
  - Deuteronomy 12:32—
  - 2 Corinthians 4:2—

- Revelation 22:18-19—

## **V. WRAPPING IT UP**

According to the Apostle John (as God’s penman writing this letter to believers under attack), every teacher belongs in one of two categories: he or she is either (1) a true prophet of the Word of God; or (2) a teacher of the antichrist. Once again, John speaks in “absolutes”; his language allows no room for anything grey in between.

And that’s a mind-buster. What he’s saying to us is—whenever we encounter teaching about spiritual matters—if what we’re hearing does not handle the subject of Jesus accurately, then it is from antichrist. Even if the teaching is Biblically sound on other matters, the entire teaching must be rejected.

John then reassures his readers (and us today, as well) that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. He assures us that we will not be misled... that we are now (and will continue to be) victorious over the one who rules in the world today.

## **LESSON 10**

### **Chapter 4—True Love**

Back in First John chapter 2, the author taught us that the one who keeps the Word of God has the love of God perfected in him. That's no small statement. Yet he goes on to say that one of the many "tests" that prove we are true believers is the fact that we walk in the same manner as Jesus walked; in other words, that we are obedient to the teachings of the Word. Since obedient brings about perfect love within us, the manifestation of perfect love is also a proof of our salvation.

So what *is* this "perfect love", what *is* this God's love? That is the focus of this week's lesson. And it's a challenging one. The believer who truly desires to please His Lord will find him- or herself convicted many times over by the straight-forward and absolute nature of John's teaching on love as contained in the last half of 1 John 4.

Be sure to allow sufficient time for study as you go through the lesson. This is a let God speak to you in whatever way He desires—a time to be still and know that He is God.

#### **I. LOVE OTHERS—BECAUSE GOD FIRST LOVED YOU**

1. Begin your study with prayer. After last week's study about false teachers, the devil would like nothing better than to bombard you this week with lies, confusion and disbelief. Your protection lies in prayer and the Holy Spirit's presence within you.
2. Refresh yourself as to the context of today's lesson by re-reading all of Chapter 4 in its entirety in one sitting. Take your time with this and let God teach you as He wills.
3. After reading the chapter as a whole, let's narrow in on the passage vv.7-13. In these seven verses, John is returning to a familiar subject for the third time. In one word, what is that subject?
4. Sometimes in a lengthy conversation, we repeat ourselves because we run out of new things to talk about. Sometimes we do it because we've been "nudged" to add a little something more. And sometimes that inner voice that does the nudging is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself. Read each of these passages in which John addresses the issue of love and determine the main thrust of each as it relates to "love."
  - 1 John 2:7-11—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - 1 John 3:10-14—

- 1 John 4:7-13—
5. In Chapter 1, John described God as being “light”. In Chapter 4, what does he describe God as being?
  6. The Greek word translated “love” here is *agape* [review Lesson 7, Roman numeral II, question #1 for what the Greek dictionary says about *agape*.] What does your answer in #5 above tell you about the meaning of the word *agape*?
  7. Read the following verses from John’s epistle and record what you learn about the full meaning of *agape* (the noun) and *agapao* (the verb). What physical evidence does John give in these verses that illuminates our understanding of the full meaning of *agape*?
    - 1 John 2:5—
    - 1 John 2:10—
    - 1 John 2:15—
    - 1 John 3:10—
    - 1 John 3:14—
    - 1 John 3:16—
    - 1 John 3:18—

- 1 John 3:23—
  
  - 1 John 4:9—
  
  - 1 John 4:10—
  
  - 1 John 4:12—
  
  - 1 John 4:17, 18—
  
  - 1 John 4:19—
8. Read the second half of 1 John 4:7. If we lift this verse completely out of context, what does it say?
9. Is the statement of conclusion we make in #8 above an accurate statement as far as God is concerned?
10. Compare this with the commandment John gives in 1 John 3:23. How does that affect the reading of 1 John 4:7?
11. From you personal experience and observations of other people, do you believe a person who is not a Christian actually can love someone? And if so, what would make this a possibility?

12. Read John 3:16 with 1 John 4:11 and complete the following sentences:

- God so loved the world that He \_\_\_\_\_ . That is to say, “love” is an action word. (John 3:16)
- God sent His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him will \_\_\_\_\_ . (John 3:16)
- Because God s loved us with a love as great as this, we also ought to \_\_\_\_\_ . (1 John 4:11)

13. Examine the sequence of the above truths taken from the writings of John. Does it appear that “loving others” is a requirement for salvation or is it a result of salvation?

14. What scriptures can you think of that support the position you took in #3 above.

## II. “NO ONE HAS BEHELD GOD AT ANY TIME”

1. First John 4:12 tells us that no one has beheld God at any time. Look up the following references and note what each tells us about looking upon the face of God.

- Exodus 33:20, 23—
- Deuteronomy 4:12
- John 1:18—

- John 5:37—

- John 6:46—

- 1 Timothy 6:13-16—

2. When Jesus came to earth as a man to dwell among us, He changed reality drastically. Read John 12:45; 14:9 and 17:24 and record what you learn about seeing or not seeing God.

- John 12:45—

- John 14:9—

- John 17:24—

### **III. GOD IN US**

1. According to 1 John 4:14-16, who abides in us?
2. This is another one of those mind-busters from the book of 1 John. As you walk in the manner Jesus walked, God dwells in you. Now think about it—God is no “little thing”; He’s HUGE, He’s beyond anything we can wrap our minds around, yet

according to John He dwells in you. Look up the following references and note who is said to be dwelling in you.

- 1 John 2:14, 24, 27—
  
  - John 6:56; 15:4—
  
  - Romans 8:11—
  
  - 1 John 4:15, 16—
3. What does the reality of what is being said in the scriptures from #2 above mean to you?
4. Read 1 John 5:1-5 and list what it teaches about love.

#### **IV. WRAPPING IT UP**

John writes this letter to assure believers of their eternal life. In all but one chapter of the book, he reminds his readers of the need to love others just as God has loved them. John begins this theme in Chapter 2 and then repeats it in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. With so much attention to a single subject, we cannot help but conclude that God must want us to see a connection between eternal life and loving others.

In the book of 1 John, the author specifically addresses our loving the brethren (that would be our fellow Christians today.) However, it's necessary to understand any teaching in light of the entire counsel of God's word. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus expands the teaching on "Love your neighbor as yourself" to include benevolent acts towards any one who might be in need, including even our natural enemies.

The nature of God is love. Every individual who knows God and who is born of God will respond to God's love nature. As a true believe receives love from God and it

overfills his or her own heart, it will quite naturally flow from him to those with whom he connects. That's what it means to be a believer: our nature becomes more and more like His nature.



## LESSON 11

### Chapter 5 Overview

Throughout the book of 1 John, we've read that if we're a true believer, if we're born again, if we're born of God *then* we are obedient to His commandments, we love the brethren, and we stand on the genuine gospel believing that Jesus is who He says He is. These are not things that save—they are evidence that we have been saved. As we come into this final chapter of the letter John writes to believers under attack, there is no reason to expect him to give us a change of approach. And he doesn't disappoint us. In this final chapter, many of the same topics are brought up again and addressed in yet one more different light in hopes that we will gain a fuller understanding of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Before getting started with Chapter 5, we see that already we have a lengthy list of “proofs” collected on the chart “How We Know that We Know Him.” Even then, the author is not through with his objective of giving readers the assurance of their salvation. In this final chapter, we find ourselves reassured a number of additional times that if certain things are true in our lives we can know that we know Jesus and that we have eternal life.

No study of the book of 1 John can be considered homework—or work of any kind—but rather an intimate time alone with the Father. For this reason, you may find it hard to bring your study of 1 John to an end. This is the last chapter; we have this lesson and one more to go. Savor the time you have left and let God use it to the fullest.

#### **I. OBSERVATION OF CHAPTER 5**

1. You can be sure that the devil does not want you to complete this course. Chances are he has already attacked in various ways and yet you continue to persevere. No doubt such perseverance pleases our Heavenly Father who desires only the best for His children.

Before beginning the lesson, spend some quality time in prayer with your Father. Ask Him to continue to teach you in the truths He wants you to know. Invite Him to refresh your mind with everything you've learned thus far so as to have a solid foundation for a full understanding of this final chapter. Thank Him for the wisdom He has given you, and the privilege you have to bask in His glory. Close with a moment of silence to allow your ears the opportunity to hear His word.

2. Read 1 John 5 in its entirety in one sitting. As you read mark the following key words with its own icon, underline or highlight color.
  - God
  - Jesus

- Holy Spirit
- true, truth
- witness(es)
- believe(s)

NOTE: God, Jesus and Holy Spirit have been marked in previous chapters. Be sure to use the same markings in Chapter 5 as you used before.

3. After marking the key words in Chapter 5, go back and mark true/truth in the following verses as well:
  - 1 John 1:6, 8
  - 1 John 2:4, 8, 21, 27
  - 1 John 3:18, 19
  - 1 John 4:6
4. Also mark witness(es) in 1 John 1:2 and 4:14.
5. Keeping in mind both the theme and the purpose of the book (listed on chart “The Big Picture”), write a theme for Chapter 5 and record it at the top of the WordSheet for Chapter 5. Also indicate the verse(s) that you used in coming up with the theme of the chapter.
6. After deciding on a theme for the chapter, determine the theme of each paragraph as follows:
  - **vv.1-5—**
  - **vv.6-12—**
  - **vv.13-15—**
  - **vv.16-21—**
7. Modify the paragraph themes as necessary so they flow from one paragraph to the next, and then into the chapter theme. When you are satisfied with the titles, transfer them to the chart “The Big Picture.”
8. Re-read Chapter 5 one more time and this time take note of every “proof statement” contained in it (refer to Lesson 2, Roman numeral V for instructions regarding “proof statements”). Add the ones you find in Chapter 5 to the list you have for Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 that are listed on the chart “How We Know that We Know Him.”



4. How many times do we find the phrase “overcomes the world” in this passage (vv.1-5)? Compare this with v.19b.
  
5. What does this tell you about the power of love and faith in life of the believer? What other verses in 1 John talk about this same issue?

#### **IV. THE WITNESS CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST**

1. Read 1 John 5:6-12. What appears to be the major emphasis of this passage? [HINT: What key word is repeated numerous times?]
  
2. According to v.6, Jesus Christ came by water and by blood. Read the following cross-references and determine what, if any, correlation there might be to the use of “water” and “blood” in the 1 John passage.
  - Matthew 3:16-17—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Hebrews 9:14; Matthew 27:54—
  
3. In light of what is going on historically in the community of the believers, what do you suppose John is emphasizing here and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Re-read 1 John 5:10 in light of Romans 8:15-16 and Galatians 4:6. According to the 1 John passage, where is the witness?

6. According to v.11, what is the testimony that God has given?

## **V. THE SPIRIT IS THE TRUTH**

1. What does v.7 tell us about the identity of the Holy Spirit?
2. Read John 14:6. According to this verse, what do the Holy Spirit and Jesus have in common?
3. Read 1 John 5:20. What identify does God have in common with both the Holy Spirit and Jesus?
4. Earlier in this lesson, you marked every occurrence of the word true or truth with a distinctive icon, underline or highlight color. Go back and look up each of these references and record below what you learn about truth from each of them.

Chapter/ Verse	What It Tells Me About Truth

5. In your opinion, what importance does God place on “truth”?

## **VI. WRAPPING IT UP**

Love, obedience, and sound doctrine—the basic tenets of Christianity that the Apostle John pounds into his readers again and again in order to strengthen their resolve against the false teachers. These are lessons we would do well to heed today.

## LESSON 12

### Chapter 5—Guard Yourself from Idols

The Spirit is truth, Jesus is truth and God is truth. As we discovered from our study of scripture in previous lessons, each of these three indwells the born-again believer. And so, without actually spelling it out, the Apostle John has given us yet another litmus test to separate the true believer from the rest of the crowd—he or she does not lie, but values truth as something sacred to God. In fact, we can put it this way: if Spirit truth, Jesus truth and God truth are all dwelling within the believer, it is impossible for that individual to lie as a customary way of life. He may occasionally fall short a step or two, but the general direction of his life will always be one in which truth is held in the highest regard.

Unfortunately, there is way too little emphasis on truth today—even in members of God’s Church who call themselves Christian. This is telling us it’s time to get back to the basics. John knew the importance of doing this as he addressed the children of God in his day. It is no less essential today.

This is our last week on the study of First John. It’s been a good journey, but it’s not over until John gives his final summation in verse 21: “Little children,” he says, “guard yourselves from idols.” This says it all.

#### **I. ASK ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**

1. Begin your session with prayer. God has a special teaching for you personally during this last week of study; and He’s just waiting for you to ask for it. Because you have eternal life, because you sincerely desire to be smack-dab in the middle of His will for your life, because you are obedient to His commandments as much as is humanly possible, He hears your prayer and will give you the requests that you ask of Him.
2. Read 1 John 5:13-15. In these three verses, the author gives us the first two of several Christian certainties to follow. After reading vv.13-15, list these two certainties in a) and b) below. We’ll come back to c) through e) later.
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)

d)

e)

3. According to these verses (vv.13-15), what is the prerequisite for answered prayer?

4. Read the following references and indicate what each tells us about how we are to pray.

- Psalm 66:18—
- John 14:13-14—
- John 15:7—
- John 16:24—
- James 4:2—
- 1 Peter 3:7—
- 1 John 3:21-23—

5. Now read Matthew 18:19 and 21:21-23. How do these two statements *appear* to conflict with what we are seeing in the references in #4 above?

6. Read the following examples that show Jesus' attitude about asking anything of God. Relate what you observe in these to what you learned above.

- Luke 22:39-44—

- Matthew 27:39-44—

7. What, if anything, can we conclude about what must be true in the way we pray if we expect to have our prayers answered?

## II. GUARD YOURSELF AGAINST IDOLS

1. Read 1 John 5:16-21 to get the overall context of the passage. When you finish, go back and re-read vv.16-17. What two kinds of sin is the author referring to?
2. John says there is a sin leading to death and there is sin *not* leading to death. What is meant by the descriptive phrase, “not leading to death”? [Do you think the author is talking physical death or spiritual death here?]
3. Keeping in mind “who” is doing the sinning, what do you think the sin is that leads to death? Be sure to give the rationale for your position.
4. What is true about the born-again believer according to v.18? Compare this with 1 John 3:9 and review the previous discussion in Lesson 7, Roman numeral IV. How are we to understand the expression “cannot sin” in this context?

5. According to v.18b, how is the true believer able to keep from sinning as a regular thing in his life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why did Jesus come according to v.20?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. In Roman numeral I, question #2 above, you listed the first two of five “certainties” that are found in this last half of the fifth chapter. The other three are listed in the material you just read in this section. Locate those three certainties and list them in Roman numeral I, question #2 above.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Anything that stands between you and God is idolatry. As such, any form of opposition to Christianity is idolatry. Explain John’s last statement in the book (v.21) as it relates to the context of the entire book. [Keep in mind the author’s stated purpose in writing the book, as well as the under-lying circumstances behind the writing of the book.]

### **III. WRAPPING IT UP**

Christianity has been under attack since the days when Jesus first walked among us on the face of the earth. The enemy will continue that attack until the day Jesus returns one day to set up His reign here on earth. In the meantime, if we’re to be God’s effective witnesses in bringing others to a saving relationship with Christ, we need to be solidly grounded in the Word and standing firm against the attacker on all fronts. We need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are destined for eternal life and that the evil one cannot touch us—no matter what.

According to the author of John’s first epistle, there are assurances that every person “born of God” can enjoy. In the book of 1 John, the author identifies for us the assurances that we have and the criteria upon which the one who loves God is measured.

It is important to keep in mind that meeting the criteria on any list cannot bring us to salvation. However, once saved, that list of criteria will be manifest in our lives as evidence of our salvation. John knew this, and he wanted us to know it too.



# APPENDIX



## Chapter 1

**Chapter Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key Verse(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

[1] What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life— [2] and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— [3] what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. [4] And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

[5] And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. [6] If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; [7] but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [8] If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness. [10] If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar,  
and His word is not in us.

## Chapter 2

**Chapter Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key Verse(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

[1] My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; [2] and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. [3] And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [4] The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; [5] but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: [6] the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

[7] Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. [8] On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. [9] The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the

darkness until now. [10] The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. [11] But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

[12] I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. [13] I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. [14] I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. [15] Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. [17] And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

[18] Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for

if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. [20] But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. [21] I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22] Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. [23] Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. [24] As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. [26] These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. [27] And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. [28] And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. [29] If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.



## Chapter 3

**Chapter Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key Verse(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

[1] See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. [2] Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. [3] And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. [4] Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. [5] And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. [6] No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. [7] Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; [8] the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [10] By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone

who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. [11] For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; [12] not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him?

Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

[13] Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you. [14] We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

[16] We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [17] But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. [19] We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him, [20] in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. [21] Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; [22] and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. [23] And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son

Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. [24] And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.



## Chapter 4

**Chapter Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key Verse(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. [4] You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. [5] They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

[7] Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. [9] By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so

that we might live through Him. [10] In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. [13] By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

[14] And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. [16] And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. [17] By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. [19] We love, because He first loved us. [20] If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

## Chapter 5

**Chapter Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key Verse(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

[1] Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. [2] By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. [3] For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. [4] For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. [5] And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[6] This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. [7] And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. [8] For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. [9] If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son. [10] The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he

has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. [11] And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. [12] He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

[13] These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. [14] And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15] And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. [16] If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. [17] All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.

[18] We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. [19] We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. [20] And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in

Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [21] Little children, guard yourselves from idols. [NASB]



## Gnosticism

Similar to what we experience in the church today, the Church following the days of Christ was significantly impacted by the prevailing philosophy of its time. Throughout the early history of the Church, basic Christian tenets were continually threatened from without—as well as from within—by *gnosticism*, a popular philosophy influenced by the teachings of Greek philosophers like Plato, and Roman theologians such as Cerinthus and Valentinus.

The term *gnosticism* is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* meaning “knowledge” or *gnostikos* meaning “good at knowing.” As implied by its name, gnosticism centers on a search for knowledge and the belief that said knowledge brings forth salvation, as opposed to the New Testament teaching that salvation comes by grace through individual faith.

Gnosticism is a general term referring to an array of false teachings that existed during the first three or four centuries of the early Church and not to a single religion or philosophy of any given period. There are, however, some beliefs common to the various forms of *Gnostic* teaching:

- Salvation is achieved through special knowledge or *gnosis*. Only certain enlightened ones have this *gnosis*; the ordinary Christian cannot possess this secret knowledge.
- All matter is evil and spirit is good.

Although gnosticism sometimes was an independent, stand-alone philosophy, it most usually wormed its way into the Christian faith. When it did, there were two major factions concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. First, some claimed that Jesus’ physical body was not real but only seemed to be physical. This faction was known as Docetic Gnosticism (from the Greek word *dokeo*, “to seem.”) Since God was spirit (and spirit is good), He could not possibly become flesh, which is matter (and all matter is evil); i.e., a “good” god could not inhabit an “evil” body. Jesus, then, would have only been a phantom which just *seemed* to have a body. Such a position would contradict the Gospel

accounts of Jesus' humanity and suffering and would do away with our great High Priest who can empathize with all our weaknesses.

A second faction of Gnostic belief is referred to as Cerinthian gnosticism. This sect takes the position that when the dove descended on the man Jesus at His baptism, the power of Christ (Messiah) came and rested on man Jesus. This power then departed from man Jesus just before the crucifixion. According to this belief, God did not die on the cross; it was just the man Jesus who was brutalized and victimized by humanity's cruelty. An heresy such as this destroys the Biblical teaching on atonement, as Jesus had to be both "all God" and "all man" if He was to be the acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for all of sin.

Among those adhering to Gnostic belief systems, we see various positions regarding one's ethical behavior. Some Gnostics isolated themselves as much as was feasible from all matter so as not to contaminate themselves with its evilness. At the other end of the spectrum were those who took a more libertine approach, indulging in every unethical and licentious activity that piqued their fancy. They reasoned that since salvation had been received through their higher knowledge or *gnosis*, it no longer mattered how they chose to live their lives; they were free to indulge their appetites on whim.

Gnostic teachings had a disruptive influence on the fellowship within the Church. Those who had received the *gnosis* held themselves to be superior to the ordinary Christian who was not (and could not be) as spiritually blessed as they. Undoubtedly, they considered themselves to be the only "true" Christians and regarded others as still needing salvation (and probably as being quite hopeless since the *gnosis* belonged only to an exclusive few.)

As we read through the New Testament today (and especially the gospel of John and all the epistles), a knowledge of the basic tenets of Gnosticism helps us to hear the Word of God with the ears of its original recipients. God was speaking then through His penmen to warn His people of the dangers of the false teachings that abounded in their day. Gnosticism was at the root of much of that false teaching and the truth needed to be heard.

It is no different today.

## How We Know that We Know Him

Chapter 1:

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Chapter 2:

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Chapter 3:

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Chapter 4:

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Chapter 5



## What John Teaches About Jesus

Scripture Reference	What It Says About Jesus