

Week #1

Introduction and Overview of 1, 2, 3 John and Jude

The Authors

1, 2, and 3 John

- Author: The apostle John, also known as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23).
- Background on John:
 - John was part of Jesus' inner circle, along with Peter and James, witnessing key events like the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-2).
 - He authored the Gospel of John, the three epistles (1, 2, 3 John), and the book of Revelation.
 - John likely wrote these epistles while serving as a church elder in Ephesus later in his life, around A.D. 85–95.
 - His writings emphasize love, truth, and fellowship with God.

Jude

- Author: Jude, also known as Judas (not Iscariot), the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James (author of the book of James).
 - Background on Jude:
 - Jude refers to himself as a "servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (Jude 1:1).
 - As one of Jesus' siblings, Jude initially did not believe in Jesus during His earthly ministry (John 7:5) but came to faith after the resurrection (Acts 1:14).
 - Jude wrote his epistle to warn Christians against false teachers and to encourage them to contend for the faith.
 - The book of Jude is believed to have been written around A.D. 65–80.
-

1 John

Tolerance and Exclusivity in Salvation

- A. Jesus exemplified tolerance toward doubt, misunderstanding, and failure.

- B. Salvation, however, is exclusive: Jesus is the only way. There are no multiple paths.
- C. Challenge: Modern culture struggles with this bold and unapologetic claim.

Key Themes from 1 John

1. Obedience in faith keeps believers in fellowship with God.
 2. God forgives sins and offers victory in Jesus.
 3. Christians can measure truth by how it relates to Jesus' divinity.
-

Bible References

Key 1: Obedience in Faith Keeps Believers in Fellowship with God

- 1 John 1:6-7 - "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."
 - Walking in obedience (the light) ensures fellowship with God and other believers.
- 1 John 2:3-5 - "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected."
 - Obedience to God's commandments is evidence of a true relationship with Him.

Key 2: God Forgives Sins and Offers Victory in Jesus

- 1 John 1:9 - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - God's forgiveness is assured when we confess our sins.
- 1 John 2:1-2 - "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."
 - Jesus' role as an advocate and His atoning sacrifice provide victory over sin.
- 1 John 5:4-5 - "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"
 - Faith in Jesus ensures victory over the world and its challenges.

Key 3: Christians Can Measure Truth by How It Relates to Jesus' Divinity

- 1 John 2:22-23 - "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."
 - The truth is directly tied to acknowledging Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God.
 - 1 John 4:2-3 - "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."
 - Any teaching or belief must affirm Jesus' incarnation to be considered true.
 - 1 John 5:11-12 - "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."
 - The ultimate measure of truth is whether it affirms that eternal life is through Jesus Christ.
-

2 John

Key Themes from 2 John

1. Truth and love are inseparable in the Christian life.
 2. Believers must guard against false teachers who do not confess Jesus Christ.
 3. Walking in obedience to God's commandments demonstrates true love for Him and others.
-

Bible References

Key 1: Truth and Love Are Inseparable

- 2 John 1:5-6 - "And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it."

- Love is demonstrated through obedience to God's commands.
- Truth and love must go hand in hand for Christian living.

Key 2: Guard Against False Teachers

- 2 John 1:7 - "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist."
 - Believers must be vigilant and reject teachings that deny Jesus' incarnation.
- 2 John 1:10-11 - "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works."
 - Christians should not support or encourage false teachers.

Key 3: Obedience Demonstrates Love

- 2 John 1:9 - "Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son."
 - Obedience to Christ's teachings is essential for fellowship with God.

3 John

Key Themes from 3 John

1. Generosity and hospitality reflect God's love and support His work.
2. Pride and self-centeredness hinder Christian fellowship.
3. Believers should imitate what is good and reject what is evil.

Bible References

Key 1: Generosity and Hospitality Reflect God's Love

- 3 John 1:5-8 - "Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth."

- Supporting and showing hospitality to God's servants is participating in His work.

Key 2: Pride and Self-Centeredness Hinder Fellowship

- 3 John 1:9-10 - "I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church."
 - Pride and rejection of others harm the church and its mission.

Key 3: Imitate Good, Reject Evil

- 3 John 1:11 - "Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God."
 - Christians are called to follow examples of godliness and reject sinful behavior.
-

Jude

Key Themes from Jude

1. Believers must contend for the faith against false teachers.
 2. God's grace is not a license for immorality, but a call to holiness.
 3. God preserves and strengthens His people in the face of challenges.
-

Bible References

Key 1: Contend for the Faith

- Jude 1:3 - "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."
 - Christians must actively defend the truth of the gospel.

Key 2: Grace Is Not a License for Immorality

- Jude 1:4 - "For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
 - False teachers distort God's grace to justify sinful behavior.

Key 3: God Preserves His People

- Jude 1:24-25 - "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."
 - God's power sustains believers and protects them from falling away.
-

Group Discussion

1. Truth and Love:

How can we balance truth and love in our daily interactions, especially when truth might offend others? Can you share a time you struggled with this balance?

Leadership Principle: "Lead with Grace and Truth" – Great leaders model grace in relationships while standing firm in truth, earning trust by navigating tough conversations with both compassion and conviction.

2. Hospitality and Humility:

Are there areas in our lives where we might resemble Diotrephes (seeking recognition) rather than Gaius (serving with humility)? How can we intentionally foster a spirit of hospitality and humility?

Leadership Principle: "Serve Before You Lead" – True leaders prioritize serving others over seeking their own gain, knowing humility builds stronger teams and healthier relationships.

3. Standing Firm:

What are some ways we can stand firm against false teachings in a culture that often distorts biblical truth? How do we discern what is true?

Leadership Principle: "Anchor Yourself in Core Truths" – Leaders must know and live by their foundational principles, so they can guide others clearly in times of confusion or cultural pressure.

4. Exclusivity of Salvation:

Why do you think modern culture struggles with the claim that Jesus is the only way to salvation? How can we share this boldly yet lovingly?

Leadership Principle: "Boldness with Empathy" – Strong leaders articulate bold truths without fear, but they listen deeply and empathize with others to create bridges of understanding.

5. Faith in Action:

1 John emphasizes walking in the light. What does walking in obedience look like in your daily life? What challenges do you face in staying consistent?

Leadership Principle: "Consistency Creates Credibility" – Leaders gain influence when their actions align with their values, consistently modeling integrity in both small and big decisions.

6. Contending for the Faith:

Jude urges us to contend for the faith. What does this look like practically in conversations with friends, family, or coworkers? How can we do this without coming across as combative?

Leadership Principle: "Defend Without Dividing" – A strong leader defends essential truths while maintaining unity, focusing on building others up rather than tearing them down.

7. Truth and False Teachers:

Both 2 John and Jude warn against false teachers. What are some modern examples of teachings that distort God's Word? How do we lovingly point others to the truth while staying grounded ourselves?

Leadership Principle: "Discern and Develop" – Leaders must develop discernment through ongoing learning and guide others by equipping them to recognize truth versus distortion.

Life Application / Practical Examples

1. Exclusivity of Salvation and Jesus' Bold Claim (1 John)

- Example: Share your testimony about how Jesus transformed your life when someone asks about your faith, emphasizing His unique role as Savior.
- Example: If a friend suggests "all religions lead to God," lovingly explain that Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

2. Pursue Truth and Love (2 John)

- Example: When a coworker shares a struggle, listen with compassion (love), but if asked for advice, offer biblically grounded truth, even if it's uncomfortable.
- Example: Avoid gossip by speaking the truth about others in love, even if it's easier to stay silent or join in.

3. Living Out Hospitality and Humility (3 John)

- Example: Invite someone from church or your community who might feel isolated to your home for a meal.
- Example: Volunteer to serve others behind the scenes at church, like setting up chairs or cleaning, without expecting recognition.

4. Defend the Faith and Trust God (Jude)

- Example: If someone questions the reliability of the Bible, calmly share why you trust its truth and offer to explore it with them.
- Example: Pray for strength to live out your faith boldly when facing opposition, trusting God to sustain you even when it's hard to stand firm.