



RCC
Women's Ministry

LOVE IN
action

1st | 2nd | 3rd
John

January- April 2024



schedule

Tuesday 6:30pm

January 23 - Intro
February 6 - Lesson 1
February 20 - Lesson 2
March 5 - Lesson 3
March 19 - Lesson 4
April 2 - Lesson 5
April 16 - Lesson 6
April 30 - Lesson 7

Friday 10:30am

January 26 - Intro
February 9 - Lesson 1
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Love in Action

1 John 1: Walking in Love

Lesson 1

1 John 1:1–10

Book Profile ~

The letter of 1 John is widely recognized as authored by the apostle John to the Christians in Asia Minor, also known as modern Turkey. It was written around A.D. 85–90 to readers who knew John well. The purpose of the letter was to refute the efforts being made by false teachers to challenge church doctrine by combining the gospel message with prevailing philosophies of the day. In it, John reiterates the main truths of the gospel message and warns against heresies leading some to compromise. The emphasis of the letter is God's love and the Christian's need to love others. It is written in simple terms that feature sharp contrasts: light and darkness, truth and error, God and Satan, life and death, love and hate.

Author Profile ~

John was an eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry and among the first called to follow Him. He was the last surviving apostle and one of the three who, along with his brother James and Peter, made up the Lord's inner circle. John referred to himself in his writings as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." He stood by Jesus at the crucifixion, being singled out by Him to care for His mother. John raced Peter to the empty tomb early on Resurrection morning and later walked with the risen Lord along the shore of Galilee. He is known as the "Apostle of Love" because love is the prominent theme in his writings. After writing his gospel account and the three letters from Ephesus, John was exiled to the island of Patmos and there wrote the Book of Revelation. He later returned to Ephesus where he lived out his final days until his death, approximately A.D. 100.

In a nutshell ~

John's personal testimony to his eyewitness account of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus was to affirm believers in the reality of their faith. He hoped that they might enter into the same kind of true fellowship he enjoyed with God.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read 1 John 1:1–10.

John was the oldest living apostle and Jesus' closest earthly friend, which meant that he was able to literally touch, see, and hear for himself the very embodiment of life—eternal life. Why would it be important for John to begin his letter with these words? Because his readers were listening to false teachers declaring that Jesus' humanity was not real. Some believed all existing matter was sinful and the body evil (Gnosticism); while others believed Jesus was merely an angel. John countered these false accusations by reminding believers that he had firsthand experience with Jesus. Throughout the remainder of his letter, he will continue to reveal his personal observations about the Lord.

“That which was from the beginning . . .” (v.1). The relative phrase “that which” encompasses every aspect about the *Word of Life* that the apostles knew and experienced. This *Word of Life* describes the Son as the visible expression of the invisible God.

1. Compare vv. 1–2 here with John's gospel in John 1:1–2. What similarities do you see?

2. How does John affirm here in vv. 1–2 what he earlier stated in John 1:14?

The reference to Jesus as the *Word of Life* is the Greek term *Logos*, signifying the very beginning.

3. How is Jesus Christ—the *Logos*—the agent that reveals God to humanity? See Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:15–17, and Hebrews 1:2–3a to form your answer.

“This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him . . . he is the one who is eternal life” (1 John 1:2 NIV). The Greek word for life is *zoe*, referring to the life of the spirit and the soul. It is expressive of the highest and best of all that Christ is, that which He imparts to all believers: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).

4. John says that the One who is life from God was manifested or revealed to us. What purpose did Jesus' life accomplish for us through His earthly ministry? See 1 John 3:5 and 8.
 - a. What will take place the next time He is revealed? Colossians 3:4 and 1 Peter 5:4

The fellowship between the Father and the Son has its origins in eternity. This fellowship was manifested in terms of *time* through the Incarnation—to the apostles and then to every believer. Everyone that enters this fellowship by believing in Christ is sealed with the Holy Spirit, becoming part of God's Family.

5. Read vv. 3–4 again closely. What two positive reasons does John give for writing?

John's desire is that all believers would enjoy the same kind of fellowship he enjoyed. The word used here for fellowship is *koinonia*, signifying a sharing together or having all things in common.

- a. John declares the foundation of our fellowship to be based in Christ. Who called us into this fellowship? See 1 Corinthians 1:9.

John is reaffirming the faith of his readers that was being challenged by false teachers. Christians who are in doubt as to the assurance of their salvation will be limited in their *fellowship* with the Father and Son as well as other believers. (We'll be exploring this in-depth throughout our study of 1 John.)

Selah ~

Looking from *your* perspective, share why fellowship is both a *privilege* and a *responsibility*.

The way believers treat one another tells the world something about God. Some people prefer to isolate themselves, believing they can live for God alone. The fact is, God created us for fellowship. He desires that we love and care for our believing brothers and sisters by *sharing* in one another's lives. He takes the matter of fellowship very seriously and so should we!

6. Personal: How much time and effort are *you* investing in the family of God? Give an example.

Key Verse ~ (Memory verse) **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.”

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week’s end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

Fellowship with God and One Another

Read 1 John 1:5–10 for review.

John’s letter is filled with references to fellowship. The biblical concept of fellowship involves more than a conversation at church or the sharing of a meal together. The Bible speaks of it as a spiritual oneness, a deep sharing of life’s concerns. It is a partnering together for a common cause. This kind of genuine fellowship—*koinonia*—can only be based upon maintaining a right heart before God.

1. What message does John convey about God in verse 5?

Up close ~

Since God is light, He is perfect and holy. He is the only one who can lead people out of the darkness of sin. In order to more fully appreciate what God has done in granting us fellowship with Him, let’s take a closer look at the contrast between darkness and light in Scripture. Look up the verses below and in a word or two note what you glean. Think carefully during this exercise about what happens to a believer during the process of turning from darkness to light.

- a. Acts 26:18
- b. Romans 13:12–14
- c. 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 6

d. Ephesians 6:12; and 5:8–11

e. 1 John 2:8–10

2. Several places in John's Gospel, Jesus speaks of being the *Light of the world*. Read John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36 and 46.

a. What do you learn about the power of light from these verses?

b. What does Jesus declare about those who believe in Him?

c. Summarize the affects of the Light of Truth upon *your own* life.

Jesus promised that whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Light then is an illustration to us of truth, knowledge, and righteousness; while darkness is a picture of falsehood, ignorance, and unrighteousness or sin. Those who claim to follow the Son cannot live in spiritual darkness; they must live in the light of God's presence, continually illuminated by the truth: *"If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth"* (1 John 1:6).

3. Personal: Here's your personal self-help list. Look at it to help you determine how far you've come in your own process. Briefly share your thoughts.

- Are you in close daily communion with God?
- Do you have a no-tolerance policy for any hypocrisy or sin?
- Is it easy for you to be transparent before the Lord or do you make attempts to conceal things from Him?
- How are you diligently working toward Christ-likeness?

Those who walk in the light will occasionally still find that they are sinning. Christians will not reach perfection until Jesus Christ returns and brings us home to be with Him. Our desire to walk in the light will help us to take advantage of the provision God has made for forgiveness through the shed blood of His Son.

4. What does John say about the person who claims to be sinless? v. 8

John was taking direct aim at the claims of the false teachers (1:6 and 1:10) who stated that it was possible for people to be without sin. In making this claim they were, in effect, saying that they did not need the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross. John's point is that they are only fooling themselves; they are liars and God's Word is not in them!

5. Christians need to be constantly reminded of a few facts. Look up the following references and finish the thought begun for you . . .

- a. *Sin has no power over Christians*—Romans 6:6–7

- b. *Believers have a new power to say 'no' to temptation*—1 Corinthians 10:13

- c. *Christians have the power to say 'yes' to righteous living*—Romans 6:11–14

As God's children, we are not to deny sin, but rather to *confess* it. God has graciously provided the answer to our dilemma: "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (v. 9).

Up close ~

Use verse 9 as a word exercise to explore the breadth and depth of this week's memory verse. Using the resources you have on hand, define each of the following words:

- a. *Confess*—

b. *Sins*—

c. *Faithful*—

d. *Just*—

e. *Forgive*—

f. *Cleanse*—

g. *Unrighteousness*—

Some people may be inclined to question that if Christ has forgiven all of their sins, then why do they need to continue confessing? Remember that John is speaking here about our *fellowship*—not our *relationship*—with the Father. The moment a person repents and believes in the name of Jesus Christ as their Savior, they become God’s child, forever adopted into His family. There is nothing they could do no matter how extreme that would cause Him to “un-adopt” that individual. However, a disobedient child cannot expect to have close intimate fellowship with God the Father.

To *confess* our sin means to *agree with God* about it and to acknowledge the wrong to Him, determining not to let it happen again. By refusing to admit that sin exists, we call Him a liar and cheat ourselves out of the possibility of fellowship with Him. Confession is also necessary to ensure continued fellowship with others in the body of Christ.

Remember that the moment a person becomes a believer, he or she is unconditionally saved from the condemnation of sin and conditionally saved from the power of sin. This means that the VICTORY you have over sin’s daily lure is *conditional*—there is something *you* must do. It is conditional in direct proportion to your *obedience* to Christ and your willingness to *confess*—agree with God—whenever you miss the mark! How wonderful to have the absolute scriptural assurance that whenever you confess—He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse. Hallelujah and Amen!

6. Personal: What have *you* learned so far about confession that will help you maintain a close walk with God?

Notes

Love in Action

1 John 2: Abiding in Love

Lesson 2

1 John 2:1–29

In a nutshell ~

The opening verses of 1 John 2 are the conclusion to John's statements in chapter 1 about fellowship with God and one another. Previously, we learned that it is through Jesus Christ that we have salvation and fellowship with God. We're also learning that walking in the light with Him enables us not to sin; when we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous—who intercedes on our behalf. Maintaining a right heart before Him qualifies us for true fellowship with the brethren.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read 1 John 2:1–29.

After focusing much of his attention on refuting the false teachers, John now turns to warmly address the Christians. At the time of this writing, John was nearing one hundred years of age. This elder father of the faith had spent nearly all his life in ministry, becoming revered by all those he considered his spiritual children.

His transition to addressing the believers begins in verse one with the words, "*My little children,*" meaning *my born ones*. It was a term of loving affection used by a teacher to address his disciples.

Up close ~

There are 7 instances in the Book of 1 John where he uses the words "*My little children.*" In several instances, John uses these words to convey his love as he prefaces a hard word to the believers. Look up each reference containing the words "*my little children*" in John's epistle and note the important message he wanted to convey to the church.

a. 2:1

b. 2:12

c. 2:28

d. 3:7

e. 3:18

f. 4:4

g. 5:21

We're discovering that the beginning point of fellowship with God and other Christians is the understanding that we need to walk in the light rather than in the darkness. As God's children, when we choose to sin and we confess it, God is willing to forgive. We *need not* sin but, when we do, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ His Son.

1. What qualifies Jesus to be our Advocate? v. 2

John is attempting to correct the perception in the minds of his readers who claim to know God but make no effort to obey Him. "*Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*" (Hebrews 9:28).

2. How can a person be certain whether or not they're a believer? v. 3

a. What about the person who professes to know Christ but doesn't obey Him—is it possible for that one to belong to the family of God? v. 4

It is only by taking God's commands seriously and keeping them that we can have absolute assurance we know and belong to Him.

3. What is the litmus test of a person's obedience to God? v. 5

The word *perfected* (v. 5) does not refer to a state of perfection as we understand it, but is better translated as *made complete* or *become mature*. In verse 6, John states that the person who says he abides in Christ ought also to walk *as He walked*. In other words, if we're going to wear the title "Christian," we must do more than just *talk the talk*; we must also be willing to *walk the walk*.

Selah ~

What has John taught us so far? As a recap, go back and examine the 5 “If we” statements in your reading of 1 John. Summarize John’s point in each one below.

- a. “If we say. . .” (1:6, 8,10)

- b. “If we walk. . .” (1:7)

- c. “If we sin. . .” (2:1)

- d. “If we confess. . .” (1:9)

- e. “If we keep. . .” (2:3–5)

- f. Personal: Your life’s behavior tells the world what *you* believe. Think about it . . . are you more at ease to *talk the talk* or do you welcome the challenge to *walk the walk*? Please explain.

- g. What in your study this week has convinced you that you do indeed belong to God?

Key Verse ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 2:5**

“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week’s end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

The Test of Knowing Him

Read 1 John 2:7–29 for review.

John had just finished telling his readers that they should walk as Jesus walked—by obeying God. John will now reveal a second way to discern a true believer—whether or not they love as Jesus loved. John states clearly that those who claim to walk in the light while hating their believing brother or sister are really walking in the darkness. The key to walking in the light is: LOVE! Unless believers learn to love one another, they will not be able to grow spiritually.

For the Jews, the command to love others is an old one, dating all the way back to God's covenant with the nation of Israel, when He set them apart as His chosen people. The new commandment was given by Jesus so that the world would be able to tell His people apart from others.

1. How was the old commandment stated in Leviticus 19:18b?
 - a. Restate the way Jesus issued the new commandment in John 13:34–35. Those who followed His command were considered what?

John knew he wasn't writing a new commandment (v.7), as the command to love one another was the same message that was heard all the way back to the Old Testament. What made it new was that Jesus interpreted it in a new way. Those who believed in Jesus had *their hearts changed* by His love. He became the motivating factor for Christians to love one another. The Indwelling Holy Spirit makes it a reality!

2. In whom is the truth of this command made visible? v. 8
 - a. Personal: Are you able to see yourself loving others the way Christ loves you?

In the remainder of the chapter, John continues to highlight the contrasts of light and darkness, love and hate, God and the world.

3. What does John say about the person who claims to be in the light, while at the same time hating their brother or sister? v. 9
 - a. In contrast to verse 9, what act reveals true faith? What benefit results? v. 10

- b. What does John say keeps a person from loving others? v. 11

Selah ~

Think for a moment about what it is like to turn off the light switch and walk around in a dark room. What does it do to your overall perspective and sense of direction? Are you more prone to trip and fall or perhaps cause someone else to? Now take it a step further and apply this same lesson spiritually. What would happen to your spiritual perspective and sense of direction if you were to deliberately cut yourself off from the light of truth? What affect would the darkness potentially have over you? Please explain your thoughts.

John was most likely referring here to the false teachers and their followers who were rejecting the Christians leaving their assembly. But what happens if you find yourself seriously disliking another believer who fellowships in the same church as you every Sunday? Does it mean that you are not a true believer after all? No! John's words are not referring to disliking a Christian brother or sister in the faith who may be disagreeable. There will always be a few people in the church who are not to our liking. Rather, he is referring to those who respond to the unlikable and disagreeable by ignoring or ostracizing them—perhaps even turning their backs on them as if they were enemies—that isn't how God's loves works. God's love working in and through us is not something *we feel emotionally* but a *choice we make deliberately to love as Jesus loved*. If our heart is right with Him, He enables us to love the unlovable. After all, each one of us was at one time or another in that same category with Him!

Verses 12–14 are difficult to understand. In them John addresses three different groups of readers: little children, fathers, and young men. There is disagreement as to whether these divisions represent chronological age or degrees of spiritual maturity. Some Bible scholars believe that the three terms refer to all the readers, and that whatever is attributed to each category is intended for all—since they had all experienced salvation, spiritual warfare, and close fellowship with God. Based on John's previous use of the term *little children*, it is most likely that he was referring to everyone in the church. The distinction, then, would be to use the three terms for emphasis.

4. Finish the statements below as to why John wrote to each group (vv.12–14). Take it a step further and consider the questions that follow each statement to better help you understand what John is saying to each one.

He wrote to little children because . . .

- What basic fact would *little children* comprehend about their faith?

He wrote to fathers because . . .

- What greater wisdom would *fathers* possess because they had a mature relationship with God?

He wrote to young men because . . .

- What quality would *young men* possess that would enable them to be victorious over their enemy?
- Verse 14 reveals the *key* to remaining strong and living victoriously—what is it?

John is attempting to reassure Christians of their salvation and growth in Christ. Next he will warn them about the dangers of loving the world and listening to false teaching. He tells them that not only are believers to love God and fellow believers, he also tells them what they are not to love—the world. John is not referring here to God's creation—that which reveals His glory and which He declared as good. He is also not referring to the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for it (John 3:16). The term for *world* John uses here actually refers to the realm of Satan's influence—those who are under his authority and who hate God as a result.

5. Is it possible to love the world and love God at the same time? v.15 (See James 4:4 for further insight into why this is so.)

- a. Verse 16 is a summation of all sin that is present in the world. Name the three categories into which every sin known to mankind falls.

Once again, John makes a sharp contrast: God and the world are such opposites that it is impossible to love both at the same time—they are mutually exclusive. But since believers cannot remove themselves from the world, we must understand that we live in the middle of a war zone. There will always be an ongoing battle on earth between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. One day Satan's kingdom will be destroyed and his rule will come to an end. In the meantime, our mission as believers is to learn to be *in the world but not of the world!*

- b. What is happening to this present world? v. 17 What about the one who does the will of God? What does John mean by this?

The world's values, which seem so appealing, are in direct opposition to God. As believers, when we love the world, we are turning away from God's love to a *substitute*, and the world is full of substitutes! Anything in our lives that keeps us from enjoying God's love and doing His will is of the world and not of God. It is foolish to hold tightly to something that is passing away. God's missionary Jim Elliot once said: "*He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*" Remember that isolation from God's people (even the difficult ones) makes it very easy for believers to become worldly. We need each other—we belong to each other—we depend on each other to live in this world and to enjoy the next!

In the remaining verses of chapter 2, John warns about the coming of the Antichrist, and that many antichrists are already here; meaning the last hour before the Lord's return has already begun.

6. What is the evidence that proves this? v. 19

a. What does John have to say about the spirit of antichrist? vv. 22–23

7. John states in verses 20–21 that every believer has an anointing from the Holy Spirit. What does this anointing ensure?

a. Every believer can be confident of this anointing—why? v. 27 What is the promise here for *you*?

John writes (v. 26) to warn all believers about those who will try to deceive them. But what are the promises for the believers who continue to *abide in Him*?

b. vv. 24–25

8. What last piece of advice does John give in this chapter to encourage his readers? vv. 28–29 What does this mean to you personally?

Selah ~

Abiding—remaining in Him—results in eternal life and the assurance now that *you* may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming! Doing the right thing does not *make* you a Christian—it only proves that you are one!

Notes

Love in Action

1 John 3: Obeying in Love

Lesson 3

1 John 3:1–24

In a nutshell ~

When was the last time that you remember pausing to think about God's great love for you? John is filled with wonder as he contemplates the love of God in making us His children. At the time this epistle was written, the church was being influenced by false teachers (Gnostics) who believed they could sin without consequence and their spirits remain untainted by evil. They claimed to know God but they hated their fellow believers who did not agree with them. John wrote to refute their openly sinful lifestyle and to assure all true believers that they must practice what is right if they claim to be Christian.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read 1 John 3:1–24.

The Greek word for *children* is a reference to spiritual birth. John is calling attention to the fact that God has *given birth* to believers—they are His own children. To be called *children of God* is not merely to assume a title; it is rather an absolute fact of life. In this chapter, John wants all believers to have confident assurance of their position in God's family.

1. Think about it: What does it mean to *you* to be a child of God?
 - a. How did you come to be His child? See John 1:9–12; John 3:3; and 1 Peter 1:23.
 - b. How does the “world” feel about the child of God? v. 1
2. The word “know” in vv.1–2 speaks of *acceptance*. John makes a similar statement about Jesus in John 1:10–11. What is his point?

The failure to recognize Jesus was due to the fact that people didn't accept Him for all that He is. Since the world rejects God, should we really be surprised when it also rejects us—His offspring?

3. As His child, what is God's ultimate goal for you? v. 2

a. How should this revelation affect your life while here on earth?

Do you have the hope John is talking about in his letter? Then for you, Christian, Heaven is not just a destination, it is a motivation to become *as Jesus is!* Since you enjoy the privilege of the family relationship with God, you must also bear the responsibility of exhibiting the character of God in your everyday life. The word *hope* (v. 3) means the confident expectation of future blessings. Since you have the hope of one day seeing Christ and becoming like Him, you must also desire to purify yourself from the presence of all sin in your life.

4. Look up the word *purify* (v. 3) and write a practical definition based upon its application to your life.

John uses the present tense in speaking of Jesus: "*He is pure*" (v. 3); "*He is righteous*" (v. 7). He remains these things today because He is eternal and He is opposed to sin and its devastating effect upon His children.

Selah ~

The believer's position is that of a child of God—nothing less—period! But as His child, do you fully realize the meaning behind that great truth? The Apostle Paul stated that the moment we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, the veil of unbelief that previously blinded our hearts to the truth is lifted and taken away and we see Him for who He is (2 Corinthians 3:14–18). Paul also says that the process of transformation here on earth is a slow one and we will only fully comprehend once we reach Heaven. Take a moment to consider the following from your perspective . . .

a. Briefly relate when and how you met Jesus Christ for the very first time.

b. Since then, are you surprised when the "world" does not accept you for being a Christian?

- c. As Jesus continues to reveal Himself to you through His Word, do you continue to see more of Him manifested in your daily life? Give an example.

- d. Be encouraged Christian! John states that one day **you will be like Jesus!** Right now, as the Holy Spirit works in and through your life, would you say that you are working *with God* or *resisting Him*?

Key Verse ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 3:18**

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week’s end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

Verses 4–10 are a challenge for the believer to interpret and make application in daily life. The Bible does not give one overall definition for sin, but here it states that *sin is lawlessness*. Scripture tells us that lawlessness is characteristic of the spirit of Antichrist: *“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and then man of lawlessness [sin] is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God . . .”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

5. Look up the following references that represent the various facets of sin and briefly note what you learn . . .

a. Proverbs 4:19

b. Romans 14:23b

c. James 4:17

d. 1 John 5:17a

The “man of lawlessness” does not reign in the believer’s life, but each child of God must deal with known sin the same way God dealt with it—by putting it to death!

Up close ~

Finish the sentences contained in the chart below to get a bigger picture of sin.

v. 4: *Whoever commits sin*

v. 4: *And sin is*

v. 5: *Christ was manifested*

v. 6: *The conclusion is*

v. 8: *He that commits sin*

v. 8: *The origin of sin is*

v. 8: *The Son of God was manifested*

v. 9: *The conclusion is*

John asserts (v. 9) that those who have been born into God’s family do not sin because God’s life (seed) is in them. They cannot keep on sinning because they have been born of God. John’s intent is to convey that the believer can no longer choose to *habitually*, or *continually* live in sin—they do not make a practice of it. They do not desire to live in that way; in fact, they renounce it because it is incompatible with their new nature in Christ. Sin is still active and, at times the believer will give in to it, but sin no longer has dominion or control, which is why the Christian is constantly fighting against it! In other words, your Christian walk is daily lived out on a spiritual battleground. The real question is: *who will win your heart today. . .tomorrow. . .next week?*

Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only thing that allowed God to forgive the sinner. It also provided the way for Christians to live without living in sin. He came literally to *destroy the works of the devil* (v. 8). The word “destroy” means to *diffuse*, or to *take the power out*. Satan is a defeated foe—meaning he can only have the victory if we let him! Remember that you as a Christian are fighting from the position of VICTORY—Jesus has already won! Will you take a moment to compose a prayer of thanks to Him?

When asked to lay one's life down for our brethren, we should be willing. The true test of being a Christian is our willingness to sacrifice on behalf of our brothers and sisters.

- b. Personal: Can you give a practical example of how you are expressing your love in action and in truth?

God knows that we love imperfectly and that we do not always rise to His standard. We may not be there for someone in need; we may not be willing to love that difficult individual in the body of Christ. We may even begin to listen to Satan's lies about us. If or when we do fall short, we have God's power and peace that keeps us secure in Him. And because He knows all things, He understands our desire to follow His example.

4. If your heart is right with God (1 John 1:9), what blessing is yours? v. 21

- a. With this confidence at hand, what can we do? v. 22 (See also John 15:12-16).

Warren Wiersbe says that conscience is the window of the heart that lets in God's truth. When we have confidence toward God, we also have freedom of speech in His presence, resulting in answered prayer and rest for our souls!

Up close ~

In verse 24, John speaks of the indwelling of Christ made possible by the Holy Spirit. John first heard Jesus speak of Him in the Upper Room Discourse (John 14). In these parting words, Jesus spoke of "another Comforter," the *Parakletos*—*One called alongside*. His Spirit makes it possible for us to know that He abides in us. What fact do you find about the Holy Spirit in John 14:17a, that is similar to John's words here in 3:1? Keep this in mind as you navigate through this temporal world with the Spirit's enabling.

Remember, if there is no sacrifice involved, it isn't Christian love. Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing! Individual acts of sacrificial love have transforming power, so don't ever minimize what you do for another in the name of the Lord. Jesus told His disciples that even a cup of cold water given in His name carries with it a reward!

Notes

Love in Action

1 John 4: Believing in Love

Lesson 4

1 John 4:1–21

In a nutshell ~

The beloved Apostle John reminds his readers in chapter four of the critical importance of discerning between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, a warning which still applies today. The world puts forth philosophies and beliefs that seem to make sense but when held up to the truth of God's Word, are shown to be what they are—wrong and dangerous. Christians must learn not to rely on the claims or credentials of other people, but to make it their aim to know God's Word well enough to be able to discern truth from error for themselves.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read 1 John 4:1–21.

Are you in the habit of testing every person you listen to and every message you hear to see if they line up with Scripture? Do your words and actions present an accurate picture of God to others around you? These are some of the issues we will deal with in our lesson this week, as we add to our understanding of what a mature, loving disciple of Christ looks like.

By the time John's letter was written, he was most likely the only remaining eyewitness to the person and work of Jesus in the world. A portion of the second and third generation believers had begun to doubt what they had been taught about Jesus. The influence of the false teachers was being felt. John makes the point that the responsibility for testing the spirits does not rest on church leaders or theologians, but each individual believer.

1. Why is it so important to try (question) every spirit and teaching we hear? v. 1
 - a. What is the most important "test" to apply? v. 2
 - b. What does John say in vv. 2–3 that reiterates his statements in 2:22–23?

2. What does John state about God's "children" in vv. 4–6?
- What does he say in these same verses about the false teachers in the world?
 - Why do *you* think a false teacher would be well received by the world?

“ . . .By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (v. 6). We can closely inspect a person's lifestyle and the fruit of their ministry but the most important test must be *what is being taught about the person and work of Jesus Christ!* The ultimate truth test for whether or not a person is speaking for God is his (or her) belief about Jesus Christ. John's point is that every believer has the responsibility to call into question anyone who rejects the biblical representation of Christ.

Note: John's use of the pronoun *you* (v. 4), is plural and refers to the community of believers. The used of "them" and "they" are both references to false teachers. John implies here that while every believer must battle the enemy daily, we are not meant to do battle against him alone. There is a greater power available to us in numbers whenever "we" come together, locking our shields for prayer, protection and guidance.

Up close ~

The world turns a deaf ear to the things of God. Look up 1 Corinthians 2:12–14 to find out why and note the reason below.

The Spirit of God, however, enables the believer to do many things. Briefly note what He does for the believer according to the following:

- John 14:17
- John 14:26
- John 15:26–27
- John 16:13–15

Key Verse ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 4:17**

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world..”

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week’s end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

Earlier in his letter (1:5), John described God’s nature as light; here in v. 7, John describes Him as *love*. Genuine biblical love finds its true origin in God. It is in Him that believers discover the resource from which to draw the purity, holiness, and joy needed to love others. Unfortunately, we all too often neglect these valuable resources, trying to supplement them instead from the depths of our own imperfect hearts, causing ourselves and others great disappointment.

3. What is the proof of the Christian’s spiritual birth and relationship with God? v. 7
 - a. How does this love come into the world? v. 8
 - b. What does a person who does not love other Christians reveal about themselves? v. 8
 - c. What is the proof and purpose of God’s love for us? v. 9

4. Verse 10 provides the true definition of love. Finish the verse below by filling in *your own name* where space is provided. (Read it through again with this emphasis.)

“. . . This is love: not that _____ loved God, but that He loved _____ and sent His Son to be the propitiation for _____’s sins.”

Take a moment to pause and ponder the full meaning of what you just read. The essence of verse 10 reveals why God created you, why He cares, and why He allowed His Son to die on the cross for you. Briefly state what this means to you personally.

Selah ~

The phrase “*God is love*” appears so simple on the surface, but behind these words is the Master’s plan of the ages. To help add some clarity to the depth of God’s love, try the exercise below. Read the phrase and the corresponding verses in parenthesis; then pick out a key word that is significant to you. This is completely subjective and will vary in your group but be ready to share and support your answer.

Because God loves—He gave (4:9) My key word: _____

Because God loves—He died (4:10) My key word: _____

Because God loves—He completes (4:12) My key word: _____

Because God loves—He blesses (4:13, 18) My key word: _____

Being born into God’s family opens up the way for a mutual love relationship—both incoming and out-flowing! “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*” (v. 11). As we continue taking on our Father’s likeness, we also allow His love to become the motive that compels us to love one another.

Evidently there were false teachers who had left the church, claiming to love God and yet at the same time hating God’s children. In verses 11–12 and 19–21, John reiterates that it is not possible to love God whom they had never seen and, at the same time, despise those belonging to Him. God was present on earth—visibly—in the life of His Son, Jesus Christ. Presently, the Holy Spirit is with God’s children on earth—*visibly*—in the lives of His children. There is evidence of His presence and power each time believers reach out in love.

5. When we do live by God’s love, what dual action takes place? v. 12
 - a. Look up the word *perfected* in several different translations and note your findings.

God never intended for His children to hoard His love for their own enjoyment; He intends for us to give it out and, as we do, His inexhaustible supply of *Agape`* is continually replenished as needed. When He abides in us and we demonstrate our love for one another, His love becomes *perfected—matured* in us. If you have ever wondered why Christians go through difficulties in life, part of the reason is because God wants to mature our love to the point that it becomes second nature to us. Love is not something for us to keep close—it must overflow to others in order to be effective!

- b. What reason does John give as to why we love God and others? v. 19
 - c. Personal: On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being best, how much are you visibly showing your love for God and others *by your actions*?

Trusting in His Love

Reread 1 John 4:13–18 for review.

Following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the disciples experienced the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, making it possible for them and every believer thereafter to know what it means to abide—to *live in God* and have *God live in them*. “*We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit*” (v.13). The Holy Spirit is the gift who enables believers to trust in their relationship with God.

1. What other reason does John give for believers trusting in the message they have heard? v. 14

The “we” referred to here pertains to the apostles and other eyewitnesses of the Lord’s life on earth.

a. What is the test that proves a person’s belief genuine? And what is the evidence of that profession of faith? v. 15

In verse 16, the pronoun “we” refers not to the apostles, but to John and his readers. He says that believers have known by experience and therefore trust in the love of God.

2. As believers trust in that love daily, what understanding do they gain? v. 16b

a. Personal: Share one of the ways *you* personally experienced God’s love abiding in you this past week.

b. What kind of love is produced by this mutual indwelling love of God? v. 17

When we have boldness we do not fear. Love and fear cannot co-exist; one will automatically exclude the other. Since fear has to do with punishment and since Jesus Christ took the believer’s punishment upon Himself, any fear in the believer’s life has to do with a lack of confidence in God’s provision. Believers do not need to be afraid of the future or of impending judgment because God’s love has set them free to love Him and others openly. The future is your friend when Jesus is your Lord!

c. Personal: Have you come to terms with how much God loves you? Your love for Him will be reflected in your love for others. As you continue to let your love overflow, what great truth can you claim in Matthew 25:37–40?

Notes

Love in Action

1 John 5: Victorious in Love

Lesson 5

1 John 5:1–21

In a nutshell ~

If you were composing a letter to leave behind as a guide to help others know and understand what really matters, you would choose your words very carefully. Neatly tucked inside the closing chapter of John's epistle we find the words that were most important to him—those containing the key to abundance here and now as well as in the hereafter: *begotten, overcome, victory, eternal life, assurance, confidence, answered prayer and freedom*—all words that convey a sense of permanence. John's desire at the end of his life was to leave those who would follow after him a solid foundation on which to build and rest their faith in God.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read 1 John 5:1–21.

John has spelled out clearly how to recognize the characteristics that are the basis for determining whether or not someone is a true Christian.

1. Let's briefly recap by taking a look back at what the chapters in 1 John previously taught us about the birthmarks of a believer. Using the references below, finish the following: *Everyone who is born of God . . .*

a. 2:29 –

b. 3:9 –

c. 4:7 –

2. Here in chapter 5, John completes the picture, brushing on the finishing strokes by explaining how to be victorious in our Christian faith. From the verses below, how does John complete his thought pattern about *everyone who is born of God*?

a. 5:1 –

b. 5:4 –

c. 5:18 –

3. According to John's statements here in chapter 5, how do we know that we love God's children? v. 2

- a. What is the true test of a believer's love for God? v. 3
- b. Look up the definition of the word *burdensome*. What does John mean when he says that God's commandments are not burdensome? v. 3
- c. Look back to the statements made about this by Jesus in the Upper Room in John 14:15 and 21. What, again, is the promise for the one who obeys Him?

John, like Jesus, inseparably linked *love* together with *obedience*. John adds the emphasis that obedience to God is possible because His commands are not a burden to those that love Him.

Selah ~

Realizing that your love for God is directly equivalent to the degree of your obedience to Him, how much would you say that you love Him right now? Please share your thoughts.

4. Who does John say will win the battle against the world? vv. 4–5

- a. In John 16:33, what does John add that is key to our ability to overcome?

Though the ultimate battle has been won *in Christ*, daily each conflict must be lived out on the battlefield! The way to overcome and claim victory is by renewing your faith through the Holy Spirit's power indwelling you. Will you do it now and praise Him for making it possible for you to overcome?

Key Verse ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 5:13**

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week’s end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

Blessed Assurance

Read 1 John 5:6–21 for review.

The Apostle John understood that a wrong interpretation of the truth would have lasting negative consequences for the believers. His goal was to help them learn to discern and live for that which is based upon truth. The singular thread that wove together John’s letter was the truth that eternal life is in Jesus Christ alone. *“This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth”* (v. 6).

1. Who are the three who bear witness to this in heaven? These three are one. v. 7
 - a. Who are the three who bear witness on earth? These three agree as one. v. 8

These verses have to do with three phases of Jesus’ life when He was manifested as the Son of God in Human form: at His baptism (*the water*), His death (*the blood*), and His resurrection (*the Spirit*). Each of these testified to the fact that the man Jesus was the divine Son of God.

John makes the point (v. 9) that because the people of his day believed human testimony when it was validated by two or three witnesses, then surely they could believe the three-fold witness of God, since He was behind all three. Together they testified that Jesus is the Christ.

Up close ~

In the Gospel of John, Jesus responded to those who questioned Him by indicating He had *five* very reliable witnesses; who or what were they in each of the following verses?

- a. John 5:31–32, and 37
- b. John 5:33–35
- c. John 5:36
- d. John 5:39

2. According to 1 John 5:10, what does John declare about the one who believes in the Son of God?

- a. What about those who do not believe?
- b. What truth does John make clear for everyone in verse 12?

The false teachers John wrote to the believers about did not believe *that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*. This truth is not only a future hope, but also a present reality for every believer. We need not wait for it—we need not work for it; it is rather a gift from God that can be fully experienced NOW! Have you thanked Him lately for His priceless indescribable gift?

The last nine verses of John's wonderful letter are meant to be a summary of the text and an encouragement to all believers to apply what they have read and believed.

3. To whom does John write and for what purpose? v. 13

4. What is the sweet confidence that we as believers have in approaching God?
vv. 14–15

- a. If we are sure that He hears us, what are we promised?

Selah ~

The High Priest of the Old Testament was allowed once a year to enter the Holy of Holies on behalf of God's people. Our High Priest—Jesus Christ—tore down the veil separating God from man and is seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession on our behalf. Read Hebrews 4:14–16 through as you think about prayer.

- a. How does God want you to approach Him in prayer?

- b. What do these verses tell you about your Lord? How would this enable Him to understand *your* petitions?

- c. Personal: Do *you* have the kind of confidence the writer of Hebrews talked about and that John writes about here in 5:14–15? (Please personalize it.)

Praying according to God's will is the key to receiving what we ask of Him. It is important to discuss the matter with Him and to know what the Scriptures say about His will. Most of God's will for our lives is already written on the pages of the Bible. By learning to use His Word to formulate our requests and praying the promises back to Him, we are praying in a way that honors Him, assuring us of our petitions.

Verses 16–17 present an example of the kind of prayer God will answer. Because believers are called to love, we are also called to pray! When we see a Christian brother or sister in sin, we should pray and, as the Lord leads, confront them about their sin. The question is in the difference between sinning in a way that leads to death and sinning in a way that does not. There are differing opinions as to what John's intended meaning is here; therefore, we must examine it in the context of the entire letter. John was writing to the believers to refute the false teachers who denied Jesus' deity and at the same time lived in habitual sin themselves. Since they were living in a continual state of rebellion against God, and at the same time denying who Jesus Christ was, their unrepentant attitude would keep them in a place that was beyond the reach of prayer. We are not called to judge others but to pray for them, and to pray in such a way that God would hear from heaven and answer! The prayer of a righteous person avails much (James 5:16).

5. What does the one born of God *do*—and *not do*? v. 18

The person who makes the deliberate choice *not* to continue in sin is safe—Jesus keeps that one safe. The enemy cannot take away his/her salvation; they are secure in God's grace!

John earlier wrote his Gospel in order that his readers would come to believe in Jesus Christ (John 20:31). He wrote this epistle so that believers might *know* and have assurance of their salvation. Although we may doubt and even falter due to lifestyle choices or our circumstances, John assures us all that we do not need to worry about our salvation! *“These things have I written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life”* (v. 13).

Up close ~

In addition to *knowing* we have eternal life, there are six other instances in chapter 5 where John uses the assuring words “we know.” Find all six and finish the statements (taken from the NKJV).

1. *We know that we love the children of God when* (v. 2) _____

2. *We know that if He hears us* (v. 15) _____

3. *We know that whoever is born of God* (v. 18) _____

4. *We know that we are of God* (v. 19) _____

5. *We know that the Son of God has come* (v. 20) _____

6. *We know Him who* (v. 20) _____

7. Personal: What have you learned through your study that has increased your confidence level in your walk with God? How has this changed your life?

In one final attempt to refute false teaching and rescue those who might be prone to receive it, John closes his letter with an affectionate plea: *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen”* (v. 21). It is his last word, his heartfelt entreaty to every believer: keep yourself from anything that would threaten to take God’s place in your heart—anything that vies for your attention and affection. Even aged believers can be tempted, as the old hymn says: *“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.”* Our heartfelt prayer should be: *“Take my heart, Lord, take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above.”* Will you make the words of this old song your prayer today?

Notes

2 John

Lesson 6

Book Profile ~

The epistle or letter that has come to be known as 2 John begins by identifying the author simply as “The Elder”. As you read through the letter, you will find many similarities in vocabulary and style to the gospel of John. It is also believed that although many of the disciples and church leaders were called elders, John being the oldest remaining disciple was called “The Elder”. John was often referred to in his early years as a “Son of Thunder”, but he loved to refer to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. Truly, the emphasis of John’s gospel and his three letters was love. Tradition holds that John spent most of his later years in Ephesus where it is believed he wrote this second epistle around 90 A.D. How it must have saddened John to write the words of Christ in Revelation 2:1-4 to his old church, declaring that they had lost their first love.

FIRST DAY: Read all of 2 John See page 8.

1. To whom is this letter written?

- a. There are two opinions as to who *the elect lady and her children are*. Figuratively, the *elect lady* may refer to a local church and *her children* may refer to members of that church. Literally, the *elect lady* may be an unnamed individual. A possible Greek translation of the phrase *elect lady* is the lady Electa. Electa was the name of a Christian friend of John’s, a mother who was well known in her community, whose sister’s children were probably residents of Ephesus.

However, the general consensus is that this letter was sent to a group of believers, described as *elect* to remind them (and all Christians) of the blessed calling of being chosen and set apart from the world for a holy purpose. Whether the letter was written to a specific church or to an individual, we know it was written to Christians and thus it would be profitable for us to glean from John’s instructions and warnings.

Record what you learned about the recipient of this letter.

2. Describe the conditions existing in the church at the time of the writing of 2 John.

3. Mark the following key words on your Observation Worksheet (page 8). Use a different color or symbol to identify each word.

Truth
love

doctrine
walk

abide(s)
deceiver

commandment

4. What were some of John's purposes for writing this letter?

5. As you read this epistle, describe your overall impressions.

a. What topics are covered in this letter?

1) Which topic are you most interested in studying further?

What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you.

SECOND DAY:

1. The Second letter of John can be divided into four paragraph divisions. Write a title or summary statement for each paragraph division. **Note:** A summary statement is a phrase or sentence which describes what you think the section is about.

Verses 1-3

Verses 4-6

Verses 7-11

Verses 12-13

2. Keeping in mind the key words, what do you think is the key verse of 2 John?

3. Taking into consideration the key words, paragraph summaries, and the key verse write a brief title for the book of 2 John.

4. Complete the chart below using the information you have previously read or recorded in this lesson.

2 JOHN AT A GLANCE

THEME/TITLE OF 2 JOHN:

PARAGRAPH THEMES
VERSES 1-3
VERSES 4-6
VERSES 7-11
VERSES 12-13

KEY VERSE:

THIRD DAY: Read 2 John 1-3

1. The key word *truth* is used four times in this section. Record what John wrote about truth in verses 1-3.

2. Look up the following verses and record the insights you gained about Biblical truth:

John 1:17

John 8:32

John 14:6

Galatians 2:14

Ephesians 1:13

1 Thessalonians 2:13

3. *because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever* 2 John 2.
List some of the benefits of truth which abides:

John 15:7

1 John 2:14

1 Peter 1:23

a. Answer one of the following:

How has *the truth abiding* in you caused you to love *truth*? OR How has the *Truth* (Jesus) abiding in you caused you to love the *Truth*?

*The Cross is God's truth about us,
and therefore it is the only power which can make us truthful. When we know the Cross, we are
no longer afraid of the truth.*

- D. Bonhoeffer

FOURTH DAY: Read 2 John 4-6

1. Love is a key word in this paragraph division. What is written about *love*?
2. Verses 4-6 reiterate John's statements in 1 John regarding love. What further truths does 1 John reveal about walking in the *commandment* to love?

1 John 2:5

1 John 2:10

1 John 2:15

1 John 3:14

1 John 3:16

1 John 4:7

1 John 4:19

- a. How would *walking in love* be a deterrent to falling prey to *deceivers*?

FIFTH DAY: Read 2 John 7-11

1. This paragraph division addresses the problem of *deceivers*. Record what John wrote about these *deceivers*.

2. According to verse 9, what makes the difference between a deceiver and one who *has both the Father and the Son*?
 - a. Describe *abiding in the doctrine of Christ*.

3. *Abide in the doctrine of Christ* (verse 9) suggests there are boundaries set for us to live within. Does this seem confining to you or liberating? Why?

4. The philosophy of the world today is tolerance. Christians are accused of being narrow minded and judgmental. Read John's instructions regarding deceivers in verses 10 and 11. Why do you think John taking such a strong stance is necessary?

SIXTH DAY: Read 2 John 12-13

1. Describe Paul's heart for the recipients of this letter using verses 1, 12, and 13.
 - a. How does his expression of love and concern reflect a life that *walks* what he has written?

2. Scan the epistle of 2 John. Using the key word *abide*, summarize the book of 2 John as it could be divided into two sections.

Verses 1-6 Abide in _____.

Verses 7-13 Do not abide with _____.

3. Look up the definition of the word *abide* and describe what it means to you personally to abide in truth and love.

4. How has the study of this book impressed you with the importance of who you abide with?

*The fear of the LORD leads to life,
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction.*

- Proverbs 19:23

2 JOHN

Observation Worksheet

¹ The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,

² because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

³ Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

⁴ I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

⁵ And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

⁶ This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

⁸ Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

⁹ Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;

¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

¹² Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³ The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

3 JOHN

Lesson 7

Book Profile ~

John, the apostle of love, knew the importance of fellowship. First John emphasizes the importance of fellowship with God through abiding in Christ; in Second John he forbids fellowship with those who do not abide in the teachings of Christ and in Third John he encourages fellowship with those who do abide in the teachings of Christ. True fellowship is a result of sharing the common bond provided through Christ, abiding in Him, and walking according to His teachings.

Third John, as written in the original Greek, is the shortest book of the Bible. Its subjects are as vital today as they were when John wrote it from Ephesus in approximately 90 A.D. As you read this letter, note its relevancy to the church of the 1990's. May it encourage you to live as those John commended in the letter.

FIRST DAY: Read 3 John using the observation worksheet provided. See last page

1. To whom is this letter written?

- a. *Gaius* was one of the most commonly used names of the Roman Empire. Other men referred to by this name appeared in the New Testament four times. Little is known about the recipient of this letter. There is no reference to *Gaius* being a pastor or elder in the church. Many regard him as an active lay member and personal friend of John's.

List what this Third Epistle of John reveals about *Gaius*.

2. Record the two other men mentioned in the letter and what you discovered about them.

3. Mark the following key words on your observation worksheet. Use a different color or symbol to identify each word.

Truth

witness

good

evil

4. Discovering the author's purpose for writing often gives us a deeper understanding of a book. Knowing *why* a book is written helps us to understand *what* has been written. What were some of John's purposes for writing this letter?

5. As you read this epistle, describe your overall impression.

6. What topics are covered in this letter?

a. Which topic are you most interested in studying further?

Within the covers of the Bible are all the answers for all the problems men face. The Bible can touch hearts, order minds, and refresh souls.

- Ronald Reagan

A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to a person who isn't.

SECOND DAY:

1. The third letter of John can be divided into five paragraph divisions. Write a title or summary statement for each paragraph division. Note: a summary statement is a phrase or sentence that describes what you think the section is all about.

Verse 1

Verses 2-4

Verses 5-8

Verses 9-12

Verses 13-14

2. Keeping in mind the key words, what do you think is the key verse of 3 John?

3. Taking into consideration the key words, paragraph summaries and the key verse write a brief title for the book of 3 John.

4. Complete the chart below using the information you have previously read or recorded in this lesson.

3 JOHN AT A GLANCE

THEME/TITLE OF 3 JOHN:

PARAGRAPH THEMES
VERSE 1
VERSES 2-4
VERSES 5-8
VERSES 9-12
VERSES 13-14

KEY VERSE:

THIRD DAY:

1. List the four key words and record what 3 John says about each one. (Be careful to use the words from the text)

a. Summarize what you discovered about each key word.

truth

witness

good

evil

2. Second John and Third John contain many similarities. Compare the two letters as to:

a. salutation (greeting) and conclusion

b. similar repeated words and phrases

c. tone or mood

d. problems in the church

FOURTH DAY: Read 3 John 1-6, 12

1. Paul commended both Gaius and Demetrius in this letter. What similar comment did he make about both of them? (see verses 3 and 12)
 - a. A person's testimony or reputation speaks volumes about not only himself, but about the church and the gospel. How would you explain the importance of a good testimony or reputation to another Christian whose life was not producing good works?

CHALLENGE: Use Scripture to support your answer.

2. Record John's response from verse 4 to the fact that Gaius was walking in truth.
 - a. *As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children* | Thessalonians 2:11. Like John, Paul had a father's heart for Christians in his care. Summarize this kind of loving care as expressed in the following verses: Ephesians 1:15,16; Philippians 1:4; I Thessalonians 2:19,20 and 3:6-9.
 - 1) If knowing his children are walking in truth causes a human shepherd to rejoice, how much do you think it means to our Heavenly Shepherd?

3. Describe a lifestyle of *walking in truth*.

- a. What are some of the temptations that can prevent a Christian from walking in truth?

- 1) What can we do to combat these temptations?

Those who believe in the Holy Scriptures are bound to observe its teachings. Those who do not are bound by its consequences. -William Bradford, Governor of the Plymouth Colony

FIFTH DAY: Read 3 John 5-8

1. In this paragraph division John praises Gaius for his hospitality. At the time of this writing, it is believed that John would send out missionaries to preach in many different cities. Their room and board was typically provided by those in the church. The strangers which John referred to in verse 5 were probably these traveling ministers. These men carried with them letters of recommendation from their home churches or the disciples. These men had returned to John bearing witness of Gaius' care. What do the following verses say about showing and giving hospitality?
 - a. I Timothy 5:10

 - b. Hebrews 13:2

2. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, included a recommendation for Phoebe, a Christian sister who had helped others, including Paul. That you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you...Romans 16:2. There are many ways to receive someone in the Lord. How would you describe hospitality as it relates to the church today?

Hospitality is a form of worship

SIXTH DAY: Read 3 John 9-12

1. In this paragraph division, John moves from commending to reproof. Describe Diotrephes' behavior.

2. According to verse nine, what did Diotrephes love?
 - a. Choose one of the following Scriptures and describe how it relates to *loving the preeminence* among men: Matthew 20:20-28; Matthew 23:4-8 or Luke 22:24-27.

- b. Rather than *loving preeminence* what should our behavior be like:

Romans 12:10

Philippians 2:3-5

Titus 1:7

...for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble -1 Peter 5:5b

REVIEW:

1. Write John's desire for Gaius according to verse 2?

a. Describe a *prosperous soul*.

b. Physical health is a result of nutrition, exercise, proper rest - a disciplined order of a balanced life. What are the components of good, spiritual health?

1) In what ways does spiritual health affect physical and emotional health?

c. As Christians, it is important that we care first about one another's spiritual well-being, but also one another's emotional and physical health. How is caring about each of these aspects an expression of love?

2. What spiritual lessons did you glean from this short letter of Third John?

My prayer for you, my very dear friend, is that you may be as healthy and prosperous in every way as you are in soul. - 3 John 2 JBP

3 JOHN

Observation Worksheet

- ¹ The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:
- ² Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.
- ³ For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth.
- ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
- ⁵ Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,
- ⁶ who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,
- ⁷ because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.
- ⁸ We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.
- ⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.
- ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.
- ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.
- ¹² Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.
- ¹³ I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;
- ¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.