

## 1-3 John | Study Notes

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**Key: Knowing God truly is the overarching theme of both John's gospel and letters.**

### Author

There is no explicit indication of who wrote the letters of 1-3 John. However, there are several clues and certain things we do know about him... maybe even enough to get to the bottom.

- He has a great deal of authority and seems to oversee a group of house churches possibly in Ephesus.
- He has a close personal relationship with these churches.
- He is an eyewitness to Jesus' resurrection (1 John 1:1-5). And refers to himself as "the elder" in 2 & 3 John.
- The style, vocabulary, language and thoughts in these letters are strikingly like that of John's gospel

*"He wrote the gospel for unbelievers in order to arouse their faith (20:30-31), and the letter for believers in order to deepen their assurance (5:13). His desire for the readers of the Gospel was that through faith they might receive life; for the readers of the letter that they might know they already had it. Consequently, the Gospel contains "signs" to evoke faith (20:30-31) and the letter tests by which to judge it." - John Stott*

*"One reason that determining the authorship of these letters is such a sticky question is that the writer's visceral urge is to witness to God, into whose truth and love he has ventured far, not to present profile of his personal identity and petty human expectations. His personality is obscured by the divine person to whom he has so thoroughly subordinated his thoughts, actions, and affection. He writes like someone well might whom perhaps sixty years earlier Jesus taught to pray, "Your will be done," and composing these letters as a very old man has become an instrument of answer to his own daily petition." - Robert W. Yarbrough*

## Dates | ESV Study Bible

John becomes a disciple of Jesus (A.D. 28-30)  
Death and Resurrection of Jesus (A.D. 30-33)  
Nero's Reign (A.D. 54-68)  
Destruction of Jerusalem Temple (A.D. 70)  
Gospel of John Written (A.D. 85-95)  
1-3 John probably written from Ephesus (A.D. 85-95)  
John writes Revelation while in exile on Patmos (A.D. 95-96)

## Genre

**2-3 John bear the marks of a Hellenistic letter, modified in a Christian way. It has a salutation, a body, and a conclusion. It contains instructions and commands from the Apostle.**

**1 John lacks an opening greeting, and it does not have a thanksgiving section, and it does not really have a pronounced conclusion, like a normal Greco-Roman letter. 1 John was probably a sermon/circular letter.**

**1 John is a written piece of encouragement meant to deepen and reaffirm values already held by the intended audience.**

## Style | Amplification

What is it? It's a way to emphasize a point and drive it home. Using ...cyclical repetition, hyperbole, and stark contrasts.

### Examples of Amplification in 1 John by Colin Kruse

Strength- Strong words are used to amplify. An example of this is found in 1 John 3:15. "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer". Murderer is a strong word, a metaphor for extreme hatred.

Augmentation- Amplification by augmentation is effected in a number of ways – for example, the use of one step or a series increasing in intensity. (An example of this 1 John 2:2. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice not only for the sins of the Christian community but for the sins of the whole world.

Comparison- Amplification by comparison. 1An example of this is 1 John 5:9. The comparison between God's testimony and human testimony amplifies the greatness of God's testimony.

Accumulation- 1 John 1:1-3 is so powerful. The four sensory verbs heard, seen, looked at, and touched have “Word of Life” as their object.

Refinement- is a figure of speech that consists in dwelling on the same topic and yet seeming to say something ever new. Or repeating something in opposite terms like, 1 John 1:5 “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” This is John’s favorite technique. One commentator counted 35 examples of this in 1 John.

Reflexio- Is a figure of speech in which the same word is used with two different meanings. Like 1 John 2:7-8, when the author says... “I am not writing you a new commandment,

“New” carries the idea of novelty, but when he says “I am writing you a “new” command, it is newness in an eschatological sense that is meant.

Regressio- is a figure of speech that reiterates things already said and draws distinctions between them like in 1 John 2:18.

Virtually, every known rhetorical technique for amplification is used in this small little sermon!

## Outline→

- **Intro (1 John 1:1-4)**
- **God is Light (1:5-3:10) → “This is the message...”**
- **God is Love (1 John 3:11-5:17) → “This is the message...”**
- **Conclusion (1 John 5:18-21)**

## Context

**The audience, like I said earlier, they are probably Christian House Churches in and around Ephesus. That were likely predominantly Jewish**

## “The crisis” 1 John

A crisis had taken place. Difficulties had popped up because a faction... false believers spouting false beliefs. They no longer believed Jesus was the Messiah or the Son of God (1 John 2:18-23; 1 John 4:1-3). And they were not content to just leave they were causing all kinds of hostility towards these house churches (1 John 1:34-10).

Primary Concern- The primary concern of John is to strengthen the assurance of these congregations by providing them once again with a clear presentation of the gospel. He also provides these churches with tools to evaluate the false claims of “those who left”. (1 John 1:5-2:2; 2:3-11; 3:7-10, 14-15; 4:4-6, 7-8, 13-15; 5:13, 18-20).

### **Purpose of 2 John-**

- Written to House Church
- Command- Don't receive these Christ deniers (v.7, 10)

### **Purpose of 3 John-**

- Written to Gaius a member of a house church
- Command- Receive God honoring missionaries & Warning about a particular leader/elder (Diotrethes) who is causing all kinds of problems (v. 5-6 & 9-10)

### **Key Themes (ESV Study Bible)**

Incarnation

Christ our advocate and the propitiation for our sins

Those who know Christ forsake their sins

Denial of Jesus is a denial of the Father

Faith in Jesus results in forgiveness of sins, eternal life, confidence in prayer, and understanding and knowing God

God is light (1 John 1:5-3:10) God is love (1 John 3:11-5:17)

Christians Bear Observable Fruit:

- Practice truth/ righteousness
- Walk in light/ as he walked
- Confess sins and have forgiveness
- Keep/ obey his commandments/ Word
- Love one-another
- Overcome the evil one/ the world
- Do the will of God/ cannot keep on sinning
- **Confess the Son/ believe in Jesus**