

1 John

1 John

Walking in the Light

Ryan M. Marks

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1 John: Walking in the Light
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DEDICATION

Lord, may this tool be a helpful resource for the local church.

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How To Use This Study

This study is designed to help believers dig into God's Word. While personal Bible study is important, there is nothing like studying the Word of God with other like-minded believers. It is special fellowship with a promise when we gather with others in Jesus' name, in fact wherever two or more are gathered in Jesus' name, He is there (Matt. 18:20). We are meant for community. It was not good that Adam was alone, and, likewise, it is not good for a Christian to be a loner. We need fellowship with God's people for encouragement and exhortation, which is why the apostle Paul commanded us not to neglect assembling together (Heb. 10:25). Indeed, we are to come together to devote ourselves to the gathering together for prayer, praising God, eating together, and Bible study (Acts 2:42-47).

This study has in mind an 8-week format, in which the class reads the Scripture and book together aloud and discusses it. I encourage you to begin and end with prayer as well. For which Bible translation to use, I would encourage you to use the English Standard Version (ESV) or New American Standard Bible (NASB) as these are the most literal translations of the Bible, meaning that they are closest to a word-for-word translation from the original languages of the Scriptures. I have prepared this study with my open ESV Bible in my lap.

This study guide is designed to be read out loud by the class. Read the Scripture and discuss initial observations, then take turns reading through the breakdown of the passage in this guide. The goal is for your Bible study group to dig deeply into God's Word and learn how to study it in context, as opposed to taking a verse here and there. The Bible was not written with chapter and verse numbers; those have been added later in translations for the sake of clarity. They were added so we can say turn to such and such and we can study the Bible together more easily. Therefore, understanding paragraphs and units of

thought are essential to studying Scripture as God intended. We can stand on God's Word, but we have a responsibility to study that we be not ashamed (2 Tim. 2:14–26, 3:10–4:8).

I encourage you to have your own Bible open on your lap or readily accessible on your smartphone, tablet, or computer as you go through this study. Read the passage, then keep looking back at specific verses as you read this study and discuss together with God's people.

Grace, Truth, and Peace in Christ alone,
Ryan M. Marks

Introduction to 1 John

Authorship

While liberal scholars doubt and debate who authored the letter of 1 John, conservative scholars and the historical tradition have viewed 1 John as having been penned by the Apostle John. Yet, while John was the human author, his words were inspired (Gk., *theopneustos*, which literally means, “breathed out by God”) by the Holy Spirit. The Words of first John still breathe God’s life today, nearly 2,000 years since they were penned and have many lessons to teach.

Key Themes

The Apostle John reminds his readers to be on guard against false teachers, examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith, and to center the focus of their church teaching on Jesus Christ and

loving the local church. Theologians talk much of how 1 John bolsters doctrine on the divinity of Jesus Christ, discerning false teachers, walking the straight and narrow road, obedience to God, and a lively hope in the accomplished victory of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Outline of 1 John

EXHORTATION

Writing for Joy (1 John 1:1–4)

Walk in the Light (1 John 1:5–10)

Your Advocate (1 John 2:1–6)

The New Commandment of Love (1 John 2:7–14)

Don't Love the World (1 John 2:15–17)

Be on Guard for Antichrists (1 John 2:18–27)

LOVE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

We are Children of God (1 John 2:28–3:10)

We are to Love the Local Church (1 John 3:11–24)

INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN

DISCERNMENT

Test what Spirit You're Listening too (1 John 4:1-6)

WHO IS GOD

God is Love, True Love Not Enablement (1 John 4:7-21)

THE BODY IS VICTORIOUS

Co-overcomers in Christ (1 John 5:1-5)

Jesus is Eternal Life (1 John 5:6-12)

You Can Know for Certain (1 John 5:13-21)

Historical Context

1 John was likely written in the 90s A.D. from Ephesus (modern day Turkey) where tradition says the Apostle John was pastor, following Paul and Timothy. Further, John's first letter was likely written in response to the upcoming Gnostic heresy which Paul and John battled (see the paper in the appendix for more information on the Gnostics and the relevance of what John says today). The Gnostic heresy would continue to develop despite the

Apostles' labors to squelch it, and such aberrant teaching would prove a formidable foe to the truth of the gospel in the second century.

Week 1

1 John 1:1-10

Introduction

The book of 1 John was written by the Apostle John. Studying the Apostle John's writing is different than studying Paul's letters. Paul is linear in his writings, listing things out in a logical sequence: point 1, 2, 3, and so on. Paul also cites his testimony and call as an apostle directly from the Lord as the source of his authority when shepherding and discipling churches. But John, in contrast, does not use his authority to gain a hearing. In addition, John talks in circles: he talks about one thing and then how that thing applies and what it produces in our lives and then back to the first point again. The chief stylistic difference between reading Paul and John is between reading a

well-structured lecture and having a conversation with someone who cares deeply about you.

Background

The letter of 1 John refutes false teachings that were gaining ground. It seems likely that the false group that was arising was an early form of Gnosticism. The Gnostics (Gr., *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”) thought that they possessed “secret knowledge,” that they were super-spiritual, that the spiritual aspect is good and everything physical is evil. This mindset led them to deny that Jesus came and lived a life in the flesh. John combats this erroneous view in his letter. First John is a letter of Christian love, standing upon the truth, proclaiming the gospel, spiritual warfare, and practicing discernment when hearing people handling the Scriptures.

Read: 1 John 1:1–10

In the first four verses, we see that John is simply sharing the truth that was from the Beginning. He is speaking of Jesus.

Read: Gospel of John 1:1-18

Jesus is the Word of God. In Creation (Gen. 1:1-3), we see the Trinity involved in creating the universe: God the Father, God the Son (God spoke The Word) and God the Spirit hovering over the waters. Jesus is the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity in human form. One reason why the Bible is so important to us is because the Bible is the Word of God in print, and Jesus is the Word of God in flesh. Jesus is the Word, the Life, the Light, the God-Man (John 1:1-3, 14). But Jesus had a unique purpose, from Jesus comes Grace *and* Truth (John 1:14-18).

Jesus is not just the Truth, He is not just someone who preaches and tells you how wrong you are. O, He won't change His message to make you feel better! The truth does not change, and He is the Truth. But Jesus is also gracious. He is perfectly balanced. He is bold and does not mince words, but He loves with a compassionate grace.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION: How is your life? Do you simply proclaim the truth to

people about their sin or are you balanced with sharing the truth with a gracious heart endeavoring to bring them to the Savior, the Living Word of God?

Getting back to 1 John 1:1–10, we have already seen that Jesus is Word who has been around from the beginning. He was not created when He was born of Mary. Jesus has always been a member of the Trinity, just as the Holy Spirit and God the Father have always been members of the Trinity. God does not change. Jesus does not change.

John testifies in the first few verses of 1 John a reiteration of the points of John's Gospel: Jesus has been from the beginning, John saw Jesus during His earthly ministry, John heard Him, John had touched Him. Jesus was fully human, despite the Gnostic claims that He was not. Jesus is the source of the message of the gospel, the Way to eternal life. Jesus was not merely a step to "hidden spiritual knowledge," as the Gnostics taught. Jesus was not created, He is eternally along with the Father and Spirit and took on flesh in order to enter in to His

creation so that He could save us. The message of the gospel has never changed. It is always the truth and we can stand on it. We have fellowship with each other; we are united because those who believe the gospel have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Jesus is fully man and fully the Son of God. John's writings have a purpose—to establish our joy in Christ. We can be confident and steadfast in who Jesus is and what He has done. False teachings and speculators do not have to deter us. We know the Truth, The Living Word of Life—Jesus!

In verses 5–10, John reiterates the importance of walking in the Light. Those who are saved no longer walk in darkness, we have seen the Light and are to walk in the Light. To emphasize this importance, John says that the message he heard and proclaims is that God is Light. There is no darkness in God! He is perfectly Holy and Righteous. He is not tainted by evil in any way, shape, or form. If we claim to walk with God but live in darkness, we are liars. The Gnostics who claimed to walk with God in a secret closeness were liars because they lived in darkness.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION: Do you know anyone that claims to be a Christian but lives in darkness? According to Scripture, are they right with God? Are you right with God? Are you walking in the light or playing with darkness?

Those who lie do not practice, they do not live or walk, the truth. But we who walk in the light as Christ is in the Light, have fellowship with one another. We are united. And the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Those who say that they have no sin deceive themselves, they are self-deluded and there is no truth in them. But if we confess our sins, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from our wicked deeds. John's main argument here is that those who are *truly* Christians recognize that they are sinners and are saved by Jesus Christ! They are blood-bought and sustained by Jesus. Those who claim they have not sinned make God out to be a liar and they are not saved. The Living Word of God, Jesus, is not in them.

I have talked with people who claim to be Christians and are even church leaders who do not believe they are still sinners saved by the grace of

God. Paul said that it was a trustworthy saying *worthy of all acceptance* that Jesus came to save sinners of whom I am the worst (1 Tim. 1:15, context: 1 Tim. 1:3–20)! Remember how we started our lesson? Jesus Christ is the source of grace and truth. Those who are saved grow more and more thankful for Jesus. His grace means more to me every day. He saved me! I am such a lost sinner! I still sin!

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION: Do you view yourself as the worst of sinners as Paul viewed himself? We should all view ourselves that way. If we don't, we are looking down on people in arrogant pride saying that we are better than them (even if we don't verbalize it). Do you look down on anyone and in your heart, saying that you are better than them? Unsure or quick to say you don't judge others? Examine your actions, they are the result of your heart. We should look at people's fruit, boldly share the gospel and have a concern that they personally experience the saving grace of God through

receiving the forgiveness of their sins in Jesus Christ alone.

The gospel is a simple message. Someone once said in effect that a child can understand the gospel and theologians can study its intricacies their entire life. Are you clinging to the gospel? Are you living trusting in Jesus alone? Or have you turned to looking at a new teaching, listening to new philosophies and strayed from the truth? The most important question from our study of God's Word (not our own) today is that if you claim to be a Christian, are you walking in the light or have you been self-deceived and walking in darkness?

*** *End of Free Preview* ***