

1 John & James

Faith that Lives

Marilyn Kunz & Catherine Schell

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1 John & James: Faith that Lives

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1 John 1—5

A Survey of the Letter

When a long-awaited letter or e-mail arrives, we often read through it eagerly and hurriedly to understand the basic message. Then we go back and ponder it sentence by sentence, word by word. We read it two or three times to be sure we don't miss anything.

Imagine the excitement and anticipation when John's letter arrives at the home of some early Christians. "Read it! Read it!" someone shouts. "Be quiet. We can't hear," someone else urges. "What does he say?" asks another.

Is our desire for God's word as great as theirs? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a new sense of expectancy to hear God's voice as you read John's letter.

In your personal preparation, read through this letter in one sitting, using a recent translation. During subsequent weeks you will study each section of this letter in detail. Remember that today's study is a survey and you are looking only for the main ideas of the letter. Leave detailed discussion of each section for later meetings.

SURVEY

1. To help you see the main points of John's letter, have someone read aloud the first sentence of each paragraph.

2. What major points does John make in the first section, 1:1 through 2:17?

3. In 2:18-29, what warnings and advice does John give?

4. What are the major points in chapter 3?

In 4:1–5:12?

5. What are John's conclusions in 5:13-21?

6. Look through the entire letter again, noting each repetition of the phrases ***we know, this is how we know, or we may be sure***. What does this repetition tell you about John's purpose in writing this letter?

What does John know that he wants his readers to grasp?

SUMMARY

1. What ideas from this letter are particularly meaningful to you?

What ideas are you eager to explore further?

2. What words does John use to address his readers?

How would you describe John's feelings for the people to whom he wrote?

How does a person's attitude toward you affect the way you receive what he or she has to say?

PRAYER

God of light and love, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, help us pay careful attention to your word as we study this letter. Enable us to receive its truths with humility. Guide us to follow daily your clear directions in it. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.