



**Bible Study**

# **1 John**

# **1 John 1**

The apostle John was inspired by God to write a gospel, the book of Revelation and three letters. His passion and commitment to Jesus is obvious and his desire for us to understand that Jesus, though man, is also Almighty God is clearly evident. It is sad but perhaps not surprising, how quickly error and false teaching needed to be confronted by the apostles in the early church.

## **Testimony**

1 John 1 begins in a similar way to chapter 1 of John's gospel.

### **Jesus is the Creator**

He was present from the beginning. He is eternal. He became man and so, was seen, looked at, touched and proclaimed as the Word become flesh.

### **Jesus is the Source of Life**

He came as a living being and is the source of eternal life. He is one with the Father.

### **Jesus is God with Us**

The apostles spoke about what they knew from personal experience. They longed for others to have this personal relationship with God too - fellowship, friendship and intimacy with God. When we experience this and see others come to know Jesus, it brings wholeness to our joy in Christ.

## **God's Message**

The message comes from God, not from the apostles. Paul said much the same and Jesus himself, always referred to the Father.

### **God is Light**

The emphasis is upon God's purity, holiness and righteousness. To walk with God requires openness and honesty. No pretence or hypocrisy.

We delude ourselves, to suggest that we have fellowship with God if there is any darkness in our hearts. Darkness can be witchcraft and rebellion but, in fact, even the slightest sin will cause us to be separated from God.

### **Walk in the Light**

We are required to be transparent before God. Nothing is hidden from Him anyway, so it is foolish to try to hide anything. When we come to God and allow Him to reveal what is in our hearts, we are able to confess and agree with Him about our true spiritual state. Then we can have real fellowship with others in Christ, as well as with God.

It's painful to come into God's light but, when we do, there is the glorious opportunity to find His grace and to be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus' blood can deal with our guilt, our uncleanness and the punishment that we deserve for our sins.

We are simply liars if we claim to have no sin but with heartfelt confession, comes the promise for us to be forgiven and purified. We are no longer rejected but fully accepted, in fellowship and friendship with God and we can enjoy deep relationships with others in the body of Christ.

God cannot lie. His assessment of us is totally accurate. Proof of His word dwelling in us, is our awareness of sin and of our Saviour, Jesus, who died to deal with it!

### **Points to Consider:**

1. Are we faithful to the whole gospel message? Jesus is God and Jesus is man. He is both!
2. Do we recognise the clear link between our relationship with God and with each other? We cannot speak of knowing God and, yet, be in a bad place with others in the body of Christ.
3. Do we walk in the light? Are we secretive or even evasive? We must be open, honest and sincere with God and with other people.
4. What do we think about confessing our sins? It is not just words that we speak - it must be accompanied by a real change of heart and attitude.
5. God is holy but eager to forgive the repentant. Do we appreciate that? Do we really value the precious blood of Jesus shed for us?

## **1 John 2**

In the second chapter of his letter, John continues his theme of forgiveness, darkness and light but also has some very clear things to say about our need to love one another. He presents firm reasons for writing his letter. He urges believers to avoid loving the world and warns people about the antichrist and deception. He also exhorts believers to be ready for Jesus' return.

### **Dear Children**

The apostle is obviously a man of great compassion and has a high regard for God's people. His heart is the heart of a father and he wants compassion and discipline to come across in a very personal way.

### **Jesus the Advocate**

John's desire is that sin in the life of the believer should be exceptional, rather than habitual. He offers hope that, if we sin, there is someone who will represent us and speak up for us. However, because of Christ, we should always aim not to sin.

### **Loving One Another in the Body of Christ**

John explains that, if we have truly come to Christ, we will be obedient to him and, therefore, obey his commands. Obedience is the key way that we demonstrate the gospel is real to us and has really touched our lives. If we truly love Jesus, we will live as he lived. Of course, this is not a new concept. Living in the light of God means that we cannot hate our brother or sister in Christ. Hatred belongs to darkness and we are not in that place any more. In Christ, we can walk confidently and not stumble aimlessly.

### **Reasons for Writing**

God's people are not like the world, in darkness and despair. We are in a much better place. The poetic repetition of 'dear children', 'fathers' and 'young men', speaks to the people of God who have been forgiven and rescued from sin by faith in Jesus - and who have been introduced to knowing God as father. Older Christians, who have been faithful for many years. Young Christians, who have overcome the evil one and have been strengthened by God. We are all comforted by the knowledge that we have an eternal God who has always been and will always be there for us!

## **Do Not Love the World**

The entire world order is corrupted by Satan, where lust, desire for things of the flesh and a lot of pride, destroy true love for the Father. We are to live in this world but are not to be addicted to it!

## **The Last Hour**

John is aware that many false teachers will come and many will pretend to be Christ. These people will, at times, appear to be part of the church. However, their inconsistency and lack of faithfulness will betray them.

As believers, we need not be afraid. We have received an anointing from the Holy Spirit, which teaches us truth. A very important test of falsehood is what is being said about Christ. A good confession is to acknowledge Christ to be God, Lord and Saviour and the only way to God the Father. Anything less is spurious and false. God's Spirit in us will always honour Jesus.

Jesus is coming back. When we love him and seek to live righteously before him, we will have nothing to fear or be ashamed of, on that great day when he comes to rule and reign for ever!

## **Points to Consider:**

1. How do we regard God's people? John's reference to them as 'dear children' says much about him. How we refer to others can say a lot about us.
2. When did you last thank Jesus for being your advocate? Do we appreciate his love in being prepared to represent people like you and me?
3. How seriously do we take John's comments about our love for each other reflecting our love for Christ? Do we make excuses for being critical and unkind to others, who also love Jesus as we do?
4. John takes account of the whole range of people in the body of Christ. Do we value everyone or just those in our own age group?
5. In what ways do you find the world to be challenging to your Christian life? How can we overcome, so as to be righteous and uncluttered by the temptations of the world?
6. How rigorously do we reject false teaching? Will we be confident or ashamed at Christ's coming?

# **1 John 3**

**This chapter speaks strongly and powerfully of the love of God. We see the impact of that love upon us and, also, the way that the devil's agenda is dismantled and brought to nothing. The love of God has to be tangible and so, must be expressed in the way that believers treat one another. The evidence of true spiritual life with God will be seen in the way that we behave towards our brothers and sisters in Christ.**

## **Children of God**

This is our new status because of Christ. We are children, not just servants. God loves all of His creation but we have a special relationship because of Jesus. This has come to pass because of the love of the Father. It is extravagant love; love we do not deserve; love which goes beyond any human reasoning. We deserve God's wrath, not his love, but this wonderful love of God has made us distinct from the world. As God's children, we have security, we are in His plans and we look forward to a glorious future!

## **Seeing Jesus**

John shares with us a very special hope for the believer. When we see Jesus just as he is, we shall be like him. What a hope! That moment we see him, we will be deeply conscious of all the wonder of who he is and we will be free from our battles with temptation and sin. With no more weaknesses and frailties in character or in body, we will be just like Jesus. Hallelujah!

## **The Law and the Devil**

Our lawlessness and rebellion has been dealt with. We have a new nature that does not just keep on sinning. Since coming to Christ, we have a totally different life and deliberately sinning and displeasing God is not part of it! The devil's work is rebellion and sin but Jesus has come to destroy his work. Those born of God will follow God's agenda, not the devil's. Loving God, loving righteousness and loving God's people, are clear indicators that we have the life of God in us!

## **Loving God, Loving One Another and Overcoming Hatred**

To love God and to love one another, are very basic requirements for a believer in Christ. After sin came into the world, it was not long before Cain killed his brother, Abel. Abel was righteous and this evoked hatred from Cain. It is sadly inevitable that if we live righteously in Christ, we will evoke anger and hostility from the world.

Eternal life is a gift from God and His Spirit dwells in the hearts of those who love Him and love His people. This is a love which is expressed in more than just emotion. Active,

practical, loving care for our brothers and sisters in need, is a clear evidence of this love and we have peace and assurance in our hearts and minds that we are living as true Christians, not just saying the right words! A clear conscience gives us confidence to fellowship with God, to intercede for others and is the breeding ground for faith in Jesus and obedience to whatever the Lord tells us to do. We become steadfast in our faith, through the enabling of God's Holy Spirit!

### **Points to Consider:**

1. How much do we value being children of God? Do we appreciate the significance of this change of status that Jesus has won for us?
2. Think about what it will mean when we see Jesus. To be like Jesus is amazing! Do we spend enough time meditating on this truth?
3. How aware are we of the devil's agenda? How did Jesus destroy it?
4. What practical steps can we take to show love to one another? Is there anything particular we can do for those in need around us?
5. Is there anger or jealousy in our lives? What can we do to root it out?
6. Consider how confident you are before God. Are there things on your conscience that should be brought to God for cleansing?

# **1 John 4**

It is sad to note that, very quickly, the young church is under strong attack and a major challenge is false teaching. The spirit that is antichrist, quickly raises its head and John wants the church to resist its influence. He also raises again, the vital importance of knowing God's love and sharing that love with one another in the body of Christ.

## **Test the Spirits**

We want to be accepting and gracious but we are encouraged in scripture to test and verify whether something comes from God, rather than from the flesh or the devil. A key issue is the testimony to Christ. Anyone who falls short of declaring Christ as truly God and man, should expect questions about their teaching.

## **False Prophets**

John tells us that there are many false prophets. They have gone out into the world and are spreading their deception. They are antichrist. However pleasant they may appear to be, they are effectively at war with Christ and belittle who he really is. They are worldly and so, have a real appeal to the flesh. They don't speak of sacrifice and suffering but often suggest that life is to be enjoyed, regardless of right or wrong and governed only by what 'feels right'.

## **Victory**

As believers, we have victory over this falsehood, because Christ actually dwells within us! Christ has come into our hearts and his Spirit bears witness with our spirit, as to what pleases God and what displeases Him. Christ in us, is greater than any false spirit. The devil may have some sway in the world but he has no say in heaven. We are destined for heaven by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who also have Christ dwelling by faith in their hearts, will fellowship with us and be one with us but those who do not have Christ, will resist us and not listen to us.

## **Our Love for Others**

John exhorts believers to love one another, because love comes from God. He is the origin of love and when we truly know Him, then His love becomes part of our lives. We are enriched by His love and, once touched by His love, it impacts us for ever!

## **God's Love for Us**

God's love is not just emotion but it is also action! He sent into our world, the one who is most precious and utterly unique, Jesus Christ, His son. Jesus, vibrant and full of life, was sent to die in our place, so that we could have eternal life, not eternal death! The just punishment and penalty we deserve for our sins, is taken away by Jesus.

## **The Testimony of Love**

We are deluded to think that we are in God's love, if our attitude to others in the body of Christ is unloving and overly critical. If we have tasted God's love, then the main way of showing that, is to love and care for others. Our love, like God's, must be revealed in action and not just words. To testify of God's love, acknowledging that Jesus is the only Saviour, revealed in God the Son, deepens our appreciation and confidence in Him.

## **The Joy of Love**

Maturing and growing in our knowledge of God's love is important and we must guard ourselves from any complacency. We do not find its full depth all at once but we develop it by looking to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. To live in the love of God, brings a wholeness to our lives. We are confident to face the day of judgement, because we have received the love of Jesus. There is no need to fear, because our punishment has been taken away. Our love for God can never originate from something that is found within us. It only comes from appreciating, enjoying and immersing ourselves in His love!

## **Points to Consider:**

1. Are you effective at testing whether something is from God or not? How could you improve your perception in this regard?
2. Are you aware of any false teaching and, if so, how are you addressing this problem?
3. What are the keys to victory, over the lies and deceptions of the enemy?
4. What is the essence and core of God's love?
5. Are there some practical ways by which you should be demonstrating God's love to others right now?

## **1 John 5**

In John's letter, he keeps reminding us that Jesus is truly man and truly God. He encourages us to love God and to love one another in the body of Christ. We are encouraged to know that, if we have Christ, we have life: Eternal Life! We must put sin behind us and have no idols but only Christ in the centre of our lives.

### **Born of God**

Those who truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, have been born of God. They are spiritually alive. When we love God, we desire to keep His commandments. So they are not a burden but, rather, a way for us to show that we love God. When we are born of God, the pull and influences of this world do not control us. Instead, Christ in us, gives us the victory that overcomes our worldliness and self-centred ways.

### **The Testimony of Water, Blood and the Holy Spirit**

John has shown us that Jesus came from God. He came in human flesh and was baptised in water, as an example that we die to self and live for God. Jesus came to shed his blood, because the only thing that could remove our sin was his blood. He paid the ultimate price, so that we could be rescued from the wrath of God. The Holy Spirit convinces us that Jesus, who came from God and who is God, who was born of the Virgin Mary and who gave himself as a sacrifice at Calvary, is the only answer to our desperate, sinful need.

### **The Christian Testimony**

Our story is based upon an acceptance of what God has done for us. We believe in the wonderful love of God, who has shown Himself to us through Jesus. We proclaim that we have eternal life through Christ and our hope of being with him in Heaven forever, is totally bound up with our acknowledgement of who Jesus is. We also declare that there is no other way for anyone to find salvation, except in Christ.

### **Confidence in God**

John is writing to us, so that we can be totally confident in approaching God and to be very sure that we already have eternal life. When our relationship with God is right and we pray in accordance with His will, we can also be sure that He will hear us.

### **Sin That Leads to Death**

For the Christian, sin should no longer rule over us. Because we have received Christ, he has taken the punishment for our sins and, although we may make mistakes and fail, when we confess our sins we are released and we do not face eternal punishment. However, John

indicates that there is sin that leads to death. Many have questioned what this sin is and whether he is referring to physical death or spiritual death. Of course, the major issue has to do with whether we accept or reject Christ. If we refuse to acknowledge who Jesus really is and stubbornly resist receiving his forgiveness, then we will face not just physical death but also spiritual death, which means being separated from God for eternity!

### **Overcoming the Evil One**

The work of the devil is to blind people from seeing who Christ is and to control this world, so that men become proud and unwilling to receive salvation. When we are born again, reject sin and receive Christ, we are freed from the power of the evil one. We come to understand that God is true, reliable and trustworthy and that the devil is a liar. John finishes his letter by reminding us that Jesus is the true God who gives eternal life and he urges us to keep away from idolatry.

### **Points to Consider:**

1. God's commands are not burdensome. Do our relationships with Him reflect that reality?
2. In practical terms, what does it mean to overcome the world?
3. Do we truly accept God's testimony through the Holy Spirit, about His Son?
4. How can we be sure that the enemy of God, Satan, has no control over our lives?
5. What is the testimony in our heart that gives us confidence in God?