

# The Letters of John

## LESSON ONE

As John opens this first letter, we notice that not only does he neglect to identify himself, but he also neglects to identify who he is writing to. Obviously, his recipients knew who was writing to them without an introduction, and John obviously thought an identification of his recipients was unnecessary.

Many scholars believe that he wrote this first letter while still in Ephesus where he had been residing and ministering before being exiled to the island of Patmos. By the time of this first letter, all his original fellow Apostles had passed away, most to a martyr's death. John alone remains as he pens this letter, most likely to the churches in Asia Minor, and very likely these are the same seven churches he later addresses in the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation, penned on the island of Patmos.

Prayerfully read through 1<sup>st</sup> John, chapter one.

1. John may have thought it unnecessary to introduce himself to his readers, but he begins his letter to them with an introduction of Jesus Christ, the One he feels his readers truly need to know. Looking at the **first** and **last** part of **verse one**, how does John describe him? Write down the descriptive facts John states.
2. Compare this to the added descriptions that John gives in his Gospel. Look up **John 1:1-3**. Write down these verses below.
3. Looking back at **our letter in 1 John**, what do **verses 1 & 2** say that gives **credibility** to these statements John makes about Christ?

4. In **verse 2**, John states that this life he has just described was **manifested**. How does the **Gospel of John in John 1:14** confirm this manifestation? What does it say?

**Adam Clarke** paraphrases John's statement in **1 John 1:1** this way: **"We deliver nothing by hearsay, nothing by tradition, nothing from conjecture; we have had the fullest certainty of all that we write and preach."**

**Pastor David Guzik** adds: "The idea is that this eternal subject of John has been audibly **heard**, physically **seen**, intently studied (**have looked upon**), and tangibly touched (**hands have handled**). This idea would have enormous implications for his readers."

One of the reasons John's statements would have had such a powerful impact on his readers is that Gnosticism had begun to creep into the church by this time, a false teaching stating that although Jesus was God, He was not actually a physical man, but rather a spiritual being who "appeared" to His followers as a man. John states this was not the case, that he was an eyewitness of His humanity. He saw Him, ate with Him, touched Him, heard Him, traveled with Him, lived with Him. This eyewitness account should have a powerful impact on us as well.

5. Still looking at **verse 2** of **1 John, chapter one**, John gives Jesus the description of the **eternal life**. Record the following verses that speak of this below.

**John 5:26 -**

**John 6:48 -**

**John 11:25 -**

**John 20:31 -**

**1 John 5:11 & 12 -**

6. Look now at **1 John 1:3**. This is our theme verse for this entire study, and in it, John states clearly **his purpose** for writing to them. What does John say that purpose is?
7. The word translated as “**fellowship**” in this verse is the Greek word “**koinonia**.” Sound familiar? If you wondered why we named our café “**The Koinonia Kafe**” and what that word means, the definition speaks of intimate fellowship. **David Guzik** describes it as “**a sharing, a communion, a common bond and common life. It speaks of a living, breathing, sharing, loving relationship with another person.**”

This is the kind of relationship John wants his readers to have **with Christ** and **with one another**. This idea of sharing a “common life” with fellow believers is described beautifully in **Ephesians 4:16**. Write that verse down below.

8. It is a beautiful thing to have such a bond of fellowship with one another. The thought that we are called into that kind of fellowship with God, Himself, is even more beautiful and mysterious and astounding. Write down and meditate on the following verses that speak of the intimate fellowship Christ invites us into.

**John 14:16 & 17 -**

**John 14:20 -**

**1 Corinthians 3:16 -**

**Galatians 2:20 -**

**Colossians 1:27 -**

## Revelation 3:20 -

9. Back to our letter in **1 John**, what does **verse 4** say is the **result** of this fellowship we share with Christ and with one another?
  
10. This is not the only time John spoke of this subject. He mentions it several times in his Gospel, quoting Jesus' words in **John 15:11, 16:24** and **17:13**. As you look at these verses, whose joy is it that we are invited to partake of?
  
11. It has often been said that there is a big difference between **happiness** and **joy**. Happiness is dependent upon "**what's happening**." It relies upon our circumstances and can change in a moment's time. Joy, on the other hand, is a contentment deep within, regardless of circumstances and situations in our life. Record the powerful statements regarding true joy in the following verses:

### Psalm 16:11 -

- a. **Where** does this verse say our joy is found?

### Isaiah 61:10 -

- b. **What** does this verse say is the **source** of this joy?

**12.** Our joy in the Lord is something often under attack. If there is something the enemy of our soul delights in robbing us of, it's our joy. **Nehemiah 8:10** tells us that the joy of the Lord is our **strength**. It's no wonder the spiritual forces of wickedness want to steal that joy away at every opportunity. If the enemy can't take away our salvation, he will at least try to take away our **strength**. A weak and grumpy Christian is an ineffective one. Share with the group some of the ways you counter the enemy's attacks on your joy. What practical things help you to "rejoice" in spite of circumstances?

**13.** As we move on to **verse 5** of our letter, John has some additional truths he wants his readers to understand about the God we serve. What is the message he received about Him that he wants his readers to know?

**14.** Why is this truth so important for us to understand? What is the reason given to us by John in **verse 6**?

**15.** If we say we have **fellowship** with Him.... We looked at the word fellowship, or "koinonia," earlier in **question #7** and found it to mean intimacy, closeness, the sharing of a "common life." We all have times where we stumble into sin, but this verse is speaking of "**walking**" in darkness. It describes a direction you are traveling, a path you are walking on, a lifestyle or pattern of living. John makes clear that if you are living in a lifestyle of darkness it is impossible to have "fellowship with God" who is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Look up and record these verses in chapter three of the **Gospel of John** below.

**John 3:19 -**

**John 3:20 -**

**John 3:21 -**

**16.** What do the following verses tell us about our God and His calling on our lives?

**1 Peter 1:15 & 16 -**

**1 Peter 2:9 -**

**17.** Read the promise John states in **1 John 1:7**. Write down the **first promise** John gives to us in this verse when we **“walk in the light, as He is in the light.”**

**18.** When we have conflicts and strife with other believers, this promise indicates that one or both parties are **not** walking in the light. **Pastor David Guzik** comments that, **“Two Christians who are in right relationship with God will also naturally be in right relationship with each other.”** **2 Timothy 2:23-25** gives us advice on how we can safeguard against this. Paul tells us in these verses to **avoid** those conversations that will stir up strife. There are times, however, when we need to speak the truth in love to someone who is in error. What does Paul tell us our attitude should be when we must confront someone who is misled?

**19.** It is obvious as we look at **1 John 1:8-10** that John does not expect any of us to live a perfect life while we are in this flesh. In fact, his expectations are quite the opposite. As we abide in Christ and allow His Word to abide in us, we will continue to grow in spiritual maturity, living lives that will more fully honor Him as our relationship with Him deepens. But this flesh will **never reach perfection**. What bold statement does John make to his readers in **1 John 1:8**?

**20.** Self-deception is the worse deception of all. What do the following verses in **James** say about this?

**James 1:22-24** -

**James 1:26** -

**21.** Jesus taught His disciples a great truth when He washed their feet at the last supper He shared with them. Not only was He teaching them about humility and how to serve one another, He was also teaching them that, although we have been cleansed from our sins, **our feet still get dirty** as we walk through this world. **(See John 13:10.)** What encouragement does **1 John 1:9** give us concerning our **“dirty feet?”**

**22.** What a wonderful promise from God’s Word! But there is a **condition** attached to it. What is that condition?

**23.** This again points back to the sin of self-deception. There is no forgiveness without a sincere acknowledgement on our part. Record David's prayer of confession in **Psalm 51:2-4** below.

**24.** John ends this first chapter with another clear reminder in **verse 10**. Write the verse down below.

**25.** What does **Psalm 119:105** tell us about God's Word?

At the beginning of this chapter, one of the descriptions John gave to us of God is that He is **Light** and there is no darkness in Him at all. What does light do? It illuminates our path ahead, but it also illuminates what is hidden. It exposes what is in darkness. It shines its light so we can clearly see what is there. If we are in fellowship with Him, we will not fall prey to self-deception because His Spirit within us will be faithful to expose those areas of sin in our lives that need our confession and God's cleansing.

**David Guzik** states, **"If we deny the presence of sin, we are self-deceived and are denying God's Word. Yet, though sin is always present, so is its remedy - so sin need never be a hindrance to our relationship with God."**

**26.** What was your greatest take-away from this first lesson?

This study was written and prepared by Shawn Van Hook, 2024