



OPTION 1
Books of 1, 2 and 3 John

“Love Letters from the Father”
- 1 John 1:1-4 “The Word of Life”

Once upon a time. . . .

Remember how exciting those words used to be? They were the open door into an exciting world of make-believe, a dream world that helped you forget all the problems of childhood. Then “pow” You turned a corner one day, and “Once upon a time” became kid stuff. You discovered that life is a battleground, not a playground, and fairy stories were no longer meaningful. You wanted something real. The search for something real is not new. It has been going on since the beginning of history. Men have looked for reality and satisfaction in wealth, thrills, conquest, power, learning, and even in religion. There is nothing really wrong with these experiences, except that by themselves they never really satisfy. Wanting something real and finding something real are two different things. Like a child eating cotton candy at the circus, many people who expect to bite into something real end up with a mouthful of nothing. They waste priceless years on empty substitutes for reality. This is where the Apostle John’s first epistle comes in. Written centuries ago, this letter deals with a theme that is forever up-to-date: the life that is real! John had discovered that satisfying reality is not to be found in things or thrills, but in a Person, Jesus Christ, and the Son of God. Without wasting any time, he tells us about this “living reality” in the first paragraph of his letter. Most professing Christians seem to be interested in fellowship. They gather in fellowship halls, attend fellowship dinners (known as potlucks) and participate in well organized activities and groups. But what is it that makes genuine Christian fellowship possible? More important, how can we know that we have genuine fellowship with God? John begins this first letter with an introduction in which he presents to his readers the basis for fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, the Apostles and Christians in general.

Read 1 John 1:1-2. Answer and discussion questions 1-4 in small groups.

1. What contact did the writer and this body of believers have with the Word of life?
2. Compare the opening statement of John’s letter to Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 1:16. In what ways are these statements similar? What is your response when you read that John actually saw, heard, and touched Jesus?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is “The Word of Life?” How has Jesus changed your life so far?
4. How important are first hand eyewitness testimonies, such as John’s, to the second generation believers to whom he is writing? How about you personally?



Read 1 John 1:3-4 Answer questions 5-9 individually and write down your responses below.

The Greek word fellowship is koinonia, which means “to share in common, to partake, partner”. We are partners in the light with Christ. Someone has said, “It’s two fellows in the same ship!” Keep this in mind as you answer these questions.

5. John wrote so that his readers would “have fellowship” with him, with other Christians and with God. How is Christian fellowship different from merely spending time with people?

6. How is our fellowship with God related to our fellowship with other believers?

7. What blocks our fellowship with God and others?

8. What are John’s reasons for announcing his message?



OPTION 1: HOMEWORK

Pray and answer the following questions:

- **What will you do this week to better enjoy your place as a child of God?**
- How should the reality that God became a man affect your life today?
- What specific steps will you take this week in order to deepen your fellowship with other believers?

Key Scripture

“And these things we write to you that your joy may be full” 1 John 1:4

Note the following insights on the subject of joy. Take some time and look up the noted Scriptures. I have heard it said, if you keep the proper order from the word joy, that your “joy will be full” (J)ESUS first, (O)THERS second, (Y)OURSELF last. 4

1. Joy is divine. It is possessed and given only by God. Its roots are not in earthly or material things or cheap triumphs. It is the joy of the Holy Spirit, a joy based in the Lord. It is His very own joy (John 15:11; Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thess. 1:6).
2. Joy does not depend on circumstances or happiness. Happiness depends upon happenings, but the joy that God implants in the believer’s heart overrides all, even the matters of life and death (Psalm 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:10; 2 Cor. 7:4).
3. Joy springs from faith (Romans 15:13; Phil. 1:25; 2 Tim. 1:4; Matthew 2:10).
4. Joy of future reward makes and keeps one faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23; Acts 20:24; Hebrews 12:2).

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.



OPTION 2

Home Group Study Books of 1, 2 and 3 John

“Love Letters from the Father” 2 John “A Faithful Family”

The apostate teachers not only invaded the churches, but they also tried to influence Christian homes. Titus faced this problem in Crete (Titus 1:10-11) and Timothy faced it in Ephesus (2 Tim. 3:6). As goes the home, so goes the church and the nation; thus the family is an important target in Satan’s war against truth.

This brief letter was written to a godly mother and her children. Some Bible students have concluded that “the elect lady” refers to a local church and that “her children” are the believer’s fellowshipping in the church. “Thy elect sister” (2 John 13) would then refer to a sister church that was sending Christian greetings.

While it is true that John does address a group in this letter, it is also true that he addresses an individual. Perhaps the solution is that a Christian assembly was meeting in this home, along with the family of the “elect lady,” so that John had both the family and the congregation in mind. He was concerned that this godly woman would permit something false to come into her house or into the assembly.

The leading feelings in this little epistle are those of friendship and joy, even though these are mixed with concern and warning. There are times when we must speak the truth generally and let the Holy Spirit make application specifically. But there are also times when, like John, we must speak the truth to people individually and personally. If you and I are to keep our homes true to Christ, then we must have the same characteristics as this family to which John wrote. The lessons seen in 2 John has great application to us congregationally, as families, and as individuals.

Read 2 John 1:1-3. Pray and answer the following questions in small groups.

2 John was written to warn believers about false teachers who were spreading anti-Christian propaganda in the first century. In this letter John was talking about specific people in a specific culture. But twenty centuries later John’s warning is still relevant, because false teachers are still with us.

And because of the advances in mass media, everyone can hear their lies. This study challenges us to be discerning and careful about what we allow to come in our minds, hearts and homes.

1. Circle the word “truth” whenever it is found in this passage. Why do you think John began this letter with the emphasis on truth? Do you think John would be as concerned about us today? Explain your answer.
2. In this brief address and greeting, notice how many times “truth” and “love” are mentioned together. What does it mean to love someone “in the truth”?
3. In what way does truth live in us?



Read 2 John 1:4-6. Answer the following questions individually and write down your responses below.

There are two equally extreme misconceptions many people have concerning what it means to be a Christian or to live the Christian life. One view says, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and loving." The other one says, "It doesn't matter how you live as long as you believe in the truth." The reason why both views are wrong is because the Word of God binds both truth and love together. They are friends not enemies.

4. In verse 4 what gave John great joy?

5. What is the difference between "walking" in the truth and simply "knowing it"?

6. John placed a strong emphasis on truth in this letter. What advantages are there to living according to an absolute standard of truth? 3

Read 2 John 1:7-9. Pray and answer the following questions:

The traveling preachers in John's day relied on the hospitality of Christians for food and shelter. But John warned his readers not to open their homes to just any person claiming to be a Christian teacher. In fact, false teachers deserved no acceptance or hospitality at all. While we demonstrate our love to God by loving one another, we also demonstrate it by rejecting teachers who misrepresent Him and lead people astray. Accepting and welcoming false teachers only ignores their false teaching. Out of love for God and others who may be influenced by false teachers, we must be careful not to support those who teach wrong ideas about God and the Christian life.



OPTION 2: HOMEWORK

1. Why are false teachers so dangerous?
2. What happens when Christians follow and support false teachers?
3. What would you do if a close friend became a member of a cult or began to follow a false teacher?

Read 2 John 1:10-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

How are believers to treat false teachers?

How can Christians be loving and kind while refusing to accept false teachers?

What specific changes will you make in your life as a result of John’s warning in his second letter?

Some Final Thoughts

John had much that needed to be said to this dear lady and her children. But it would be better to say it to them face to face. Therefore, John planned a trip to visit her and the other believers in the area.

Note how important the gospel is even for believers, so important that John would plan a special trip to share the glorious teachings of Jesus Christ. And remember: John was already an elderly man.

Note that the elect lady had a sister. The final words are greetings from the children of the sister. This is significant: it shows how the gospel had spread throughout the whole family. First one sister was reached for Christ, then the other sister, and then the children of both families. When we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, our duty is to do all we can to reach our families for Christ, all our brothers and sisters and their families. Acts 4:20 “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.



OPTION 3

Home Group Study Books of 1, 2 and 3 John

“Love Letters from the Father” 3 John “It’s the Truth”

The battle for truth and against apostasy is fought not only in the home

(2 John) but especially in the local church; and that is where John’s third epistle comes in. This little letter (the shortest New Testament epistle in the original Greek) gives us a glimpse into an early assembly, its people, and its problems. As you read this brief letter, you find yourself saying, “Times have not changed very much!” We have similar people and problems today!

One of the key words in this letter is witness or “testified.” It means not only the words that we say but the lives that we live. Each Christian is a witness, either a good one or a bad one. We are either helping the truth

(3 John 1:8) or hindering it.

This letter was addressed to Gaius, one of the leaders of the assembly. But John also discussed two other men in these verses, Diotrephes and Demetrius. Wherever there are people, there are problems, and the potential for solving problems. Each of us must honestly face the question, “Am I a part of the problem or a part of the answer?”

Consider the three men involved in this letter and note the kinds of Christians they were:

Gaius

How we thank God for church members like Gaius. John uses the word “beloved” four times when referring to him. Verse 2 suggests that Gaius may not have been in good health or that he was just recovering from an illness. But this we know: he had a healthy spiritual life. Whatever the condition of the outer man, the inner man was prospering.

Diotrephes

This is the kind of church member we can do without. He wanted to be the “boss” of the church; he loved to have preeminence and be first in everything. Colossians 1:18 says that Christ alone deserves preeminence. “He must increase, I must decrease,” is the way John the Baptist put it (John 3:30). 2

Demetrius

How refreshing to turn from Diotrephes to Demetrius! He was the kind of person others could follow. He had a good report from the saints and from the Word itself. You could test his life by the Bible, and it passed the test. Churches today need more members like Gaius and Demetrius, saints who love the Bible, the church family, and lost souls. We can do without those like Diotrephes!

Read 3 John 1:1-4. Answer questions 1-3 in small groups.



1. Why must our love for fellow Christians be bound by the bond of truth? How have you seen this to be true in your own experience?
2. Why is Gaius a good example for us to follow in the Christian life?

3. What does it mean for us to be, “walking in the truth”?

Read 3 John 1:5-8. Pray and answer the following questions individually and write down your responses below.

Imagine living in a world with no bed and breakfast homes, no hotels or motels. If traveling evangelists and teachers were to come to your town, you would have the privilege of inviting them into your home for the night and giving them supplies for their journey. Such was the world of John and his readers. Their hospitality was one of the clearest testimonies of their love for the brethren and obedience to God.

4. According to verse 6, how should we treat traveling missionaries?
5. In what ways do you think the world’s idea of hospitality differs from Christian hospitality? Are entertaining and hospitality the same thing? Explain
6. The Greek word that has been translated “hospitality” in the New Testament means “lover of hospitality,” and “to entertain strangers.” What do these definitions teach you about God’s perspective of hospitality?

