

1, 2, & 3 JOHN

Date: 11.09.25 | 1, 2 and 3 John

Scripture: 1, 2 and 3 John

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Jesus sits at God's right hand and continually prays for us. Jesus will one day return to exercise His reign over creation.
- Jesus is the only way people can connect with God
- People cannot save themselves, and Jesus is the only way to be reconciled with God.

HIGH SCHOOL:

- Jesus sits at God's right hand and continually intercedes for believers as our advocate, mediator, and High Priest. Jesus will one day return to exercise His reign over creation, and He will make all things new.
- Because no sin can enter God's presence and because Jesus is holy, He is the only way people can connect with God.
- No amount of good works can save a person, and Jesus' paying the penalty for our sin is the only way to be reconciled to God.



MEMORY VERSE

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

H 10:23 - L u h f t c o o h w w, f h w p i f. - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a clue.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Cake Or Fake

Get on YouTube and look for a “Cake Or Fake” Video. See how many your class can get correct.

Transition to Lesson: In 1, 2, and 3 John, the apostle John talks about the difference between real faith and fake faith. John calls believers to live with authentic love and truth.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Near the end of his life, the apostle John wrote three short but powerful letters to believers living in and around Ephesus. Having walked closely with Jesus for three years, John now served as a spiritual father to the next generation of Christians. The churches were facing confusion and division because false teachers were spreading an early form of Gnosticism. This false teaching claimed that special secret knowledge was the key to knowing God and that the physical world—including human bodies—was evil. Because of this belief, some even denied that Jesus truly came to earth in a real human body. Their pride and error led them away from love, truth, and fellowship with other believers.

John wrote these letters to set the record straight. He reminded his readers of what he had personally seen and heard from Jesus Himself ([1 John 1:1-3](#)). True Christianity, John explained, is not about secret knowledge but about knowing Jesus, obeying His Word, and loving others. In his first letter, John described three clear marks of genuine faith: (1) obedience to God’s commands ([1 John 2:3](#)), (2) love for others ([1 John 3:14](#)), and (3) right belief about Jesus—trusting Him as both fully God and fully man ([1 John 4:2; 5:1](#)).

The main theme of 1 John is assurance of salvation. John wanted believers to know with confidence that those who genuinely trust in Jesus have eternal life ([1 John 5:13](#)). This assurance is not based on perfection but on the finished work of Jesus Christ, our Advocate before the Father ([1 John 2:1-2](#)). When believers follow Jesus, their lives are transformed: they grow in holiness, experience joy, develop discernment, and live in secure fellowship with God and His people.

John mentioned five objectives for writing 1 John: first, to refute false teachings that were deceiving some ([1 John 2:26](#)); second, to urge believers not to continue in sin ([1 John 2:1](#)); third, to reaffirm the apostolic message so his readers could share true fellowship with him and the other apostles ([1 John 1:3](#)); fourth, to express his joy in seeing believers walk in the truth ([1 John 1:4](#)); and fifth, to assure them of their salvation ([1 John 5:13](#)).

John also gave three tests that reveal whether someone’s faith is genuine: (1) the moral test—

obedience to God's commands (*1 John 2:3*); (2) the social test—love for fellow believers (*1 John 3:13-14*); and (3) the theological test—correct belief in the incarnation of Jesus Christ (*1 John 5:1*).

Unlike Paul's letters, *1 John* does not follow a typical outline. Instead, it reads like a series of spirals—key themes that John introduces, revisits, and deepens as the letter unfolds. He contrasts light and darkness, truth and lies, love and hate, and the children of God versus the children of the devil. Each cycle reinforces how knowing Jesus revolutionizes a believer's life.

Following Jesus changes our relationships (*1 John 1:3*). John shared the gospel so others might share in fellowship with God and one another, encouraging mutual growth and unity in faith. Following Jesus changes our holiness (*1 John 2:1*). As we meditate on God's truth and act on it, sin loses its grip, and when we fall, we can rest in the grace of Jesus, our Advocate. Following Jesus changes our joy (*1 John 1:4*). True joy flows from knowing the real Jesus and living in fellowship with Him. Following Jesus changes our discernment (*1 John 2:27; 4:1*). We must test what we hear against God's Word to recognize what is true and good. Finally, following Jesus changes our security (*1 John 5:13*). Our faith rests not on wishful thinking but on the solid assurance that through Christ, we have eternal life.

The second letter, *2 John*, continues the theme of truth and love. John wrote to a faithful woman, or perhaps to a local church, commending her for walking in truth and encouraging her to continue loving others. However, he also warned against showing hospitality to false teachers who denied the truth about Jesus. During this time, traveling teachers often relied on the generosity of believers for food and shelter, but John reminded the church to be discerning. They were to love others without supporting those who rejected the gospel. True love must always be anchored in truth (*2 John 1-6*).

The third letter, *3 John*, gives a personal example of how believers should live out truth and love. John praised his friend Gaius for showing hospitality to faithful traveling teachers and contrasted him with Diotrephes, a prideful leader who refused to welcome them. John also commended Demetrius as a model of faithfulness. Through these examples, John urged the church to imitate what is good, not what is evil (*3 John 11*). Love that flows from truth leads to humble service, generosity, and unity in the body of Christ.

In both *2 and 3 John*, the writer identifies himself as "the Elder" (*2 John 1; 3 John 1*), a title that conveys both his maturity and pastoral care. These letters were written near the end of John's life, probably between AD 90–95, while he was still ministering in Ephesus. Not long after, John was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he would write the book of Revelation.

Together, *1, 2, and 3 John* remind believers that truth and love must never be separated. Love without truth becomes shallow, while truth without love becomes harsh. Genuine love requires a commitment to the truth, and sharing love without sharing the truth of the gospel falls short of God's purpose. John's letters point us back to Jesus—God's truth and love in human form (*John 1:14*). Because Jesus is faithful and forever, we can live confidently in His salvation, walk in His truth, and love others with His enduring love.

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



TELL THE STORY - 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John

Near the end of his life, the Apostle John wrote three short letters to Christians living in and around Ephesus. John had followed Jesus for three years, listening to His teaching, seeing His miracles, and learning from His example. Now, John was an older man who wanted to help younger believers stay strong in their faith. Some false teachers were confusing the churches by saying wrong things about Jesus. They taught that the way to know God was through special secret knowledge, not through faith. They also said that because the body is physical, it must be evil—so Jesus could not have had a real human body. These ideas were wrong and led people away from the truth about Jesus and away from loving others.

John wrote his letters to remind believers what was true. He said that he had personally seen and heard Jesus (*1 John 1:1-3*), and he wanted everyone to remember that Jesus really came to earth as both fully God and fully man. John explained that true Christians show their faith in three ways:

1. By obeying God's commands (*1 John 2:3*).
2. By loving other people (*1 John 3:14*).
3. By believing the truth about Jesus (*1 John 4:2; 5:1*).

The main message of *1 John* is that believers can know for sure that they have eternal life through Jesus (*1 John 5:13*). We don't have to be perfect, but we can be confident because Jesus is our Savior and our Advocate who speaks to the Father on our behalf (*1 John 2:1-2*). When we follow Jesus, our hearts change—we become more holy, more joyful, wiser about what is true, and more secure in our faith.

John gave five reasons why he wrote 1 John:

1. To warn believers about false teachers (*1 John 2:26*).
2. To help them stop sinning and live in obedience (*1 John 2:1*).
3. To share the truth about Jesus so they could have fellowship with other believers (*1 John 1:3*).
4. To share his joy in seeing them walk in the truth (*1 John 1:4*).
5. To help them know for sure that they have eternal life (*1 John 5:13*).

John also explained three ways to test whether someone's faith is real:

1. The moral test—do they obey God's commands? (*1 John 2:3*)
2. The social test—do they love other believers? (*1 John 3:13-14*)
3. The belief test—do they believe that Jesus is God's Son who came to earth as a man? (*1 John 5:1*)

Instead of organizing his letter in a straight line, John wrote in circles—he returned to the same big ideas repeatedly, illustrating how truth, love, and obedience are interconnected. He discussed light and darkness, truth and lies, love and hate, and what it means to be a child of

God rather than a child of the devil.

John showed that following Jesus changes everything:

- Following Jesus changes our relationships (*1 John 1:3*). We live in friendship with God and with other believers.
- Following Jesus changes our holiness (*1 John 2:1*). We learn to turn away from sin and live in a manner worthy of Jesus.
- Following Jesus changes our joy (*1 John 1:4*). Real joy comes from knowing Jesus and walking with Him.
- Following Jesus changes our discernment (*1 John 2:27; 4:1*). We learn to test what people say to ensure it aligns with God's Word.
- Following Jesus changes our security (*1 John 5:13*). We can be sure that through Jesus, we have eternal life.

In John's second letter, *2 John*, he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of truth and love. He wrote to a woman—or maybe a church—who was faithfully following Jesus. John was happy that her “children” (the people in her church or family) were walking in truth and love. But he also warned her not to welcome or support false teachers who said wrong things about Jesus. Back then, traveling teachers often stayed with other believers for food and shelter. John said to be kind but careful—believers should love everyone but not support people who teach lies (*2 John 1-6*).

The third letter, *3 John*, gives examples of what true love and truth look like in action. John praised his friend Gaius for showing kindness to faithful teachers who traveled to share the gospel. He warned about Diotrephes, a prideful man who refused to welcome them, and praised another man named Demetrius for being faithful. John told the church to follow good examples, not bad ones (*3 John 11*).

In both *2 and 3 John*, the writer referred to himself as “the Elder” (*2 John 1; 3 John 1*), indicating that he was an older leader and pastor. These letters were probably written between AD 90 and 95, when John was living in Ephesus. A short time later, John was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation.

Together, *1, 2, and 3 John* teach that truth and love always go together. Love without truth can be weak, and truth without love can be harsh. Real love means caring enough to share what is true about Jesus. John's letters remind us that Jesus Himself is both truth and love (*John 1:14*). Because Jesus is faithful and forever, we can be confident in His salvation, walk in His truth, and love others with His everlasting love.



RETELL THE STORY

Have students re-tell the story as best they can.



SHARE THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the best news in the world! God loves us so much that He made a way for us to be forgiven and to live with Him forever through His Son, Jesus Christ. John wrote that “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). But all of us have sinned and walked in darkness—choosing our own way instead of God’s. Because of that sin, we were separated from God and spiritually dead (Romans 6:23).

The good news is that Jesus stepped into our darkness to bring light and life. He laid down His life for us on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven and we could have fellowship with God (1 John 4:9-10). Jesus’ death was the ultimate act of love, and His resurrection proved His victory over sin and death. When we believe in Him and confess our sins, He promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Following Jesus is not just believing the truth about Him—it’s also living that truth. True believers respond to God’s grace by walking in the light, obeying His Word, and rejecting the world’s way of thinking (1 John 1:7). The world tells us to live for ourselves, but Jesus calls us to live for Him. That’s what makes Christianity so revolutionary—it changes our hearts, our minds, and our actions.

Real love and truth always go hand in hand. We can’t separate them. To love Jesus means to obey His commands and follow His Word (2 John 6). God doesn’t want us to add anything to the gospel—no extra rules or ideas. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

When we trust in Jesus and walk in His truth, we are transformed. God fills our lives with joy, peace, and the assurance that we belong to Him forever. That’s the power of the gospel—the light of God’s love shining in our hearts and changing us from the inside out.

QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

1. What does it mean that “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all”? *(1 John 1:5)*
2. What separates us from God and keeps us from walking in His light? *(Romans 6:23; 1 John 1:8–10)*
3. How did Jesus show His love for us? *(1 John 4:9–10)*
4. What happens when we confess our sins to God and trust in Jesus? *(1 John 1:9)*
5. How does the world’s way of living differ from God’s way? *(1 John 2:15–17; Romans 12:2)*
6. Why can’t we separate love from truth when it comes to the gospel? *(2 John 6)*
7. What does it mean to “walk in the light”? *(1 John 1:7)*
8. What kind of changes happen in a person’s life when they truly follow Jesus? *(1 John 1:4; John 8:12; Galatians 5:22–23)*
9. How can you walk in the light this week?
10. What’s one way you can show someone around you both love and truth this week?
11. What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
12. What does the story teach me about myself?
13. Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?

14. Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

15. How does this story help me live on mission?

PRAYER PROMPTS

Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to bring light into the darkness and to forgive our sins. Help me to walk in Your truth every day by obeying You and showing love to others. Thank You for giving me joy, peace, and the promise of eternal life with You. Amen.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of His children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for His children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves His children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time; He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps His promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share His glory with another. All glory rightfully belongs to Him.

JUST - God is fair in all His actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward His children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give His children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. Nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of His children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for His children.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give Him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure. He controls all things.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.

List taken from Jen Wilkin Bible studies



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is God inviting you to do differently in your relationships?

LOOK OUTWARD



- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD



- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?