

1 John

Introduction

The Apostle John refers to himself in the Gospel as “the disciple Jesus loved,” and 1 John is known as the epistle of love. In our Bible study series we’ll be looking at all three love letters from the Apostle John. He shares with us the heart of God revealed in the loving gift of his Son, Jesus.

Touchy-feely theology

Read 1 John 1:1-4. Compare the beginning of 1 John with the beginning of John’s Gospel. What similarities do you notice?

Why does John place such emphasis here on seeing, looking, hearing and touching?

What is your takeaway in a modern context from John’s emphasis on the physical, tangible Jesus?

The account of “doubting Thomas” is only found in John’s Gospel. How does that account fit with John’s words here?

Jesus said to Thomas, “Blessed are they who have not seen yet have believed.” In one sense why can we be *thankful* for “doubting Thomas”?

Explain the difference between *testimony* and *hearsay*.

Is John’s writing here testimony or hearsay? Why is this so important?

(In Acts 1:15ff, as the apostles sought to call a replacement for the deceased Judas, what criteria did they lay out for the position?)

John proclaims the eternal life that was with the Father and has appeared to us. How did John know that Jesus was from “out of this world”?

According to John, what was the purpose of Jesus’ miraculous signs? (Can you think of several ways in which this emphasis is reinforced?)

Which miracles of Jesus were witnessed by the largest number of people (and therefore carried the broadest weight of testimony)? According to Paul (Acts 26:26), these things were “not done in a corner.”

Give a descriptive meaning of the word *fellowship*.

What is the goal of John’s testimony?

Consider: We live in a decaying world of broken, hurting, violent, empty, dying people. How does your testimony compare with John’s? How does your goal compare with John’s? How is fellowship such a beautiful concept in today’s world?

Life in the light

Read 1 John 1:5-2:2. John says, “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you.” Why are these words important for us nearly 2,000 years later?

What does fellowship with the God who is light imply for the life of the Christian?

Do you recall parallel thoughts expressed by Jesus himself in John’s Gospel? (John 3:19-21; John 8:12ff)

Let’s explore the powerful contrast between light and darkness that John lays out here. Characterize the difference between . . .

Life in the light	Walking in darkness

How do you respond to the person living in sin who says, “I know what I’m doing is wrong, but I believe in Jesus, and I know my sins are forgiven”?

Can you think of other passages in Scripture that drive home the same point John is making here in Jesus’ name? (Hebrews 10:26, Romans 6:1-10, Matthew 7:17-23)

Is forgiveness conditioned (“If we walk in the light . . .”) upon our behavior? Explain John’s words here.

What would ever prompt us to claim to be without sin?

Explain the difference between saying, “I am a sinner” and “I have sinned.”

What is the natural reaction to an accusation of sin?

Evaluate this statement: When I refuse to confess my sin it’s because I really don’t believe in forgiveness.

The word translated “Advocate” (NIV 2011, EHV) or “one who speaks to the Father in our defense” (NIV 1984) is the word παράκλητον (*parakleton*). Describe the picture painted by this word.

Why are John’s words here a tremendous comfort and joy for you?

The word ἱλασμός (*hilasmos*) here is translated “atoning sacrifice” (NIV, EHV) or “propitiation” (KJV). Where is this word and its relative ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*) used in the Greek Septuagint Old Testament (LXX)?

What do the words *atonement* and *propitiation* mean?

What personal comfort do you take from the fact that Jesus is the ἱλασμός for the whole world?

Why need we never be afraid to confess any sin before God our Father?