



TESTIFY

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN

MARCH 5 - APRIL 5

H

HIGHLIGHT: 1 John 5:1-21 NLT

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. **2** We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. **3** Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. **4** For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. **5** And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

6 And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony. **7** So we have these three witnesses— **8** the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree. **9** Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his Son. **10** All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son.

11 And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **12** Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

13 I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. **14** And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. **15** And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.

16 If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it. **17** All wicked actions are sin, but not every sin leads to death.

18 We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them. **19** We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.

20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.

21 Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

EXPLAIN

E

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

vv.1-2 John continues the thought of "loving our brothers and sisters" with which he ended chapter 4. As he often does, he repeats something already said but with a new twist. Sometimes in a conversation we may say, *Let me put it this way or In other words*. Instead of "loving our Christian brothers and sisters" (4:20-21) John now uses other words: **Everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too**. I am a **child of God** by faith in **Jesus, the Christ** "who came into this world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). We are equal at the foot of the cross whether we think our sins are scarlet (Isaiah 1:18) or just dull gray; we all are holding hammer and nails. Because God loves me enough to call me His child, I must love His other children too, and they must love me.

vv.3-5 **Keeping [God's] commandments** (doing what pleases Him) is my way of expressing **love for Him**. The people we love know that we love them by the way we treat them. Jesus told Peter that the way to love Him was to tend to the matters that were precious to Him (see John 21:15-17). We seek to please and bring joy to those we love. We overcome all kinds of obstacles to make our love known to the beloved. And loving God by keeping His commandments is **not burdensome**. It may be tough to love the unlovely and "conquer evil by doing good" (Romans 12:21), but we can **achieve this victory—defeat this evil world** system that would drag us down—**through faith in Jesus—the Son of God** (see Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:20-21).

vv.6-10 John is probably dealing again with the Gnosticism that denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. He reminds his readers that **Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism, his blood (sacrifice for our sins), and by the Spirit—and all three of these witnesses agree**. But **the greater testimony comes from God**. And this is the emphasis of these verses—**God testifies about his Son**. And if we don't believe what he says, we are **actually calling God a liar**. Not a good place to be (see Genesis 3:1-7). Question: how seriously do I take God?

vv.11-13 **God's testimony is that eternal life is found only in his Son.** A good teacher cannot bring life. A good model will most likely drive me to despair. **Only the Son of God can bring life** (see John 1:17-18).

vv.14-15 John now introduces the subject of **confidence** in prayer—that **[God] hears us**. He is not an idea, a figment of our imagination. He is a Living God who hears and answers **whenever we ask for anything that pleases him** (see 1 Kings 18:26-29, 36-39). God always desires that we grow in our faith (see Matthew 7:7-11). Ah, but too often I want to do it *my way*. People disembark a ship not because the pier has been pulled to the ship, but because the ship has been pulled to the pier. Prayer is like that. I can walk on solid footing not because my prayers have pulled God to me, but because God has pulled me to himself. Let the Holy Spirit pray for you—pull you to God (see Romans 8:26-28). Maybe the best praying is listening.

vv.16-17 Difficult passage, to say the least. Commentators have given several suggestions through the years as to the meaning of **a sin that leads to death**. I'll give you what I think are the best two. (1) A sin which has death as its consequence. Paul seems to indicate that hypocrisy (at least around the Lord's Supper) can have serious consequences (1 Corinthians 11:27-32 [especially v.30]; see Acts 5:1-11 for another example of hypocrisy being judged). (2) The other suggestion rests on "a sin that leads to death" being better translated, "the sin which is going towards death." This would seem to suggest that there is not a particular sin that leads to death, but a sinful spirit that fundamentally delights in sin and encourages it in others (Romans 1:32). It is the sin which, if continued in, must finish in death (physical and spiritual).

vv.18-20 But **God's children do not make a practice of sinning**. We will sin (see 1:8; 2:1; 3:9), but we do not allow sin to run wild because **God's Son holds us securely and the evil one cannot touch us**. The devil may sling his "fiery darts" at us (Eph. 6:16), but believers have a shield (faith in Jesus) to deflect them. Take time to read Matthew 12:29, and understand that the "someone stronger" is Jesus.

v.21 John closes out his letter by encouraging us to live realistically—**keep yourselves from idols** (NIV); **keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts**. John is telling us to trust God's love as seen in Jesus Christ. In C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* a high-ranking demon is speaking to one with a "lower pay grade." "When [God] talks of their losing their selves, He only means abandoning the clamor of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever." That's what John is saying: don't settle for a counterfeit.

A**APPLY**

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. As new creations in Christ, one aspect of our growth is in our minds. In verse 3, John says that God's commandments are not burdensome to us. How is that evidence of growth in a renewed mind?
3. When we pray, why should we ask for things that please God (or "according to His will", ESV)?
4. John ends this letter by warning his readers to keep themselves from idols. Why do you think John would end this letter that way?
5. As we have read, studied, and preached through 1 John, what have you learned and applied?

R**RESPOND**

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. Write out verses 11-12 on notecards (or whatever you have) and place them around your house. Journal any ways that these verses are meaningful to you during this time.
2. Verse 3 says, "Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome". Reflect on this verse and your own life. Do you find that it is a really hard thing to obey God? Pray that this verse would become more true for you—not because we are saved by your own perfection, we aren't (See Eph. 2:8-9), but because a growing obedience is good for us and glorifies God.