



TESTIFY

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN

MARCH 5 - APRIL 5

H

HIGHLIGHT: 1 John 2:1-29 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 My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. **2** He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. **4** If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. **5** But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. **6** Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. **8** Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.

9 If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. **10** Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. **11** But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

12

I am writing to you who are God’s children
because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus.

13

I am writing to you who are mature in the faith

because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.
I am writing to you who are young in the faith
because you have won your battle with the evil one.

14

I have written to you who are God's children
because you know the Father.
I have written to you who are mature in the faith
because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.
I have written to you who are young in the faith
because you are strong.
God's word lives in your hearts,
and you have won your battle with the evil one.

15 Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. **16** For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. **17** And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

18 Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. **19** These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.

20 But you are not like that, for the Holy One has given you his Spirit, and all of you know the truth. **21** So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. **22** And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. **23** Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

24 So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. **25** And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

26 I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. **27** But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.

28 And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.

29 Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children.

EXPLAIN

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

"It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand." Mark Twain was not a theologian, but he hit on a sensitive truth: our problem is not *not knowing*; our problem is *not doing*. In 1John 2, John says, "I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies" (v.21).

1 John 2:1-29

vv.1-2 These verses form a bridge from chapter 1 to chapter 2. John's desire is that we **not sin**. But real life tells us a different story. It's not a matter of *if* we sin, but **when we sin**. We will *fall short*. We will *do wrong*. So John counsels us strongly against sin, but he is realistic about our needs. When we are in relationship with Christ **he becomes an advocate and pleads our case before the Father**. When we stumble (see Matthew 12:20) he not only picks us up but also comes along side us to help us. He is not *wishful thinking*. He is not a *good idea*. **He is the sacrifice that atones for our sins**—the one who conquered death and hell by the cross (see Matthew 16:16-18).

vv.3-6 The question naturally arises: how do I know that I'm in a right relationship with God? John writes without reservation that **we can be sure that we know him [Christ] if we obey his commandments**. Vv. 1&2 lead us to believe that John is not talking about perfect obedience. We have one who stands and pleads our case because we do sin. So, fellowship with God [**knowing God**] is not predicated by action, but by the heart. It is a matter of the will. If the desire of my heart is to obey God I am in fellowship with him; if that is not my desire I am not (see Romans 7:22-26). To say otherwise is to be a **liar** and show that **I am not living in the truth**. But the desire to obey opens up a new dimension: **the love of God is perfected (ESV)**—maturing. When we **live in him ("abide" ESV)**—desiring him, longing for him—his life and nature flows into us, making obedience a joy and an adventure (see John 15:4-5; Romans 8:1-4). It's a matter of the *heart*.

vv.7-11 These verses reveal the goal of the Christian life: *love as God loves*. John was **not writing a new commandment**—it was not numerically new (having to do with age), but it was qualitatively new (having to do with freshness). This commandment **to love one another** was an **old commandment—the same message you have heard before** (see Luke 10:25-28 and Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). So why would John say **it is also new**? Because we have the indwelling Christ who **lived the truth of this commandment**, so now **[we] can also live it**. We cannot help but notice the similarity of this passage to John 13:34 (please read). To love one another is an old commandment; to love one another "as I have loved you" is new. Think about those 12 men he called to be his friends—"sons of thunder," a zealot who would just as soon stick a dagger into a tax collector as look at him, one who considered himself better than all the others and made sure the others knew that, one who sold him out. It must have been hard to love them. The way we love our **fellow believer** is a pretty good gauge of the light and darkness of our lives.

vv.12-14 John continues his thought on the difficulty of loving by calling his readers to *remember who they are as followers of Jesus Christ*. Their **sins have been forgiven**. **They know Christ and the Father** (experienced his indwelling). They **have won their battle with the evil one**, so they can "be strong in

the Lord...and stand firm against all the strategies of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10-13). **God's word lives in their hearts. That is what makes them strong.** We need to have our "hearts flooded with light" (Ephesians 1:18-19).

vv.15-17 Ray Stedman says, "The world and its allurements...is the great enemy of the Christian, the siren voice that seeks to lure us aside, trap us, delude us, and ultimately defeat us in our Christian experience" (1 John, p. 101). John says, **Do not love this world** (the enemies of Jesus [John 15:18-19], the world order that stands opposed to him and seeks to eliminate him). It's interesting that John uses the word *agapaō* (same root as God's love) for **love**. We are not to set our *will* on the world, because **the love of the Father will not be in us** (see Matthew 6:24). We have to make a choice; we can't have both.

vv.18-19 John has a name for all that he has written about in chapter 2: **antichrist**. The word can mean those who are *against* Christ; it can also mean *instead* of Christ. It was not a new thing—they had **heard that antichrist [was] coming**. So the **appearance of many antichrists** was just a reminder that this is a **[not the] last hour event**. Jesus wanted his disciples to be aware of what was coming (Matthew 24:4-8). Paul warned Timothy that there would be "difficult times in the last days" (2 Timothy 3:1-9). There would be wave after wave of false teachers who would even appear to **belong to us**. But they are part of the "world order" that opposes Christ and the Father for their own advancement.

vv.20-23 After reminding his readers that **the Holy One had given his Spirit to them, and, therefore they know the truth**, John identifies the **antichrist as anyone who denies the Father and the son**. You take them both, or you lose them both. **Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either**. The *Jesus of history* and the *Jesus of redemption* are one and the same. If you see him as only a good teacher or a good example you lose him and the Father.

vv.24-27 **So...remain faithful...to what the Holy Spirit...who lives within you...has taught you**. He will never lead you astray.

vv.28-29 Here is a clear call to faithfulness. There may be much that we don't understand about the Bible. But our biggest threat is *not doing anything with what we do understand!* **Remain in fellowship with Christ**.

APPLY

A

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. How does obedience to God's word show how "completely" we love Him? (v.5) See also John 15:4-5
3. What are the dangers of loving this world and the things it offers you? (vv.15-17)
4. How do we remain in fellowship with Christ? What are some ways you personally do this?

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. What are the disciplines you find important in your own life for staying in fellowship with Christ (v.28)? (Reading Scripture, praying, journaling, confession, etc.) If you aren't currently doing any, how can you incorporate disciplines to increase your fellowship with Christ?
2. What are the things of this world that you are drawn to more than Christ? (Money, prestige, entertainment, comfort, safety, family, technology, other people's opinion of you, etc.) Are there certain things you need to confess to God? If so, take time to do it now. Ask him to help you "live in the light" so you will be drawn to Him over the allures of the world.