



# TESTIFY

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN

MARCH 5 - APRIL 5

H

## HIGHLIGHT: 1 John 3:1-24 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** See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. **2** Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. **3** And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

**4** Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. **5** And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him. **6** Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.

**7** Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. **8** But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. **9** Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. **10** So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

**11** This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. **12** We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. **13** So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

**14** If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. **15** Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

**16** We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. **17** If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?

**18** Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. **19** Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. **20** Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

**21** Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. **22** And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

**23** And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. **24** Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

## EXPLAIN

E

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

John continues to pastor these young believers as false teachers would come and scatter the flock with deception and lies.

**vv.1-3** It appears that John's believing friends are questioning God's love for them. So he begins this chapter with **See how very much the Father loves us**. And he says *that is the truth—that is what we are!* He reinforces his conviction by calling on the Fatherhood of God—**He calls us his children**. Jesus reminded his disciples of a child's security in the love of his father (see Matthew 7:9-11). We may be experiencing trouble today, but that doesn't mean God has turned His back on us. We have an enemy who wants to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8), and we live within a world system that **doesn't know [God]**, and will deal treacherously with those who claim to be His children (see John 16:1-3). But **we are already God's children**. And when the story ends we are on the winning side. Hold on to that assurance from your Father.

**vv.4-6** We cannot be at peace with sin! John reminds us that being a child of God is not a license to **continue living in sin; that is contrary to the law of God**. To be at peace with sin in our lives exhibits a **lack of knowledge and understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do—take away our sins**. John may have been making reference to that sect of Gnosticism that believed "flesh" was totally bad. It must be destroyed to set the "spirit" free and, in their eyes, the best way to do this was to engage totally in sinful lifestyle that would destroy the physical being.

**vv.7-10** So John's call was to **not let anyone deceive you** concerning sin. "**Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning**" does not mean we are sinless (1 John 1:8-10 and 2:1-2). We will sin. We will make mis-steps. And that opens us up to being enslaved by sin. But if we are genuinely in love with Jesus we will not be content with "one step forward; two steps back." We will not be content with opposing Jesus by our self-centeredness (see Matthew 16:21-23). We will immediately confess and receive forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9), and then begin running the race again—keeping my eyes on Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14; Hebrews 12:1-2). We can do this by the power of **God's life in [us]**.

**vv.11-13** The false teaching of the antichrists probably caused factions and arguments in the Body of Christ. So John calls them again to **love one another**. He uses the example of **Cain killing his brother** to move his readers from being pawns in the hands of **the evil one** (he exploits our hatred which becomes deadly) to authentic discipleship that leads to **love**. As a loving caution he tells them **not to be surprised if the world hates them** because they are only doing what comes natural to those who don't follow God (see 1 John 2:15-17; John 15:18-19; John 3:19-21). Question: what is "natural" to me? To whom does it show I belong?

**vv.14-15** There are two animating principles of our existence: **life**, which exhibits itself with **love**; and **death**, which exhibits itself with **hate**. **A person who has no love is still dead...no eternal life is in him**. Eternal life is qualitative here. Life and death don't mix. It's one or the other. Choose life! When someone comes into your "space/presence", what will they breathe in?

**vv.16-17** John doesn't leave us to wonder what love is. **We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us**. Cain's hate killed Abel. Jesus' love gave up His life for us. Holy God died for sinful man (Romans 5:6-10). That's love. And we are to **give up our lives for our brothers and sisters**. Most of us will not be called to lay down our lives like Jesus did (John 15:13). John gives a more common and practical test for us: sharing what we have of this world's goods with those in need. If we **show no compassion (close [our] hearts [ESV and RSV])** we have failed the test of love. John may have had in mind the everyday opportunities that present themselves to us. Or maybe he had traveling missionaries in mind (3 John 3-5). Probably both. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:20). Does my "love" reflect a clear understanding of God's love for me (Colossians 3:13-14)?

**vv.18-22** James 2:14-17 is a good commentary on vv.18-19. In his book *Screwtape Letters* C. S. Lewis brings this matter into focus. The senior devil, Screwtape, is counseling the junior tempter, Wormwood, after he has failed to keep his "project" from turning to God in faith and repentance. "It remains to consider how we can retrieve this disaster. The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance...Let him do anything but act." **We show the truth by our actions. Our actions will give us great confidence before God**. Feelings can betray us—or more correctly, betray **God who knows everything** and still loves us (see John 21:17). Oh the joy of **com[ing] to God with bold confidence** in being His children.

**vv.23-24** Our relationship with God is not a matter of good deeds alone; it is also a matter of believing in the **name of Jesus** and all that His name stands for. **We have his Spirit inside us**. That is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

## 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. What are some of the amazing benefits of being a child of God?
3. John says that if we keep on sinning, we do not know [Jesus] or understand who He is (v. 6). How does knowing Jesus prevent us from habitual sin? If we continue in sin, how does that show that we don't know Him?
4. What are some ways, especially during this time of social distancing, that we can show love by our actions?
5. What are some of the ways that you have struggled with 1 John so far? How have you been encouraged or challenged?

## 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. There is a difference between a struggle with sin and intention to sin. Romans 8 (see 8:1-17) tells us the power of sin in our lives has been defeated. It can no longer separate us from God because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Yet, sin is still present in our lives. We can choose to live by our sinful nature or by the power of God's Spirit alive in us. Are there areas of your life where you are still living by your sinful nature?

Romans 8:12 says, "you are under no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do." How will you allow the power of the Spirit to "put to death the deeds of your sinful nature"(Romans 8:13)?

2. "See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!" (v.1) List ways you have seen the love of the Father for you displayed in recent times.

Give God praise for his love for you.