1 JOHN

1 John
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO THE 3 EPISTLES OF JOHN

John was the brother of James. They were sons of Zebedee. Once they left their boat and nets to follow Jesus. John calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 21:20). He wrote John's Gospel. In his latter years he shepherded God's people in Ephesus; finally he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation.

These three letters were written to believers who were being confronted by false teachers--especially by those with Gnostic ideas. The Gnostics taught that flesh is evil and spirit is good. This is an unbiblical idea, and it leads to the denial of the true humanity of Christ. In practical life, those who embrace Gnosticism fall into one of two extremes: They either become ascetic to the point of mistreating their bodies, or they throw off all moral restraints, saying that it doesn't matter what we do with our physical bodies as long as we believe in Jesus.

The Bible teaches that God created man-- body and spirit--and said, "It is good." Jesus is God. He is the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us (Jn 1:14).

John invites us to walk with Jesus in the light of his love and truth. He reminds us to love one another. He wants us to know the real joy of fellowship with God and fellowship with one another.

JESUS, THE WORD OF LIFE

1 John 1:1-4

Key Verse: 1:1

1. We have heard and seen and touched (1-2)

John the Apostle was an eyewitness to Jesus' life and death and resurrection. He had followed Jesus during his earthly life. John knew Jesus the man; he saw him and heard him and touched him. And he loved Jesus. He was changed from a "son of thunder" into an apostle of love. He also came to believe and know that Jesus is the eternal Word of life, the Son who was with the Father from the beginning.

2. We proclaim to you (3-4)

In this short passage the word, "proclaim" is repeated 3 times. The good news that God loves us and sent his one and only Son to save us must be proclaimed. John and the apostles proclaimed what they had seen and heard so that we who read might know Jesus and have fellowship with

him, and have fellowship with all believers down through history. When we proclaim this good news, our joy is complete.

Prayer: Lord, help me to hold your word in my heart and have fellowship with you. Help me to proclaim Jesus and have fellowship with all believers.

One Word: Receive the word and proclaim it

CONFESS YOUR SINS AND BE FORGIVEN

1 John 1:5-10

Key Verse: 1:9

1. The blood of Jesus purifies us (5-7)

Sin breaks our fellowship with God and with others. It makes us fatalistic and dark, and robs our lives of meaning. But we don't have to live in the darkness of sin. God is light, and in him there is no darkness. If we repent before him, he exposes our sin, and the blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from all sin. We can walk joyfully with God in his light.

2. Confess your sin (8-10)

If we cover up our sins because of pride or self-righteousness, no one can help us. But if we confess our sins and put them under the blood of Jesus, God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Everyone is a sinner, so there is no need to pretend not to be one! There is every reason to confess our sins and be forgiven, for this is the way of healing and peace. This is the only solution to sin and guilt.

Prayer: Lord, I am a sinner. By your grace alone wash me in the blood of Jesus and make me clean.

One Word: He purifies me from all unrighteousness

OUR ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER

1 John 2:1-6

Key Verse: 2:1

1. The atoning sacrifice (1-2)

We are God's children, and we don't want to sin. But when we are honest with ourselves, we know that we sin daily in thought, word and deed. Sin is serious, for it is rebellion against God; the wages of sin is death. When I stand before God's judgment throne, I can only plead guilty. But there is one who speaks to the Father in my defense. He is Jesus Christ the Righteous One

who shed his blood on the cross to atone for my sins and the sins of the whole world. When I belong to him, his blood atones for my sins. He is my advocate, my defender; he speaks for me.

2. Obey him (3-6)

How do I know that I belong to Jesus? When by faith I obey his command to love others, I know I belong to him. When I accept his atoning sacrifice for my sins, he comes into my heart. His love begins to change my rebellious heart. I obey him and walk in his ways because I love him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus' atoning death for my sins. Help me to love Jesus more and walk with him today.

One Word: Jesus is my friend and advocate

AN OLD COMMANDMENT MADE NEW

1 John 2:7-11

Key Verse: 2:10

1. The old command made new (7-8)

Jesus summed up the Law and the Prophets in two words: Love God and love your neighbor (Dt 6:5; Lev 19:18; Mt 22:37-39). Jesus told his disciples, "A new command I give you: Love one another." Jesus commanded us to love, and he also showed us how. We can see the truth of his command in his life. When we obey his command, its truth is seen in us too. Jesus came into a dark and hate-filled world as God's gift of love. He is the true light shining in the darkness.

2. Walk in his light (9-11)

How can we live in Jesus' light? By loving our brothers. In other places we are commanded to love our neighbors and to love our enemies. Here, we are told to love our brothers. It is hard to love those close to us. Sometimes it's hardest to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. For this reason there are many divisions in the Christian community. But if we hate our brothers, we are still living in darkness.

Prayer: Lord, I can't love others in my own strength. Come and dwell in me. Help me to love others with your love.

One Word: Love others; walk in Jesus' light

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD

1 John 2:12-17

Key Verse: 2:17

1. I write you because...(12-14)

John writes to all believers. Some are children in the faith, some are mature shepherds and fathers, and others are growing young men. He reminds us that we are no longer under the bondage of sin, for our sins have been forgiven. Knowing God is the fountainhead of life (Jn 17:3). To know God the Father means to have an intimate love relationship with him. Shepherds must not only love their sheep; they must also have a personal love relationship with God. Otherwise, they cannot help anyone. Young men must have fighting spirit--but their strength is not physical. It comes from the word of God in their hearts. With this sword of the Spirit anyone can overcome the evil one.

2. Love God, not the world (15-17)

If we love the world, i.e., spend our time thinking about and/or trying to satisfy our large and small worldly desires, then there is no room in us for the love of the Father.

Prayer: Lord, renew and refresh my love for you so that the love of the world may not occupy my heart.

One Word: Love God and overcome the world

REMAIN IN HIM

1 John 2:18-27

Key Verse: 2:24

1. Many antichrists (18-23)

An antichrist is an enemy of Jesus. Those who deliberately turn their backs on the work of God and on the body of believers to which they were called are antichrists (19). They discourage others, so their influence is destructive. Jesus is Christ. He is our King and Savior, and our one true hope. One who knows the truth but puts his hope in the world or seeks some other savior is a liar.

2. Keep God's word in your heart (24-27)

We have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He leads us into all truth--if we hold on to the word of God which we heard from the beginning. If we keep God's word and his anointing in our hearts, we have eternal life, for the Son and the Father dwell in us. This is his promise. He is for real. We should not allow psychological humanists to rob us of what God has given.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your word and for your anointing. Help me to remain in Jesus until I meet him face to face.

One Word: Remain in him

CHILDREN OF GOD

1 John 2:28-3:10 (Tue.) Dec. 16

Key Verse: 3:1

1. We shall be like him (2:28-3:3)

What a privilege it is to be a child of God! He loved us while we were sinners and sent Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus will come again. Through faith in Jesus we have been born again into God's family. We do not know what God's will for us is, but one thing we know: He loves us and he is working to restore his image in us. When Jesus comes again, we shall see him as he is. And we will be like him. This is our great hope. This hope purifies our hearts of all lesser hopes and desires.

2. Don't continue in sin (3:4-10)

A child of God should not make excuses to continue in sin. He who breaks God's laws is lawless and is sinning. He who continues to do what is sinful is of the devil. Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. As children of God, we must do what is right and love our brothers.

Prayer: Lord, I am weak. Please purify my heart and life. Help me to live like a child of God and grow in Jesus' image.

One Word: We shall be like him

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:11-24 (Wed.) Dec. 17

Key Verse: 3:23

1. Don't hate -- love! (11-15)

Cain belonged to the evil one. He killed his brother Abel because Abel was a man of faith. If we live by faith, we can expect the world to hate us. But we must live by faith and love others anyway. One who, like Cain, has murder in his heart is dead in sin, for no murderer has eternal life in him. But if, by faith, we love our brothers we know that we have passed from death to life.

2. God is greater than our hearts (16-24)

Love is action, not words or feelings. We can know what love is by looking at Jesus. Jesus loved us and laid down his life for us. When we have the love of God in us, we will act in love toward fellow believers in need. We must love according to the truth; we must love in a way that builds up and encourages others in faith. If we only serve others according to our own feelings we are not really loving them. We must pray for others, and obey God's commands.

Prayer: Lord, come into my heart and rule; help me to love others with your love.

One Word: Believe in Jesus and love one another

TEST THE SPIRITS

1 John 4:1-6 (Thur.) Dec. 18

Key Verse: 4:4

1. How to recognize the Spirit of God (1-3)

We are engaged in a spiritual conflict. We are not fighting people, but the devil. He is a liar and a deceiver, and he gives his lying spirit to false prophets. John gives us a sure test: the Spirit of God is in one who acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Jesus is the Christ; he is God; and he came in the flesh. He was tempted in every way as we are; he learned obedience from what he suffered. Those who ignore Jesus' example of prayer and his spiritual struggle, and refuse to apply God's word to themselves are antichrists.

2. The Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood (4-6)

Worldly people speak from the viewpoint of the world. They sound reasonable. They encourage us to seek small, selfish benefits. But they are full of a spirit of falsehood. Those who know God listen to God's word. They have the Spirit of truth.

Prayer: Lord, fill me with your Spirit. Help me to have spiritual discernment.

One Word: God's Spirit overcomes the world

GOD'S LOVE AND OURS

1 John 4:7-16a (Fri.) Dec. 19

Key Verse: 4:10

1. He sent his son so that we might live (7-10)

Love comes from God; in fact, God is love. How did he show his love? He sent his one and only Son into the world to die as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Because he died, we can live. God's love is sacrificial. God's love is unconditional. God's love is life-giving.

2. So we ought to love one another (11-12)

Since God so loved us and showed us his love so clearly, we ought to love God. If we love God, we will obey his command. His command is to love one another. If God lives in us, then we can love even unlovely people.

3. We can rely on God's love (13-16a)

If we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, then God lives in us. We can't depend on changeable people--not even on ourselves. But we can rely on God.

Prayer: Lord, I can't love others. But I know that you love me and sent Jesus to die for me and live in me. Help me to love.

One Word: Rely on God's love

PERFECT LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR

1 John 4:16b-21 (Sat.) Dec. 20

Key Verse: 4:18

1. No fear in love (16b-18)

Unconfessed, unforgiven sin in our hearts makes us fear death and fear judgment. But when we repent and receive God's gift of love, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, our sin problem is solved and the basic fear that underlies all fear is cast out of our hearts. God's children who live in this world are growing in his image. We love our Father, and we know he loves us. His perfect love casts out our fear.

2. Because he first loved us (19-21)

Sin, fear and mistrust also keep us from loving other people. We can love God and love others because God first loved us. How amazing--that God could love dirty, useless sinners like us! Love for our brothers does not come naturally. So God gave us a command to be obeyed: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Prayer: Lord, wash my heart clean of all sin and fear and selfishness. Let your love dwell in my heart so that I can love my brothers and sisters.

One Word: Perfect love drives out fear

THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD

1 John 5:1-12

Key Verse: 5:4b

1. Children of God (1-5)

What is the victory that overcomes the world? It is our faith in Jesus Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ we are born again into God's family, into a new love relationship with God the Father.

Those who are born again are full of love. We love God by obeying his commands. He commands us to love all the children of God. If we love God, his commands are not burdensome. The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world.

2. He who has the Son has life (6-12)

God himself testifies to Jesus the Son. Jesus came by water (a reference either to his natural birth or, more probably, to his baptism, at which time the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove), and by blood (his blood shed on the cross for our sins). God's testimony is this: God has given us eternal life in his Son. If we have Jesus, we have life; if we do not have Jesus, we are dead.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus. Come, Jesus, and dwell with me today.

One Word: Faith is the victory

KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

1 John 5:13-21

Key Verse: 5:13

1. Know that you have eternal life (13-17)

It is important to have assurance of salvation. If we believe in Jesus, and trust him only for our salvation, we have eternal life. We have a right relationship with God. We may come confidently to God in prayer, knowing that he hears and answers. If we know and love God, then we must pray for our brothers and sisters.

2. Know that Jesus keeps you safe (18-21)

We know that we are children of God; but the whole world is under the control of the devil. So we are engaged in a spiritual battle. The devil never gives up trying to draw us into his camp, but we have been born of God. And Jesus, God's one and only Son, is our Savior and Protector. We are in him; he is in us. He cleanses us from sin. He gives us understanding so that we may know God, who is truth. Eternal life is an intimate relationship with the Father and the Son (Jn 17:3).

Prayer: Lord, help me to pray. Help me to remain in you. Keep me from sin today.

One Word: Believe in Jesus and have life

WALK IN LOVE AND TRUTH

2 John 1-13

Key Verse: 2

1. Walking in love and truth (1-6)

This letter is from John to a community of believers for whom he has a shepherd's love. This means that he loves them in the truth. Jesus commands us to love one another. But how do we love others? We must show our love by living according to God's word of truth. We must not compromise with the truth of God's word in the name of love, for such love is not real love.

2. Watch out for deceivers (7-13)

The central idea of a heresy called Gnosticism was that flesh is evil and spirit is good. The Bible does not teach this. The Gnostics denied Jesus' true humanity. They followed their own ideas, not the Bible. Sometimes an idea excites us and we go off on a tangent. We must not run ahead of the teaching of the Bible, but continue in the word of God. Then we can know the truth that sets us free (Jn 8:31,32). We must not welcome into our homes or into our hearts anyone who brings false teaching.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love others in the truth. Help me not to compromise with the truth of your word in the name of love.

One Word: Walk in love and truth

FAITHFULNESS TO THE TRUTH

3 John 1-14

Key Verse: 4

1. Gaius, who walks in the truth (1-8)

What does it mean to be faithful to the truth? According to John's letter to Gaius, walking in the truth means faithfully loving our brothers in Christ without mixing in false or impure motives. Gaius even showed love and generous hospitality to strangers who were only passing through. He did this, not with some political motive or some hope of receiving personal benefit, but simply for Jesus' sake, because the visitors were servants of God. Acting in love, for the sake of Jesus alone is walking in the truth.

2. Diotrephes, who loves to be first (9-14)

Diotrephes evidently was full of personal ambition. Because he wanted to be number one, he was very narrow and critical of others. He did not welcome God's servants. We must imitate what is good, not what is evil.

Prayer: Lord, help me to walk according to the truth. Give me a heart that is always open to accept your children.

One Word: Gaius or Diotrephes?