

T R U T H A N D L O V E



FIRST JOHN

LOVE
MADE
KNOWN



T R U T H A N D L O V E

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WHAT TO EXPECT

This eight-week study of 1 John can be used by an individual or a group. The only other thing you will need is a Bible. Each week includes a Scripture reading from 1 John, some brief comments on the passage, an explanation of an important term or concept, and some questions to reflect on and discuss. As a supplement to each week's study, we've also provided a link to a video that contains a sermon excerpt based on the passage for the week.

This study of 1 John is based on a sermon series by David Platt titled "Love Made Known." Participants are encouraged to view or listen to these sermons as a supplement to this study. The sermons can be accessed for free at <https://radical.net/series/love-made-known/>.*

David Burnette
Editor, Radical

*Two of the sermons in this series were preached by Mike Kelsey, Teaching Pastor at McLean Bible Church (Montgomery County).

INTRO- DUCTION

How do I know if I'm really a Christian?

That's an eternally important question, and yet, sadly, it's one that many Christians struggle to answer. They may not realize that it's possible to have assurance, or perhaps they're looking for assurance in the wrong places or in the wrong ways. Thankfully, God doesn't leave us in the dark when it comes to our standing before Him. He wants His children to know that they belong to Him, which is one of the reasons He gave us the book of 1 John.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
(1 Jn 5:13)

This brief yet penetrating book gives us evidences of eternal life to look for in our lives. Seeing these evidences should bring assurance and joy to God's children. At the same time, 1 John offers a much-needed warning to those who lack these evidences. It is entirely possible to think that things are okay between you and God when, in reality, you don't actually have eternal life. There are likely many people in our churches today who fit that description. (Is that you?) Of all the things to be deceived about, nothing could be worse than being deceived about your eternal standing before God.

For these reasons and more, we need to hear what God is saying in the book of 1 John. We want to avoid the deadly deception of false teaching and instead rest assured that we have eternal life in Jesus Christ. What could be more important than that?

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The book of 1 John was written by the apostle John, a man who spent three years with Jesus, witnessed His crucifixion, and then encountered Jesus after He had risen from the dead. This same John also wrote 2 John, 3 John, the Gospel of John, and the book of Revelation. John likely wrote 1 John to the churches of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) while he was in Ephesus sometime between 80–95 A.D.¹ Interestingly enough, the church at Ephesus was the first of seven churches addressed by Jesus in the book of Revelation.

First John does not give us many specifics about the context John was addressing, though John does mention some who had left the church, presumably due to false teaching (2:18–19). Like a good pastor, John wanted to make sure that those who remained in the church weren't carried away by similar errors. They, like us, needed to know the truth and to live in light of it.

PRIMARY PURPOSES & IMPORTANT THEMES

John gives us several purpose statements throughout this letter. For instance, he wants believers to know the joy that comes from fellowship with God (1:3); he wants them to avoid sin (2:1); he wants to protect them from false teaching (2:26); he wants them to have assurance of “eternal life” (5:13), a phrase that appears throughout this short letter.² We hear in these concerns the heart of a pastor who cares deeply for God's people.

In order to help us know that we possess eternal life, 1 John gives us

evidences to look for in our lives. These evidences resurface throughout this book, and we can group them under three general headings:

1. Believing the truth about Jesus Christ. Those who have eternal life believe the Bible's teaching about who Jesus is and what He has accomplished for our salvation.

2. Obeying God's commands. Those who have eternal life obey God's Word rather than living lives that are characterized by unrepentant sin.

3. Loving fellow believers. Those who have eternal life love and care for their brothers and sisters in Christ as a response to God's love in Christ.

No Christian will see these evidences as much as he or she would like. In fact, John recognizes that sin is an ongoing reality in the life of a Christian (1:8–10). Nevertheless, seeing these evidences, at least in some measure, should give us greater assurance that we have eternal life. And this assurance leads to greater joy and gratitude. Even in the face of doubts, suffering, and false teaching, we can rest secure in Christ and in the promises of God's Word.

WEEK 1

ETERNAL LIFE AND EVERLASTING LOVE

1 JOHN 1:1-4

“Many are willing to believe in Christ if he remains a merely spiritual reality. But when we preach that Christ has become a particular man in a particular place issuing particular commands and dying on a particular cross exposing the particular sins of our particular lives, then the preaching ceases to be acceptable for many.”

—John Piper³

GETTING STARTED

Respond to the following statement: “Regardless of what someone believes about Jesus, the most important thing is that they know of God’s love for them.”

QUICK OVERVIEW

The first four verses of 1 John set up the rest of the letter. John wants his hearers to know that they have eternal life, which means that they must have a right understanding of Jesus Christ. As an apostle, John had firsthand knowledge of Jesus, and he wanted others to enjoy the same joy-filled fellowship that he had with the Father and the Son.

READ: 1 JOHN 1:1–4

JOHN'S MESSAGE IS RELIABLE

Some people reject the Bible's teaching about Jesus because they view it as a collection of unreliable stories that were passed on by those who never spoke with Him or saw Him. **How does this opening section of 1 John speak to this objection?**

John tells us that he had personally heard, seen, and touched Jesus (v. 1). As an apostle, John was an eyewitness of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (see Acts 1:21–22 for the qualifications of an apostle). And Jesus Himself had promised John and the other apostles, “. . . the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (Jn 14:26).

This promise from Jesus means that we don't have to worry that John and the other apostles forgot or misunderstood the teachings of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was their teacher, enabling them to remember and understand Christ's teachings. This is the same Spirit who inspired all the words of Scripture, as 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches us: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

Why is it so crucial that we have confidence in the authority of everything we read in Scripture?

FULLY GOD, FULLY MAN

John tells us that he saw, heard, and touched Jesus (1:1), which means that Jesus did not simply *appear* to be human. He was (and is) fully human. Jesus was like us in every way, except that he was “without sin” (Heb 4:15). Believing this truth is necessary for eternal life because the penalty for man’s sin had to be paid for by a man.

At the same time, Jesus Christ was not *merely* a man. He was (and is) the eternal Son of God. Before He “became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14) approximately two thousand years ago, Jesus was “with the Father” from the “beginning” (1 Jn 1:1–2). In his Gospel, John tells us that Jesus was the “Word” through whom God made all things (Jn 1:1–3). Only One who is fully God could exist prior to creation, and only One who is fully God could overcome sin and death through His own death and resurrection. In order to have eternal life, we must believe in *this* Jesus, the One who is both fully God and fully man.

JESUS IS ETERNAL LIFE

John says that he is proclaiming “eternal life” (v. 2), a phrase that is used throughout this letter.

However, for John, eternal life is not merely a thing or a concept. It is a Person. This eternal life was “with the Father and was made manifest to us” (v. 2). John is referring to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **How, then, should we think about attempts to find eternal life—whether through good works, other religions, etc.—apart from Christ?**

The reason eternal life comes only through Jesus is because of who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. He is “from the beginning” (v. 1), which is likely a reference to the fact that Christ existed prior to creation. John also tells us that Jesus was “with the Father” (v. 2) prior to His earthly ministry. Such things can only be said of the fully divine Son of God. This is the same Jesus the apostles heard, saw, and touched (v. 1).

This Jesus who was fully divine and fully human lived a life of perfect obedience, the life we have all failed to live. Jesus then died on the cross to take the punishment that sinners like us deserve. Later in this letter, John says that Jesus “laid down his life for us” (3:16). But, three days later, Jesus rose from the dead to show His power over sin and death. Now all who turn from their sin and put their trust in Jesus are forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God forever.

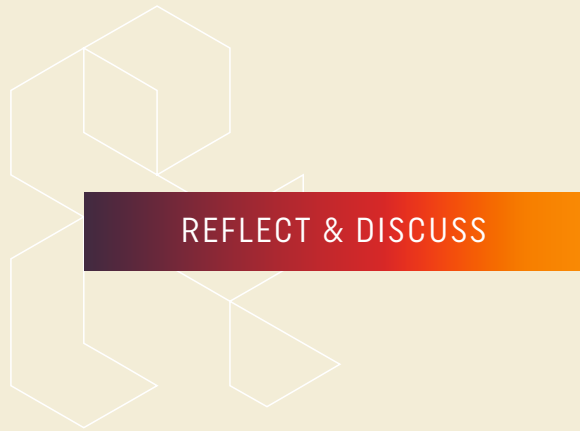
In light of who Jesus is and what He has done for our salvation, what would you say to someone who claimed to have eternal life but who did not seem to care much about the Jesus revealed in Scripture?

JESUS OFFERS EVERLASTING LOVE

If you truly love someone, then you will make that love known to them. God has revealed His love to us by sending us His Son. Knowing and experiencing this supernatural love is, according to verse 3, why John proclaims Christ: “. . . so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

By “fellowship,” John is referring to a partnership or a close bond. **How is this idea of fellowship different than the way many Christians use the word?**

Based on verse 4, what is John’s purpose in writing, and how does fellowship with God achieve that purpose?



1. What are some unbiblical views of Jesus that are common in our culture? How have these views spilled over into the church?

2. What is at stake when it comes to our view of Jesus? How can we make sure that we have the right view of Jesus?

3. How does this opening section of 1 John speak to the deity of Christ? (Hint: see 1 John 1:2)

4. Given what John says about Jesus, what's wrong with the idea that all religions essentially teach the same thing?

5. We are often tempted to find ultimate joy in people and possessions. How does John's stated purpose in 1 John 1:4 point us in another direction to find ultimate and lasting joy?



To review this week's teaching about who Jesus is and what He has done, see the sermon excerpt for Week 1: radical.net/lovemadeknown-week1

WEEK 2

WHY JESUS DIED AND HOW WE LIVE

1 JOHN 1:5–2:2

“When you know you are sick, you will listen to the doctor.”

—C.S. Lewis⁴

GETTING STARTED

“If people really knew me, they would be shocked or disappointed.” Many people feel that way, though they don’t often say it out loud. The thought of having our sins and weaknesses exposed before others is extremely uncomfortable. **What are some ways we try to hide or deny our sins and weaknesses?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

John now turns to consider the implications of God’s character for the lives of God’s children. Those who claim to know God must walk in the light because God *is* light. He is holy, and He sees and knows everything about us, including our thoughts and secret motives. Gratefully, God is also gracious and forgiving. And as we’ll see in this week’s passage, our response to this gracious and holy God is an indicator of our spiritual condition.

READ: 1 JOHN 1:5–2:2

THE GOOD NEWS: GOD IS HOLY

In order to respond to God rightly, we need to understand what God is like. John begins by telling us that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1:5). For God to be light means that He is the source of pure life and perfect goodness. This idea of God as light is closely related to God’s holiness, an attribute that sets Him apart from every created thing. Here are some other biblical references to light:

- “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.” (Gen 1:3)
- “In [Jesus Christ] was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (Jn 1:4–5)
- “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (Jn 8:12)

What do these references to “light” teach us about God?

We typically (and wrongly) think of God as being a lot like us. **How does the fact that God has “no darkness” make Him unique?**

THE BAD NEWS: WE ARE SINNERS

John mentions the word “sin” nine times in this passage, and he says that God’s children are not to walk in “darkness” (v. 6). In fact, we are deceived if we claim that we are *not* sinners (v. 8). **Why does it make sense that John would follow up a discussion of God as “light” in verse 5 with so many references to our sin?**

Some Christians wrongly assume that spiritual maturity will result in sinless living (or nearly sinless living), which leads them to worry about their spiritual condition when they continue to battle sin and feel its allure. Other Christians recognize that the presence of sin is still a reality in the life of every believer, but they respond to God’s ongoing forgiveness and grace by treating their own sin lightly and by downplaying the need for obedience. **How can 1 John 1:6-10 guard us against both of these errors?**

Sin involves refusing to obey God's Word in our thoughts, words, actions, and motives. The Bible says that we not only commit acts of sin but are born with a sinful nature, unable to obey God. Before God gave us new life, we were "dead in . . . trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). **In light of this reality, what's wrong with looking within yourself for strength and hope?**

The Bible teaches that our sin deserves God's eternal judgment (Rom 6:23). However, some people object, claiming that a loving God would never punish people for sin. **How would the idea of God as light and as perfectly holy and just help you respond to this objection?**

THE GREATEST NEWS: JESUS DIED FOR GOD

How can a holy God show His love to sinners given that they deserve His wrath? That's the most important question in the Bible, and it's

one that this passage helps us answer. According to 1 John 2:2, Jesus is the “propitiation for our sins.” That word “propitiation” refers to a sacrifice that satisfies God’s wrath by atoning for sin.⁵ So while Christ died to secure our salvation, His sacrifice was ultimately a satisfaction of God’s perfect justice. Ultimately, then, Jesus died for God.

How should Christ’s sacrifice on the cross compel us to confess our sin to God rather than deny it?

John tells us that Christ is not only the propitiation for our sins but also “for the sins of the whole world” (2:3). **How does this truth give you confidence in sharing your faith? How might it give the church confidence in obeying Christ’s command to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19)?**

OUR ADVOCATE AND PROPITIATION

Jesus is called our “advocate” and our “propitiation” in 1 John 2:1–2. An advocate is someone who comes alongside you to plead your case or to represent you. Christ, who is perfectly righteous, represents us before God. He is our “advocate with the Father” (v. 1). But, you may be wondering, on what basis does Christ plead our case if we are sinful and God is perfectly just?

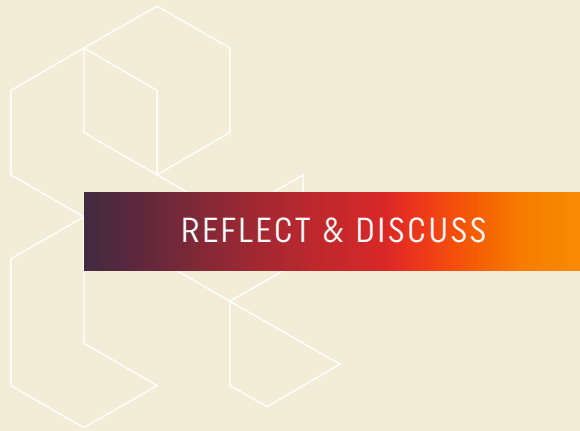
John tells us that the One who is our advocate is also our “propitiation” (v. 2; see also 1 Jn 4:10; Rom 3:25). A propitiation is a sacrifice that atones for sin. God satisfied His own justice by sending His Son to die on the cross in order to atone for our sins. Now, with God’s wrath appeased, those who belong to Christ stand under God’s favor rather than God’s judgment. What a comfort to have an Advocate who pleads on our behalf based on His own infinitely valuable, all-sufficient sacrifice!

When some people hear about God’s offer of full forgiveness through Christ, they assume that it will lead to a life of self-indulgence, a life in which sin is no longer a big deal. After all, we’re forgiven! But 1 John 1:5–2:2 is telling us just the opposite. Those who belong to Christ should “walk in the light” (1:7), confessing their sin honestly, receiving God’s grace happily, and obeying God’s Word humbly. In other words, those who truly understand God’s grace will gladly walk in obedience to Him.

If you want to know if you have eternal life, then ask yourself these questions:

(1) Do I walk in the light or do I resemble the world in my actions and values? (Is my life characterized by obedience or by unrepentant sin? Think holy direction, not holy perfection.)

(2) Do I confess my sins or deny them? (True Christians sense the Holy Spirit's conviction when they sin, and they regularly acknowledge their need for God's forgiveness and grace.)



1. How would your friends answer the question, “What is God like?” How does John’s teaching that “God is light” (1 Jn 1:5) differ from the way many people think about God today?

2. Why might a spiritually mature person be more aware of his or her own sin than someone who only recently became a Christian?

3. How is confessing our sin different than simply saying “I’m sorry” and then going back to the same sinful patterns?

4. Some people think that God could never forgive certain sins that they have committed. How does the description of Christ as our “advocate” (2:1) and “propitiation” (2:2) give us hope in the face of the darkest of sins?

5. How can it be good news that Jesus died not only for us but, ultimately, for God?



To review this week’s teaching about Jesus as our propitiation, see the sermon excerpt for Week 2: radical.net/lovmadeknown-week2

WEEK 3

TRUE ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

1 JOHN 2:3-17

“I believe that one reason why the Church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church.”

—Charles Spurgeon⁶

GETTING STARTED

Maria has a friend named Amy who claims to be a Christian. However, Amy’s life looks no different from her non-Christian friends and she shows very little interest in spiritual things. When asked about her lifestyle, Amy replies, “I remember asking Jesus in my heart when I was seven years old, so I know I’m going to heaven.” **How should Maria respond?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

In this week’s passage, John gives us some ways to discern whether or not we have eternal life. We’ll consider these ways under two categories: false foundations for assurance and true foundations for assurance. For the good of our own souls and out of love for others, we should want to know what it looks like for a person to have eternal life.

READ: 1 JOHN 2:3–17

CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE AND THE WORLD'S SEDUCTION

John tells us that those who claim to know Christ should “walk in the same way in which he [Christ] walked” (2:6). This doesn’t mean living sinlessly—only Jesus could do that—but it does mean that followers of Christ should live differently from the world. The enslaving power of sin has been broken in our lives, and the Spirit gives us the desire and ability to walk in obedience to God’s Word.

As you look at your own life, how do your values, words, and actions look different from the world? In what areas do they look the same?

Sadly, the lives of many professing Christians do not look much different from those of their unbelieving neighbors. One of the reasons this is true is because of the sinful, and often subtle, seduction of the world. **What are some ways that we are subtly seduced into thinking and acting like the world?**

Jesus said to his disciples, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34–35). **How is this similar to what John says in 1 John 2:7–11 concerning those who are “in the light”?**

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The imagery of light and darkness shows up throughout Scripture, from the opening chapter of Genesis all the way through to Revelation. John tells us that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5), which means that those who claim to know God should “walk in the light” (1:7). To walk in the light means to reflect God’s perfect character in our beliefs and our actions. Only those who belong to Christ, who is the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12), can do this.

Scripture often associates light with God’s life, truth, and goodness, while darkness is associated with sin, death, and evil. Because we see sin’s devastating effects in the world, it’s easy to feel as if darkness will win in the end. However, Christ has overcome the darkness through His life, death, and resurrection, and when He returns His victory will be apparent to all. Even now, John tells us, the “darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining” (1 Jn 2:8). Those who trust in Christ and love fellow believers demonstrate that they belong to God rather than the passing darkness of this world.

In order to obey the exhortation not to love “the world” or “the things in the world” (2:15–17), we need to understand what John

means by these terms. He is referring to that which is opposed to God, that is, things “that are characteristic of the fallen world order rather than of God’s redemptive order unfolding in the world.”⁷ We know from various passages of Scripture that it is not wrong to enjoy God’s creation (1 Tim 4:3–5; Ps 104; Eccl 2:24–25). Followers of Christ should, for instance, find delight in food, art, music, sports, etc. And we are commanded to love our neighbors (Matt 22:39) and our enemies (Matt 5:43–45), who are also a part of the world God created. It is fitting that we would find joy in these things, provided these things lead us to glorify the Giver rather than His gifts.

So what are some practical ways we can avoid the “love of the world”? How might this affect the way we organize our schedules, make entertainment choices, or pursue a career?

FOUNDATIONS FOR ASSURANCE

The fact that followers of Christ should look different from the world causes some professing Christians to worry about their standing with God because they don’t know *how* different they should look. Others assume that their standing before God is secure even though they have little or no desire to obey God. To be clear, no follower of Christ is without sin, so we should not expect anything close to sinless perfection prior to Christ’s return. At the same time, those who profess Christ as their Savior and Lord should be characterized by obedience and an increasing hatred of sin.

Since eternity is at stake, we need to have a firm foundation for our assurance. Consider the false foundations for assurance listed be-

low and identify any that you may be relying on for your standing before God. Remember, these aren't bad things, but they don't necessarily indicate that someone possesses eternal life in Christ:

FALSE FOUNDATIONS FOR ASSURANCE

- **Religious heritage:** growing up in a Christian home or attending a Christian school
- **Church involvement:** regularly attending and serving in the church
- **A moral lifestyle:** trying to be a good person and to live with integrity
- **Intellectual knowledge:** knowing the facts of the gospel
- **Active ministry:** serving others sacrificially or participating in church programs
- **A guilty conscience:** feeling bad when you do something wrong
- **Positive thinking:** being sincere in your beliefs and assuming that you are right
- **A past decision:** remembering a time, place, feeling, or experience when you think you became a Christian

Again, these “false foundations” are not inherently bad, but it is dangerous to base our assurance on them. Gratefully, Scripture gives us true foundations for our assurance. **The questions below can help us determine whether we truly possess eternal life:**

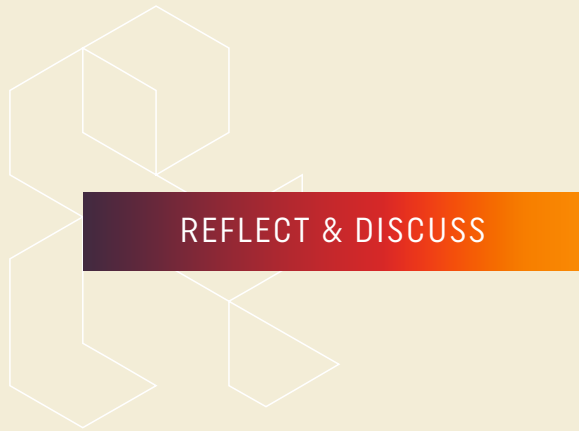
TRUE FOUNDATIONS FOR ASSURANCE

- Are you trusting in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of your sin?
- Are you obeying Jesus as the Lord of your life?
- Are you showing the love of God to others?
- Are you experiencing God's love for you?

If you are struggling with whether or not you have eternal life in Christ, ask a pastor or a mature Christian friend to talk and pray with you about these things. Continue reading God's Word and

meeting with your local church.

If you conclude that you have not truly turned from your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can ask Him now to forgive your sins and to give you eternal life (For more on the question “What is the Gospel?” see pages 90–91 of this resource). Speak with a trusted Christian friend or talk to your pastor if you have further questions. Even if you have professed to be a follower of Christ for years, this issue is too important to ignore.



1. What are some ways that churches in your culture look like the world?

2. Given how subtle sin can be, what are some ways Christians can guard against the seduction of the world?

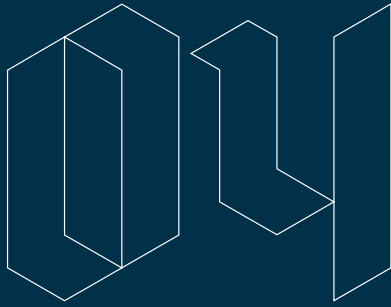
3. Every follower of Christ should be a committed member of a local church. Why is this so important as we think about the issue of assurance and the need to avoid being deceived about our spiritual state?

4. Remembering a past decision to follow Christ isn't necessarily wrong. However, why is it dangerous to *base* your assurance on such a memory rather than on the promises of the gospel?

5. One of the true foundations for assurance is believing in Christ and His gospel. Give a brief answer to the question, “What is the gospel?”



To review this week's teaching about obedience in the life of a Christian, see the sermon excerpt for Week 3: radical.net/lovemadeknown-week3



WEEK 4

ANTICHRISTS AND THE CHILDREN OF GOD

1 JOHN 2:18–3:10

“If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.”

—J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*⁸

GETTING STARTED

Several members of Jerome’s church decided to leave the church because they liked the teaching of a new pastor in town. This new pastor is teaching some things about Jesus that Jerome has never heard before, and it is making Jerome uneasy. However, the members who left Jerome’s church can’t stop talking about how much this new pastor’s teaching is changing their lives, which makes Jerome feel as if he is missing something spiritually. **How should Jerome decide whether or not to follow the teachings of this new pastor?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

In this week’s passage John warns us about false teachers—people he refers to as “antichrists”—and he gives us some criteria to dis-

cern whether someone is a false teacher. Some individuals had left the church, and John wanted to offer assurance to those who stayed and continued to believe the truth of the gospel. He assured them that they had the anointing of God's Spirit and that they could look forward in hope to Christ's return. And unlike the world, God's children do not live in an unbroken pattern of sin.

READ: 1 JOHN 2:18–3:10

A WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS

John speaks of those who “went out from us” (2:19), that is, those who had left the fellowship of God's people. This was not simply a decision to join another church but rather an abandonment of the gospel. Despite their outward identification with God's people in the past, those who left the church demonstrated that they did not truly belong to Christ. **How does this serve as a warning for us and for our churches today?**

When people abandon the gospel, it may look as if they have lost their salvation. However, the Bible is clear that those whom God saves will never perish. Here's how Jesus put it in John 10:27–30:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

Many other passages give us this same rock-solid confidence in God's ability to keep His people to the end (see Rom 8:28–39). Those

who abandon Christ prove that they were never truly Christians, or as John says, they were “not of us” (1 Jn 2:19). True Christians always persevere in faith until the end because God’s Spirit remains in them. They aren’t perfect or sinless, and they may even seem to fall away for a time, but by God’s grace they eventually repent and refuse to abandon Christ and the gospel.

What are some common false teachings that lure people away from Christianity today?

Many people claim that it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. **How does 1 John 2:22–23 speak to this idea?**

Those who deny that Jesus is the Christ, and those who deny the Father and the Son, are referred to by John as the “antichrist” (2:22). **Read Romans 10:9–10 and 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 and make a list of other foundational truths that are necessary for one to believe in order to be a Christian.**

THE ANTICHRIST AND THE LAST DAYS

Scripture warns of an individual who, inspired and empowered by Satan, would come in the last days to oppose Christ (see 2 Thess 2:1–10). John calls this individual the “antichrist” (1 Jn 2:18), a man who would deny the truth that Jesus is the fully human and fully divine Messiah, the Son of God. John could even say that “many antichrists have come,” which is likely a reference to those who oppose Christ and the truth of the gospel.

Jesus and His apostles promised us that such false teachers would arise in the “last days” (Matt 24:24; 1 Tim 4:1–3). The “last days” is a reference to the time between Christ’s first and second comings, the time we live in now. John calls the current era “the last hour” (1 Jn 2:18). Even if we don’t see the actual individual known as the antichrist, John warns us that “the spirit of the antichrist” is already at work in the world denying that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn 4:3). It is critical that God’s people understand and hold fast to the truth of the gospel.

CHILDREN OF GOD (2:28–3:10)

John calls Christians “children of God” (1 Jn 3:1). That may not sound like a remarkable claim, particularly since even unbelievers often say that “we’re all God’s children.” Certainly, we should affirm that all people belong to God as their Creator and have value as those who bear His image (Gen 1:27). However, John is saying something more than that. Only those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ have the privilege of being called God’s children and knowing God as their heavenly Father. They become part of God’s spiritual family.

Being a part of God’s family means that we should eagerly anticipate Christ’s return, the time when we will finally be set free from sin in new, glorious, resurrected bodies—made like Christ Himself (3:2). **According to 1 John 2:28–3:3, what should the lives of God’s children be characterized by while we await Christ’s second coming?**

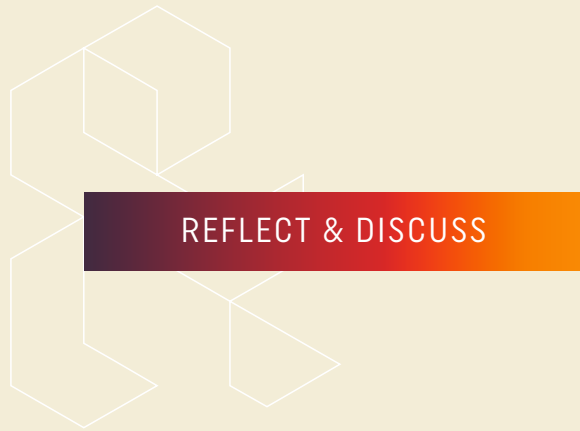
We saw in 1 John 1:5–2:2 that true believers do not deny but rather confess their sins, so we know that John does not expect sinless perfection when he says, “No one who abides in him [God] keeps on sinning” (3:6). John is warning us that those who consistently live in unrepentant sin do not have eternal life.

Living in sin makes no sense for the Christian because the Son of God came in order to “destroy the works of the devil.” (3:8; see also 3:5). **Based on 1 John 3:4–10, what should we conclude about a person who claims to be a Christian but whose life looks no different from the world?**

Just as 1 John 3:8 speaks of Christ destroying the works of the devil, so Hebrews 2:14–15 speaks of Christ destroying the devil himself:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself [Jesus] likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Christ took on flesh in order to “destroy” the devil, and He did this in an unexpected way—by dying on a cross on behalf of His people. In other words, Christ overcame death through His own death. He died for our sins so that we would no longer be enslaved to the fear of death and judgment.



1. What are some ways we can guard ourselves and others against false teaching? What role should the church play in this process?

2. What are some characteristics of false teaching that make it so attractive to people?

3. How would you approach someone who claimed to be a Christian but who stopped attending church and reading their Bible for a long period of time?

4. We learned in 1 John 1:9 that true Christians confess their sins. How, then, can John claim in 1 John 3:6 that those who abide in Christ do not keep on sinning? Explain your answer.

5. According to this week's passage, how is living in sin completely at odds with the purpose of Christ's coming in the flesh?



To review this week's teaching about the privilege of having God as our Father and Christ as our brother, see the sermon excerpt for Week 4: radical.net/lovmadeknown-week4

WEEK 5

CAPTIVATED AND COMPELLED BY LOVE

1 JOHN 3:11-24

“The importance of Christians loving one another cannot be overstated.”

—Danny Akin⁹

GETTING STARTED

Carl and his wife are members of your church, and they attend every Sunday. They love the singing, and they are constantly being challenged by the pastor’s sermons. However, as soon as the service ends, they leave without speaking to anyone. When you ask them to join you for Sunday School, small group, or even a meal, they politely refuse, saying, “We’ve got all the spiritual encouragement we need.” **What’s wrong with the way Carl and his wife view their relationship to the church?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

After seeing that the lives of God’s children should be marked by righteousness rather than sin (3:1-10), this week we consider how God’s children should relate to one another. One of the signs that we have passed from death to life is that our lives are marked by love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. And this love is more than just a feeling. Just as Christ demonstrated his love by laying down His life for us, so we should be willing to lay down our lives for others.

READ: 1 JOHN 3:11–24

THE CONTRAST WE NEED TO SEE: LOVE AND HATE

John contrasts the love that should characterize Christians with the hatred of the world. The world's hatred surprises some Christians, and they may even be tempted to change their beliefs or behavior in response to opposition. **What is at the root of the world's hatred according to verses 11–15, and how does knowing this help us respond better to opposition?**

AN ANCIENT WAR

The world's hostility toward God's people is nothing new. Ever since the serpent tempted the first couple, Adam and Eve, to sin, God declared that there would be hostility between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15). We see this hostility in the life of Cain, who murdered his own brother, Abel (Gen 4). John tells us that Cain was "of the evil one" (1 Jn 3:12) and that his hatred stemmed from the fact that Abel acted righteously.

According to Scripture, God's people should expect the world's hatred (Jn 15:18–19; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 4:12–19). Gratefully, though, the world's hostility will cease when Christ returns, for Christ has defeated Satan by His death and resurrection. While we wait for Christ's return, the question John puts before us is this: *Are we characterized by the hatred of the world (like Cain) or by the sacrificial love of Christ?* Only those who are marked by love for their brothers and sisters in Christ have eternal life.

Jesus identified love for God and love for one's neighbor as the two greatest commands (Matt 22:34–40). Therefore, a Christian should be marked by love. In fact, our love for one another is a reflection of God's love for us. **According to 1 John 3:15, what are we to conclude about the spiritual state of a person who has no love for other Christians?**

Recall that some believers to whom John wrote likely lacked assurance that they had eternal life. **How does verse 14 offer assurance to those who truly belong to God?**

John tells us about the kind of love that should characterize God's children in verses 16–18. **How would you describe this kind of love in your own words?**

Compare John's description of love to the description of genuine, saving faith in James 2:14–17:

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James teaches that genuine faith produces good works, or else it's not the kind of faith that saves. **How is this similar to what John is saying in 1 John 3:16–18?**

We need to be reminded that true love works itself out in tangible acts of service and sacrifice. However, such acts of love should be motivated by our faith in Christ rather than guilt or an attempt to earn God's favor. **What's the danger of disconnecting our acts of love from God's grace in the gospel?**

THE CONFIDENCE WE CAN HAVE

The world often tells us to look within ourselves for strength and peace. **How is this advice different from the comfort offered in 1 John 3:19–24 for times when “our heart condemns us”?**

Based on what John has been saying in the preceding verses, why do you think John's hearers might feel condemnation?

While verse 22 says that "whatever we ask we receive from him [God]" (v. 22), we know from the rest of Scripture (see 2 Cor 12:1–10) and from experience that God does not always give us everything we ask for in prayer. **How does the rest of verse 22, as well as verses 23–24, help us understand what John is saying?**

How does our obedience and our desire to please God change our perspective on prayer?

What kinds of things do you typically pray for, and what do your prayers reveal about your relationship with God?

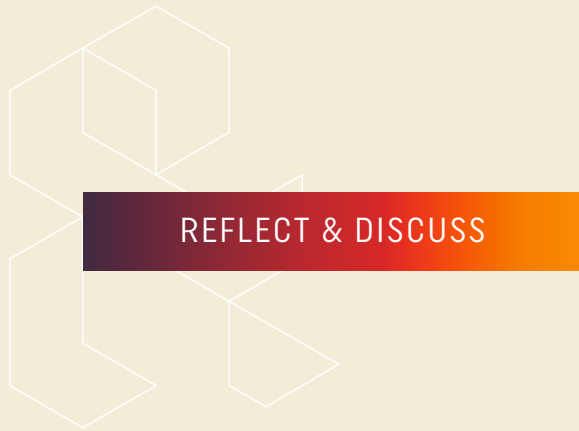
For a good summary of the right priorities and perspective on prayer, see what's known as "The Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6:9–13:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

How does the beginning of this prayer shape the rest of the requests?

According to Jesus, what kinds of things should we ask for in prayer?

In your own words, what priorities does this prayer encourage?



1. Why do you think so many Christians in the West are surprised by the world's opposition to their faith?

2. John teaches that love should show itself in practical ways (3:16–18). How is this different from earning God's favor by our deeds, and what role does the gospel play in our practical works of love?

3. Respond to the following statement: “God will give us anything we want as long as we pray in faith.”

4. What biblical truths can we base our assurance on when we *feel* as if we don’t have eternal life?

5. How can meditation on God’s attributes and His promises in the gospel change your perspective on prayer as well as your requests?



To review this week’s teaching about love as a necessary mark of a Christian, see the sermon excerpt for Week 5: radical.net/lovemadeknown-week5

WEEK 6

WAGING SPIRITUAL WAR

1 JOHN 4:1–6

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight.”

—C.S. Lewis¹⁰

GETTING STARTED

Many Christians talk about experiencing spiritual warfare, but they mean different things by it. Some people think Satan is holding them back from financial prosperity. Others associate spiritual warfare primarily with sickness and disease. **What comes to mind when you think of spiritual warfare?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

Last week we saw how important it is for Christians to have genuine love for one another, the kind of love that is sacrificial and meets practical needs. This week in 1 John 4:1–6 we are reminded that we are in the midst of a spiritual war. This war has eternal consequences, and it is being fought over the identity of Jesus Christ. We will either

believe what the Spirit says about Christ in the Word of God, or else we will find ourselves aligned with the spirit of the antichrist.

READ: 1 JOHN 4:1-6

OUR ENEMY IN THIS SPIRITUAL WAR

John says that there are many “false prophets” (v. 1) in the world, and he speaks of the influence of the “spirit of the antichrist” (v. 3). **Why do you think so many people today, including some Christians, practically ignore the reality of a spiritual conflict between Christ and Satan?**

The spiritual conflict John is talking about concerns the identity of Jesus Christ. **What, according to verses 2-3, do false teachers deny about Christ?**

In order to be a mediator between God and man, Christ had to be both fully God and fully man. As Paul reminds Timothy, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). **In light of this truth, how does the message of the false teachers in 1 John 4:2–3 strike at the very heart of the gospel?**

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Speaking the truth has never been easy, and that is certainly true in our own day. To claim that someone else’s beliefs are wrong is often viewed as narrow-minded and arrogant. As the saying goes, “What’s true for you may not be true for me.” God’s Word, on the other hand, makes a clear distinction between truth and error: “Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” (1 Jn 4:6). Those who know God believe what His Word says about Jesus.

If we don’t speak the truth about Christ and the gospel, then we are rejecting the Spirit’s testimony and preventing people from hearing about their only hope of eternal life. Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6). That may sound narrow and unloving to the world, but it is good news for those who recognize their need for a Savior. Speaking the truth about Jesus is the most loving thing we can do.

Unfortunately, some Christians have a distorted view of spiritual warfare. They look for demons behind every difficulty or disappointment in life. Others view Satan based on popular images of devils holding pitchforks. **What's the danger of viewing Satan and spiritual warfare in these ways?**

OUR WEAPONS IN THIS SPIRITUAL WAR

Warnings against false teaching are common in the New Testament. Take, for example, Paul's warning to Timothy:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared . . . (1 Tim 4:1–2)¹¹

John tells us to “test the spirits” (1 Jn 4:1), which means that we should test everyone's teaching by the standard of God's Word. **What does the need to test the spirits tell us about the importance of knowing God's Word, as well as hearing it taught by those whom Christ has gifted to lead in His church (Eph 4:11–12)?**

There are issues that genuine, well-meaning Christians can disagree over. However, John makes it clear that there are some biblical truths that are non-negotiable if we want to call ourselves followers of Christ. Gratefully, God has not simply left us alone when it comes to understanding His Word and trying to discern error. Not only has He given us church leaders and other church members (Eph 4:11–16), but He has given us His own Spirit (1 Jn 3:24)! **How does the Spirit help God’s children in terms of believing the truth?**

Find security in the comforting words of 1 John 4:4: “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them [false teachers], for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

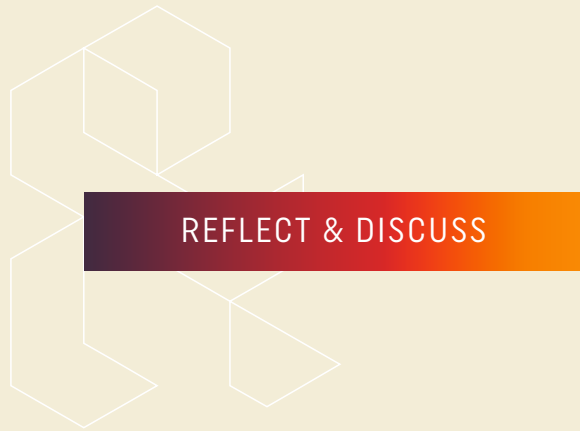
THE OUTCOME OF THIS SPIRITUAL WAR

The very mention of a “spiritual war” might cause some Christians to assume that the outcome of the conflict between Christ and Satan is uncertain. However, unlike physical wars here on earth, the outcome of this spiritual war has already been decided. Christ has defeated Satan through His life, death, and resurrection. Here’s how John wrote of Christ’s victory in the last book of the Bible:

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole

world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” (Rev 12:9–11)

In light of Christ’s victory, God’s children do not fight *for* victory but *from* victory. **How does Christ’s victory and the hope of his second coming change your perspective on spiritual warfare?**



1. How would you respond to someone who claimed that they were experiencing spiritual warfare based on the fact that they could not get a promotion at work?

2. What's the relationship between spiritual warfare and false teaching?

3. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. What “armor” has God provided for His people as they engage in spiritual battle?

4. Some Christians assume that if a pastor cites some verses from the Bible, then his teaching must be true. Why is this a dangerous assumption? What are some practical ways we can avoid having a shallow knowledge of the Bible that is susceptible to error?

5. “False teaching should not be confronted because conflict among Christians is unloving and the world finds it unattractive.” What’s wrong with this approach to false teaching? How *should* we respond to false teaching?



To review this week’s teaching about weapons God has given us for spiritual warfare, see the sermon excerpt for Week 6: radical.net/lovemadeknown-week6

WEEK 7

A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1 JOHN 4:7–5:5

“While in any culture various definitions of love vie for acceptance, for John’s readers there is a central and defining image: Christ’s death for others.”

—Robert W. Yarbrough¹²

GETTING STARTED

Sometimes people reject the teaching of Scripture because it doesn’t sound loving. They may say something like, “I just can’t believe that a God of love would do that.” **How do you think most people you know define the word love? How does the popular notion of God’s love differ from Scripture’s teaching on God’s love?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

After thinking about the spiritual war that Christians are involved in, John returns to his familiar theme of God’s love. The greatest demonstration of God’s love happened at the cross, where the Father sent His Son to atone for our sins. Now, on the basis of this infinite and undeserved love, God’s children should be marked by love for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

READ: 1 JOHN 4:7–5:5

GOD IS LOVE

God does not merely do certain things that are loving, nor does He conform to a standard of love that we impose on Him. According to 1 John 4:8, “God *is* love” (emphasis added), which means that those who know Him will live lives that are characterized by love (4:7). **What would John have us conclude about the spiritual standing of those who show no love for other believers?**

Although John stresses the importance of love for other believers, he clearly identifies God’s love as the basis of our love: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (4:10). **Why is it important to see God’s love for us as the basis of our love for Him (and not the other way around), and how does this affect our assurance of salvation?**

John’s perspective on God’s love reminds us of Romans 5:8, where Paul highlights the free and gracious nature of God’s love: “But God shows his love for us in that *while we were still sinners*, Christ died for us” (emphasis added). Gratefully, God doesn’t wait to see if we will love Him in order to extend His love to us. He sent His Son to die for those who were His “enemies” (Rom 5:10). Our assurance of eternal life, then, must ultimately be based not on our own love and obedience but on God’s character and His promises.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

God wants His children to know that they have eternal life. That’s why 1 John continues to give us evidences of eternal life that should be present in the lives of God’s people. John says that whoever loves has been “born of God” (4:7). However, these evidences are only true of those who have been “born of God” (4:7), and this new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit. Here’s how Paul describes the Spirit’s work in our salvation:

[God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by *the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5–7, emphasis added)

Only the Spirit can give us new, spiritual life. **What does this teach us about attempts to enter God’s kingdom based on our own efforts or willpower?**

What, according to 1 John 4:13–14, does the Spirit do in our lives?

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE NEW BIRTH

John speaks of Christians as those who are “born of God” (4:7). He is referring to the new, spiritual birth we receive from the Holy Spirit. This idea of a new birth reminds us of Jesus’ teaching: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is *born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3, emphasis added). Jesus goes on to tell us that this new birth comes about by the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5–8).

Those who are dead in their sins cannot bring themselves to life, which is why we need the Holy Spirit to give us new, spiritual life. And this same Spirit who gives us new life remains with us throughout our Christian life. He testifies to God’s abiding presence (1 Jn 4:13) and to the truth of Christ (5:1). The apostle Paul calls the Holy Spirit the “spirit of adoption,” the One by whom we cry out to God as our Father (Rom 8:15). The Spirit brings us assurance, for He “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16). These truths about the Holy Spirit remind us of our complete dependence on God and of our inability to manipulate or bring about His saving work in our own strength. Only by the Spirit’s power and grace can we believe the gospel and have eternal life.

In addition to being born of God, a true Christian also abides in God and testifies to His salvation (4:13–16). **What does this truth mean for the person who professes to be a Christian but has little or no desire to hear God’s Word and walk in loving obedience to Him?**

How would you use this week’s passage to lovingly exhort and warn that person?

TRUSTING, OBEYING, AND DISPLAYING SUPERNATURAL LOVE

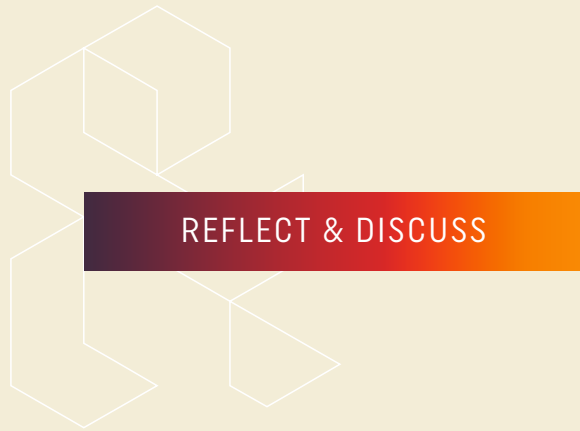
In light of God’s love for us in Christ, there are at least three ways we should respond.

First, we should trust His love (4:9, 16, 5:1, 5), and this trust should remove our fear of God’s wrath toward us because Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross (1 Pet 2:24). That’s why John can say, “There is no fear in love . . .” (4:18). **Make a list of verses that you can meditate on in order to grow in your assurance of God’s love for you.**

Second, believing in God's love should lead to our obedience, for obedience to God's commands is a mark of a true Christian (5:2–3). **Based on what we've seen in this passage, why shouldn't God's commands seem "burdensome" to His children?**

Third, God's supernatural love should cause us to display that love to others (4:7, 11, 20–21; 5:1), and this should be a willing, sacrificial love. **What are some practical ways that you could lovingly serve members of your own church? How might this love be extended to Christians who are persecuted or in need of daily physical provisions?**

God's people should also reflect God's love in the way they relate to unbelievers. What are some practical ways we can do this as it relates to our unbelieving family, friends, and neighbors?



1. John tells us that “God is love” (4:8). Does this mean that God will not punish sin? Explain your answer.

2. Only the Holy Spirit can give us new, spiritual life through the gospel. How should this truth affect the way we do evangelism?

3. John teaches us that God’s love for us precedes and is the basis of our love for Him. How should this reality affect the main emphases of the church’s Sunday gathering?

4. What would you say to someone who told you that they loved God but not the church? (See Eph 5:25–27)

5. How should the love of God in the gospel change our perspective on and our response to God’s commands?



To review this week’s teaching about why it’s good news that God is love, see the sermon excerpt for Week 7: radical.net/lovemadeknown-week7

WEEK 8

THAT YOU MAY KNOW

1 JOHN 5:6–21

“If you are a believer in Christ—united to him by faith—then your salvation is not ultimately grounded in your waffling, wavering commitment to him. It’s grounded in God’s eternal, unbreakable determination to honor his Son by saving you.”

—Greg Gilbert¹³

GETTING STARTED

A fellow church member tells you that it’s presumptuous to say that you *know* that you have eternal life. “God wants to keep us on our toes,” she says, “so that we don’t become spiritually lazy.” **What’s wrong with this perspective, and how does it miss what John has been teaching about assurance throughout this letter?**

QUICK OVERVIEW

After talking of God’s love and the love that should characterize God’s people, John ends this letter by offering believers great assurance concerning their standing with God. Those who believe the testimony that God has given of His Son can *know* that they possess eternal life. The book of 1 John closes by offering us some exhortations concerning sin, prayer, and avoiding idolatry.

READ: 1 JOHN 5:6–21

TRUSTWORTHY WITNESS

In verses 6–7, John mentions three different testimonies to the truth about Jesus Christ: the water, the blood, and the Spirit. Water is likely a reference to Christ's baptism,¹⁴ while blood reminds us of Christ's atoning death on the cross (see 1 Jn 1:7). The Spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit, and He is the one who testifies to Christ's identity. **What role does Scripture play in the Spirit's testimony to Jesus Christ?**

Why, according to verses 9–10, is rejecting Christ the equivalent of calling God a liar?

Some people claim that all religions essentially teach the same truths. **How do verses 11–12 speak to this error?**

ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

One of the overarching purposes of 1 John is stated in verse 13: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” It’s comforting to know that God wants us to have assurance of our standing before Him. **How does this kind of assurance affect the way we live on a daily basis?**

While those who are not truly Christians should not have assurance (that would be an eternally dangerous deception), many genuine Christians struggle with whether they truly have eternal life. A common reason for this struggle is looking to the wrong basis for assurance. Instead of looking primarily to the finished work of Jesus Christ and the promises of God’s Word (which do not change), some Christians base their assurance on their feelings and emotions (which do change). Others base their assurance almost entirely on their own obedience (or lack thereof).

Though 1 John points to our obedience as *evidence* that we belong to Christ, what's the danger of making our own obedience the *basis* of our assurance?

STRUGGLING WITH ASSURANCE

There are various reasons genuine Christians lack assurance of their salvation: exposure to unbiblical teaching on the gospel and/or assurance, a refusal to repent of known sin, an increasing awareness of one's own sin, a natural disposition that is prone to introspection and melancholy, etc. Such struggles may be short-lived or, for some people, they may linger. It's important to walk through such struggles and questions in the fellowship of God's people, the church. If you are not a member of a local church, commit to finding one that preaches the gospel and is committed to the authority of God's Word.

If you struggle with assurance, ask one of your church leaders or a trusted member of your church to talk and pray with you about it. Continue looking to the promises of God's Word and meditate regularly on the gospel. Beware of those who tell you not to worry about assurance or who flippantly offer you their own assurance of your standing with God. God often uses others in this process, but it is ultimately the Spirit who must bring assurance. For a good resource on this topic, see Donald Whitney's book *How Can I Be Sure I'm a Christian?: What the Bible Says About Assurance of Salvation*. Knowing that we have eternal life should give us confidence in prayer (5:14–15). **Is John saying that God always gives us everything we pray for? Explain your answer. (Consider the words of Jesus in John 15:7: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.")**

FINAL EXHORTATIONS

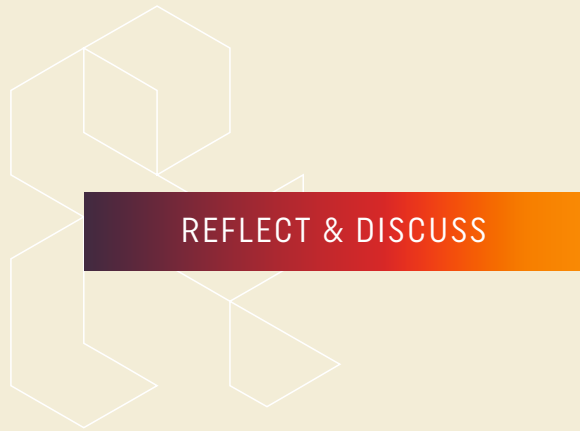
While there is “sin that leads to death” (v. 17), which may be a reference to someone who has definitively rejected Christ’s gospel and the commands of God, John says that not all sin leads to death, so we should pray for one another (v. 16). We’re reminded of the importance of our ministry to one another in the body of Christ. Paul talks about this ministry in Ephesians 4:11–16:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

In light of Paul’s exhortations, why is it dangerous to try to live the Christian life without committing to a local church?

Although “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” (v. 21), John assures us that we are protected by “he who was born of God,” which is almost certainly a reference to Christ. Ultimately, our confidence that we will not finally walk away from the faith is based on Christ’s ability to protect us from Satan’s attacks.

John closes this letter with the following exhortation: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (5:21). When we refuse to believe the Bible’s teaching about Jesus, we inevitably come up with our own, distorted conception of who God is. **How can you make sure that you do not fall prey to false teachings about Jesus, and what role should your church play as you seek to persevere in believing the truth by the power of the Spirit?**



1. Why is the assurance of eternal life so important in terms of the way we approach God and His commands?

2. The book of 1 John has given us many evidences to look for in order to give us assurance of eternal life. Why are our emotions and feelings an unreliable gauge for our spiritual condition?

3. How would you counsel someone who is struggling with assurance of salvation?

4. God gives us the gift of other believers in the church. List some spiritual benefits of being in fellowship with other believers.

5. How has the book of 1 John exposed some misconceptions you had about the Christian life? How has it strengthened your assurance? (If you have remaining questions about your own spiritual standing, talk with your pastor or another trusted Christian friend and continue to meditate on the truths of the gospel.)



To review this week's teaching about why Christians can have confidence in the gospel, see the sermon excerpt for Week 8: radical.net/lovemadeknown-week8

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The just and gracious God of the universe looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross and to show His power over sin in the resurrection so that all who turn and trust in Him will be reconciled to God forever.

This brief summary of the gospel includes five key elements from God's Word:

1. THE CHARACTER OF GOD

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3)

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- Biblical truth: God is the just and gracious Creator of all things.
 - Biblical response: Realize that we belong to Him, are accountable to Him, and are created to glorify Him.
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(See Romans 1:18–20; 2:1–16; 3:22–24; Isaiah 43:6–7)

2. THE SINFULNESS OF MAN

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

- Biblical truth: We are each created by God, but we are all corrupted by sin.
- Biblical response: Admit areas of rebellion, be honest with God about sin, and turn from sin.

(See Romans 1:21–25; 3:9–20, 23; 6:23)

3. THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God . . .” (1 Peter 3:18)

- Biblical truth: Jesus Christ alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God through His death. He alone satisfies the wrath of God for our sins.
- Biblical response: Recognize that we are unable to be reconciled with God apart from Jesus Christ.

(See Romans 3:21–26; 4:25; 5:6–10, 18; 8:1–4)

4. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .” (Acts 16:31)

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- **Biblical truth:** We are reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus. There is nothing we can do to become right with God.
 - **Biblical response:** Faith that leads to salvation involves turning from sin and self-sufficiency. We submit to Jesus as Lord and trust in Him as our Savior.

(See Romans 1:17; 3:20–31; 4:22–25; 6:11–14; 8:10–11; 10:9–13)

5. THE URGENCY OF ETERNITY

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36)

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- **Biblical truth:** Our eternal destiny is dependent on our response to Jesus.
 - **Biblical response:** Cry out to God to save you from your sins, and receive the eternal life that He offers you in the gospel.

(See John 3:14–16, 36; 10:27–30; 17:3; 1 Timothy 1:16–17; Hebrews 9:12; 1 John 5:11–13)

For a brief video explaining the gospel, go to <https://radical.net/the-gospel/>. For a free downloadable resource that explains the gospel and makes suggestions about how to share it with others, go to <http://radical.net/book/gospel-threads-2/>.

NOTES

1. Daniel L. Akin, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: *Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 4. (Introduction)
2. Akin, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 4. (Introduction)
3. John Piper, “Eternal Life Has Appeared in Christ,” <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/eternal-life-has-appeared-in-christ>. (Week 1)
4. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1980), 39. (Week 2)
5. See the notes in the *ESV Study Bible* on the term “propitiation” in 1 John 2:1 and Romans 3:25. *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008). (Week 2)
6. Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner: How to Lead Sinners to the Saviour* (Chicago: Revell, 1895), 278. (Week 3)
7. Robert Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 127. (Week 3)

8. J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 201. (Week 4)

9. Akin, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 74. (Week 5)

10. C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Touchstone, 1961), xi. (Week 6)

11. For another example, see the warnings of Jesus about false teachers in Matthew 7:15–20. (Week 6)

12. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 203. (Week 7)

13. Greg Gilbert, *Assured: Discover Grace, Let Go of Guilt, and Rest in Your Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 60. (Week 8)

14. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 282; Akin *1, 2, & 3 John*, 130–131. (Week 8)

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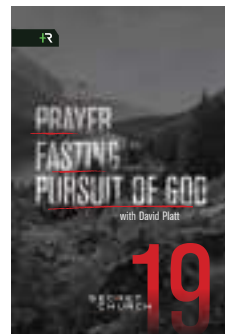
Books by David Platt include *Radical*, *Radical Together*, *Follow Me*, *Counter Culture*, and *Something Needs to Change*, as well as the following volumes in the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series: *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, *Exalting Jesus in James*, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, and *Exalting Jesus in Galatians*.

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ABOUT RADICAL

As a global center for the unreached, Radical exists to serve the church in accomplishing the mission of Christ through free online resources (radical.net), through translated sermons, and through hosting Secret Church (secretchurch.org).

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