

From the Garden to Glory

First, Second and Third John

Author: John the Apostle

Written to: 1 John ~ all believers

2 John ~ the elect lady and her children, some think this refers to a Christian matron and her family while others believe that the Church and its members are personified

3 John ~ Gaius

Timeline: c. 85 - 90 A.D.

Theme: 1 John ~ Walking in Light

2 & 3 John ~ Walking in Truth

Purpose of writing:

1 John ~ the three main purposes of John's writing is *that your joy may be full* (1:4), *that you may not sin* (2:1), and *that you may know that you have eternal life* (5:13).

2 John ~ to warn against heresy and association with false teachers

3 John ~ to commend Gaius for his loyalty to the truth and hospitality to traveling teachers and missionaries. To rebuke Diotrephes for his pride, and to commend Demetrius.

Introduction:

1 John is a very practical letter. At the time of John's writing a false sect had arisen whose teaching would later be called Gnosticism. The

Gnostics claimed to be Christians but denied the deity of Jesus Christ. Gnostic doctrine is a mix of some Christian truths, Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and eastern mysticism. The Gnostics professed to have superior knowledge of spiritual things. John sought to correct this heresy by emphasizing the deity of Jesus Christ in his writings. He warned against the dangers of false teaching and exhorted believers to walk in the light and the truth of God's Word.

2 and 3 John addresses how "open" or "closed" Christians should be to others, especially those who profess to know Christ. 2 John shows the importance of keeping our house closed to heretics; Christians cannot have fellowship where there is false doctrine. 3 John encourages hospitality to traveling teachers and missionaries.

As we begin our study of the books of 1, 2 and 3 John consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. Look up the following verses and note what you learn about the Apostle John.

- Matthew 10:1-2
- Mark 3:17
- Matthew 17:1-2
- Matthew 26:36-44
- John 13:23
- John 19:26-27
- John 20:2-8
- Acts 1:12-14
- Acts 3:1-4:31
- Acts 8:14-17
- Acts 12:2

2. Many of those to whom John wrote were second or third generation Christians. Consider this comment from William Barclay,

In the first days of Christianity there was a glory and splendor, but now Christianity had become a thing of habit - traditional, half-hearted, nominal.

Why is habit so dangerous in the life of the believer? How can you keep your relationship with the Lord fresh and exciting? What practical things can you do to keep it from becoming habit? Be specific.

3. As you read in the Introduction, Gnosticism had crept into the Church. Gnostics claimed to have superior knowledge concerning spiritual matters. These men did not say that they were out to destroy the Christian faith; instead, they said they wanted to improve it. Their aim was to make Christianity intellectually respectable. What similar doctrines do you see in our world today? How do you protect yourself and your family from these doctrines?

Walking in Fellowship

Read 1 John 1:1-2:14

1. Look at 1:3-4. Define the word *fellowship*. List five practical ways that you can have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. How does fellowship with Him cause your joy to be full?
2. Read 1:8-2:2. The word *sin* in these verses refers to our basic sin nature. What do you learn about sin from these verses? Based on what you have learned, explain how you would respond to a person who says: "I'm basically a pretty good person. I don't sin or do terrible things!" (You may want to look at the following verses concerning sin: Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 3:23, and Romans 5:12-21.)

3. Write out 2:3. The word *know* means to know by experience. If we know God by experience, we'll keep His commandments. Re-write verses 4-6 in your own words.

Walking as Children of God

Read 1 John 2:15-3:24

1. Read 2:15-17 slowly and carefully. Consider the following definitions:

The *lust of the flesh* portrays a life that is dominated by the senses.

The *lust of the eyes* describes a life that is dominated by materialism.

The *pride of life* is an insolent, vain self-assurance in one's own resources.

Satan came to Jesus and Eve with all three of these temptations. Read Luke 4:1-13 and Genesis 3:1-7. Fill out the following chart, describing the temptation and the response of each. Finally, list a way that the enemy tries to tempt you in each of these areas and one thing you can do to resist him.

	Lust of the flesh	Lust of the eyes	Pride of life
satan's temptation of Jesus			
Jesus' response			
satan's temptation of Eve			
Eve's response			
the enemy's means of tempting you			
one way you can resist the temptation			

2. Take time to meditate on 3:1-2 today. How do these verses encourage you? Write your response to the Lord.

3. Read 3:22-24. What is God's commandment? How can you obey each part of this commandment today?

Walking in Love

Read 1 John 4:1-21

1. Read verses 1-3 and the following quote from H. A. Ironside.

Men may profess to honor Jesus, while recognizing Him as the mightiest among the mighty, the greatest of all great men of the world, the most marvelous of all its ethical teachers, but they are really degrading Him unless they acknowledge Him as God over all, God blessed forever, Jesus the anointed, come in the flesh.

The real *test* that separates true doctrine from false doctrine involves who a person says that Jesus is. Who do *you* say that He is? How would you explain this to a non-Christian?

2. Read verse 4 slowly. How does this verse encourage you today? Look up the following verses and note what you learn about the Holy Spirit living in a child of God.

- Romans 8:9-11

- Romans 8:15-16

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- 1 John 3:24

3. Read verses 7-21. Fill in the chart with everything you learn about love from this section of John's letter.

The love of God manifested toward us	Our love

Walking in Knowledge

Read 1 John 5:1-21

1. Read verses 4-5. What do these verses mean? How has your faith caused you to be an *overcomer*?

2. John stated one of his purposes for writing this letter in 5:13. Write out this verse. Why are *these things* so vitally important for the Christian to know?

3. Read verses 14-15. What is the condition for answered prayer? Read the following verses about prayer and note what you learn.

- Psalm 66:18-20

- Psalm 145:19

- John 15:7

- James 4:3

- 1 John 3:22

Walking in Truth

Read 2 John 1-13

1. John used the word *truth* five times in this short letter and the word *love* four times. How are *truth* and *love* inseparable in the life of the Christian?

2. Read verse 4. John said that he *rejoiced greatly* when he saw *children walking in the truth*. What does it mean to *walk in truth*? Respond to this commentary by Henrietta Mears:

We must test all teachings in the world by the Scriptures "for the truth's sake" (v. 2 KJV). This is the final test. Test your experience by the Word of God, but never test the Word of God by your experience!

3. How did John define love in verse 6? How can you *walk in this commandment* this week?

Walking in the Way

Read 3 John 1-14

1. Read verse 4. Who are your spiritual children in the faith? How are you rejoicing in them today?
2. What did John instruct Gaius to do in verses 5-8? What is the Lord calling you to *do faithfully* today? How are you responding?
3. What were John's accusations against Diotrephes? Consider what you know about the spiritual climate of the time. Why would Diotrephes' behavior have been especially harmful to the body of Christ?

Summary

As you conclude your study of the books of 1, 2 and 3 John consider the following questions and write your answer:

1. What is the most significant thing that you have learned from your study about the Lord, His character, or His attributes? How does this encourage you? Take a few moments to thank and praise the Lord for the things that you learned about Him.
2. What is the most important lesson or new insight that you have learned from your study of these books? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?