

The First Epistle of John

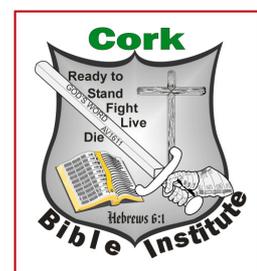
Things We Are Sure Of



A Verse by Verse Study of the First Epistle of John

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Table of Contents

Introduction to First John.....	3
First John Chapter One	6
We Are Sure About Sin	6
First John Chapter Two.....	10
We Are Sure About Victory	10
The Power of Our Advocate (2:1,2)	11
The Power of Obedience (2:3-6).....	15
The Power of Brotherly Love Over Sin and Temptation (2:7-11).....	19
The Power of Encouragement (2:12-14).....	22
The Power of Separation (2:15-17).....	25
The Power of Clear Warning (2:18-29)	29
First John Chapter Three.....	35
We Are Sure About Our Family	35
The Marks of Sonship (3:1-3).....	35
The Constant Battle With Sin (1John 3:3-10).....	38
The Constant Battle With the Heart (1John 3:10-18)	43

To the Students of the Cork Bible Institute:

To earn the full credit for this class you will have to accomplish the following course requirements:

Course Requirements

1. Fill in the notes from the Student Edition
2. Take the Chapter Exams at the completion of every chapter taught in the Church evening meetings, and turn in the exam by the upcoming Wednesday evening.
3. Read through First john 5 times
4. Take the Final Exam

Introduction to First John

Things We Are Sure Of

I. Introduction

A. Author

1. 1, 2, and 3 John have from earliest times been attributed to **John** the apostle, who also wrote the fourth and final gospel, known simple as the Gospel of John.
2. John became known as the “beloved apostle”, using the word “love” 46 times in this epistle.
3. But John was not always the apostle of love. His life is an example of how Jesus can transform anyone’s life. Earlier in John’s life we see him being:
 - a. Judgmental. (Luke 9:54)
 - b. Prejudiced and exclusive. (Mark 9:38)
 - c. Proudful and ambitious. (Mark 10:35-37)
4. Only later did he become known as the beloved apostle — Jesus had a lot of work to do with him. That gives me hope.
5. John also wrote one other Book... the Book of the Revelation!



B. Date of Writing: First John was likely written around A.D. 95.

1. At this time, Jerusalem has been destroyed
2. Nero has had the Apostle Paul beheaded
3. All of the apostles have died
4. Only John is left of the original apostles, and he is living in a penal (prison) colony of an island called Patmos.
5. But Christianity had spread beyond India, and into China, and throughout Europe!

C. Purpose of Writing:

1. John states four reasons for writing this letter
 - a. That your joy may be full (1:4). Joy is not the same as happiness. It’s easy to make the mistake of equating the two. Happiness is temporary and subject to our conditions. Joy is something that grows out of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Gal 5:22).
 - b. Freedom from sin (2:1). Sin does not rule in the life of the believer. Only by our yielding to it, does it obtain power over us. We can overcome sin, and temptation on a moment by moment basis.
 - c. Warnings of false teachers (2:26). Even this early in church history we see corrupt teaching of the word of God. Just because someone steps into a pulpit on Sunday does not give them the ability to correctly teach the Word of God.
 - d. Assurance of eternal life (5:13). It is possible to **know** you have eternal life here and now and that you will for sure will spend it in heaven. John lists three tests of your Christianity:
 - 1) Do you seek to keep God’s commandments now that you are saved (2:3-5)?
 - 2) Do you love your brother (3:14)?
 - 3) And do you sense God’s Holy Spirit at work in your life (3:24, 4:13)?
2. Concerning the False teachers, at the time John writes, a group called the **Gnostics** (the secret knowers – Da Vinci Code, etc) had infiltrated the church; John writes in part to set the record straight about the Gospel.

- a. The Gnostics believed they possessed hidden knowledge and you needed to be part of their group to truly understand the scriptures and to know “THE truth” — similar to cults of today who say you need the Bible AND their books.
 - 1) That is rubbish! All you need is the Bible. Anytime someone says to understand the Bible you need other books (from their group at a small cost) you can be sure they are feeding you lies and deceit.
 - 2) The Holy Spirit teaches ALL things (John 14:26, 16:13) — not some things and you need someone else to finish the job.
 - 3) This is not to imply we don’t need teachers — we do and teaching is one of the gifts of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:11). However, any honest teacher will insist (even beg) you read the Bible for yourself. A dishonest teacher will try and keep you from the Bible. It’s important for anyone who claims to be a teacher of God’s word to remember the words of James (James 3:1) — teachers are held accountable before God for their teaching of God’s word.
 - b. As a religious philosophy, it held that **matter is evil** and that **the invisible (spirit) is good**.
 - c. It’s interesting to note the Gnostics did not question Jesus’ deity, they mainly questioned His humanity; whether He was real and tangible, or just an apparition, or ghost.
 - 1) Since they taught all matter is evil, Jesus really didn’t have a body like yours and mine; people have drawn pictures of him walking along the beach and not leaving any footprints. In that time, everyone knew Jesus had supernatural power, and had done many impossible things — many people witnessed His miracles; it would take a crazy person to deny their occurrence. Today, of course, we have the “Jesus seminar” people who deny Jesus’ deity, and make Him out to be only a man, instead of denying His humanity like these guys did.
 - 2) Gnostics were spiritists, animists, who believed only in invisible spirits and souls. That we are all trapped in our mortal bodies, but that one day we will evolve (if we are successful) BACK into “the godhead” (Scientology) from whence we came (Mormonism).
 - 3) Did you ever hear of “Madonna” and her kabala religion? It’s Gnosticism! A secret pathway to knowledge and salvation!
 - 4) Mysticism is a secret path to salvation – Catholicism (Monks, Hermits, etc).
 - 5) Docetism, teaches that the human Jesus was only a ghost, not really physical
 - 6) Cerinthus took the teaching of pagan Gnosticism and mixed them with Christianity. He taught that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary and only became the “Christ” at the time of his baptism. But at the crucifixion, the Christ part departed leaving only the human Jesus to die. There was no resurrection of the physical dead body of Jesus. Christ was an Aeon (a created god) who made the earth and could not die. Much of his false doctrine can still be seen in the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and in the Muslims.
 - d. In any event, the Gnostics led people into two errors.
 - 1) A form of asceticism — that denying yourself, and self-sacrifice is the path to heaven.
 - 2) Your body’s needs don’t matter (since it is evil). So, don’t marry, don’t have children, don’t eat right, don’t soul-win, don’t enjoy life at all, and ONLY worry about appeasing spiritual beings who torment them, and never love them!
3. John writes to combat this false teaching, but doesn’t directly assault their beliefs. Rather, John just restates the truth, over and over! As the last apostle alive John possessed considerable apostolic authority. He walked with Jesus, ate with Jesus, and was directly taught by Jesus. Thus John doesn’t have to waste time establishing his authority, everyone knew his authority — he was an eyewitness to the life of Jesus.

II. Brief Summary:

A. *False spiritual teachers were a big problem in the early church.*

1. Because there was not a complete New Testament that believers could refer to, many churches fell prey to pretenders who taught their own ideas and advanced themselves as the leaders.
2. John wrote this letter to set the record straight on some important issues, particularly concerning the true character and identity of Jesus Christ.

B. Because this letter is about the basics of **confidence** in Christ, it helps his readers reflect honestly on their faith. It helps them answer the question, Are we true believers?

1. John told them that they could tell by looking at their actions
2. If they consistently loved one another, that was evidence of God's presence in their lives.
3. But if they bickered and fought all the time or were selfish and did not look out for one another, they were betraying that they, in fact, did not know God.
4. That did not mean they had to be sinlessly perfect. In fact, John also recognized that believing involved regularly admitting our sins and seeking God's forgiveness.
5. Depending on God for cleansing from guilt, along with admitting our wrongs against others and making amends, was another important part of getting to know God.

C. There are several key words that are repeated throughout this book:

1. "**Hath**" – 69 times: something we HAVE, possess, not hope for
2. "**Knowledge**" - occurring at least 13 times in the Book of 1 John.
3. "**Love**" – 46 times
4. "**Sin**" – 28
5. "**World**" – 23

III. Biblical Contrasts in First John:

- A. Light vs. Darkness (1:5-2:11).
- B. The Father vs. The World (2:12-17).
- C. Jesus Christ vs. Antichrist (2:18-28).
- D. Good Works vs. Evil Deeds (2:29-3:24)
- E. The Spirit of Truth vs. The Spirit of Error (4:1-6).
- F. Godly Love vs. False Love (4:7-21).
- G. True Believers vs. False Believers (5:1-21).

IV. Practical Application of What We Will Learn

- A. The book of 1 John is a book of **love** and **joy** for the Christian (1John 1:4)
- B. It explains the fellowship we have with other believers and with Jesus Christ.
- C. It differentiates between happiness and joy. True joy is something we all seek. We all want it. 1 John tells us exactly how to get it - by taking the words of God, written by John, and applying them to our daily lives in obedience.
- D. We can have a close, personal, intimate relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ! The apostle John is a disciple who knew Christ well. He is telling us that we can all have a close intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is right here with us in both the simple, mundane parts of our lives and in the complex, soul wrenching parts of our lives. John teaches us that Christ is the believer's life. It is only as a person has Christ in his life that he is able to have true fellowship with God.
- E. **Jesus lives HERE!** He lives in our world, not just in heaven! John testifies as a witness of his personal experiences that God became flesh and actually lived among men. That means Christ came here to live with us. Yet, **He still lives with us!** He walks through each and every day of our lives. He is still with us! We need to apply this truth to our lives and live as if Jesus was standing right next to us every second of the day. Put this truth into practice and day by day you will be adding holiness to your life and becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

V. Next Study, Chapter One

First John Chapter One

We Are Sure About Sin

I. Introduction

- A. **Author** - 1, 2, and 3 John have from earliest times been attributed to **John** the apostle, who also wrote the fourth and final gospel, known simple as the Gospel of John.
- B. **Date of Writing:** First John was likely written around A.D. 95.
- C. **Purpose of Writing:**
 - 1. That your joy may be full (1:4).
 - 2. Freedom from sin (2:1).
 - 3. Warnings of false teachers (2:26).
 - 4. Assurance of eternal life (5:13).
 - 5. Refuting the Gnostics (wrote mystical tales of Jesus, like the Gospel of Judas, etc)
- D. First John is an intensely Practical Book, giving assurance about our relationship with God, and about the established truth of the Gospel, and about the Christian's life
- E. The Apostle John begins Chapter One talking about someone he calls, the Word of Life
 - 1. His Manifestation – the fact that God was here in the flesh
 - 2. His Application – that His coming changed everything, especially when what He taught is acted upon, or applied to our lives
 - 3. His Revelation – there are specific truths that Jesus reveals about God, and John shows them to us

II. Study Lesson

- A. **The Manifestation of the Word of Life** (1:1,2)
 - 1. He was from the beginning - He was there AT the beginning (Micah 5:2; Heb 1:8)
 - 2. He spoke, and we heard Him
 - 3. We saw Him - We gazed upon Him – got a good look at – studied
 - 4. We touched Him, and held Him
 - 5. He was the Word of Life (John 1:1-2, 14; 1Tim 3:16)
 - 6. He was God's Word in flesh (manifested) – see 1 John 5:7
 - 7. He is ETERNAL LIFE, that had dwelt with the godhead, and then became flesh, and dwelt among us!
 - 8. This is PURE deity – no question at all!
- B. **The Application of the Word of Life** (1:3,4)
 - 1. EVERY Book in your Bible has an effect on the reader (Rev 1:3). This one is not different
 - 2. When you start believing and applying the truth of GOD actually coming here, and living here, and then being murdered here, and then rising again... what will happen in your life?
 - a. It is kind of like getting an ointment for a skin burn, and you are told it will sooth the burn, and help the healing
 - b. Well, the same is true with these great truths we are going to be learning in this Book
 - c. When you simply take what we are learning, and start applying them to your doubts, your burdens, your sins, your depression, your bitterness, your feelings of inadequacy, you will then enjoy two great and priceless results:

- 1) Fellowship
 - 2) Joy
 - d. Isn't that what everyone is looking for? Most everyone tries to fake it with money, and pleasure, and entertainment, but they really wish someone loved them unconditionally, and that they could experience joy!
 - e. Well, both are available to the Bible believer!
 3. John is so confident in these truths, he "declares them" preaches them, stands upon them, nothing doubting
 4. He says believers need four things:
 - a. Fellowship with other believers, all the way back to the original "us" of the first century. There is nothing new here, just a bunch of believers who, like those throughout history have simply gotten along as a family!
 - b. Fellowship with God the Father – our Abba
 - c. Fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ – our older brother
 - d. Full Joy – overflowing joy, like being in love, and loved constantly!
 5. And all this from words on a page! All because it is not just words, but the truth about JESUS!
- C. **The Revelation of the Truths of the Word of Life** (1:5-10). Four great truths are presented here in chapter one.
1. ***The Truth About God - God is Light*** (1:5)
 - a. What a great way to express God's divine character. This is where we begin
 - b. He is LIGHT, bright, brighter than the sun (Acts 26:13). He was the Light shining before the sun ever appeared (Gen 1:3; 14-19)
 - c. He is Invariable, Unchanging, Immutable (James 1:17)
 - d. He is Pure, Perfect, not spot at all
 - e. He is all good, and only good
 - f. No darkness at all – emphatic! No sin, no ulterior motive, not untrustworthiness
 - g. GOD is our magnetic North – the basis of what is good, and clean, and right, and true, and beautiful – never evil, hurtful, deceptive, perverse
 - h. Any slightest deviation from that belief, and you are walking in darkness (John 8:12; Eph 5:8; 1John 1:6; 2:11)
 - i. All other lights are either
 - 1) Reflectors of the true light (as Christians are supposed to be)
 - 2) Or frauds, as Satan and his ministers are (2Cor 11:13,14)
 2. ***The Truth About Hypocrisy - Christians Cannot Walk (Live) in Both Realms*** (1Jn 1:6)
 - a. Nobody is a Christian who is following Jesus, and yet continues in sin (Rom 6:1)
 - 1) What does it mean to continue in sin?
 - 2) Knowingly disobeying God's word
 - 3) It is impossible to disobey God and yet not receive chastisement (Heb 12:5-8)
 - b. If you say that you have fellowship...
 - 1) If we talk as if we KNOW Him (Matthew 7:23)
 - 2) If we talk as if we and God are related as family
 - c. And yet you "walks in darkness"...

- 1) Don't KNOW where you are
 - 2) Don't know where you are headed for sure – but you are filled with doubts
 - 3) If you still live in sin's grip instead of the blood's cleansing
- d. Then you are a liar!
- e. AND, you are not living the truth!!!
- 1) Too many people KNOW the truth
 - 2) But they do not obey it, and LIVE IT (Gal 3:1; 5:7; 1Pet 1:22)
- f. The power of TRUTH
- 1) It CAN make you free
 - a) From sin's eternal penalty – hell
 - b) From sin's power – on a moment by moment basis
 - c) From sin's presence – one day in heaven
 - 2) It can give you peace and rest
 - 3) But it must be LIVED, or it is useless to you (James 1:22-25). That's the emphasis of James and 1st John – LIVING as a Christian, not working to become a Christian
- g. Decide which direction you want to walk in.
- h. The power of the truth is a changed life, not just knowledge
- i. Gnostics delight in their knowledge, while Christians delight in a changed life
3. ***The Truth About Forgiveness - Christians Can Live Clean Lives (1:7,9)***
- a. Here are the four conditions set out for a clean conscience, and a right relationship with a perfectly holy God:
- 1) If you will “walk in the light” (1John 1:7)
 - a) Walk in God's light, His revelation
 - b) Seeking to walk with GOD ALMIGHTY (there is a seeming flip back and forth between God the Word and God the Father as if they are one and the same throughout First John)
 - c) And seek to fellowship with GOD
 - 2) And, if you will walk in the power of the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb 9:13,14)
 - a) As the Old Testament believer did after Atonement
 - b) He was able to walk away and go home in the power of the blood that was shed for him
 - c) The blood of Christ completely pays for any and every sin
 - d) Even for sins committed against YOU (Eph 4:31,32)
 - 3) And, if you will Confess – agree, admit, humble yourself before God (1:9). Part of repentance
 - 4) And, if you will Forsake your sin (Prov 28:13) – they must go hand in hand
 - 5) THEN, your conscience will be clean and your relationship with God will be restored
- b. Summary of this truth:
- 1) Just agreeing with God is not enough
 - 2) God calls us to walk in a different direction, out of darkness
 - 3) The moment you confess and forsake any sin, you are clean – even though you might struggle with it in the future!

- 4) To STAY clean,
 - a) You need to start walking in the LIGHT instead of in darkness – DO the truth
 - b) You need a constant “bath” in the eternal blood of Christ
4. ***The Truth About Sin in the Christian*** (1:8)
 - a. We all fall from God’s expectations (1Cor 10:13) – But, we don’t stay down
 - b. We all have sin in us (Rom 7:14-20), but since salvation, there is not sin on us! It can’t send anyone to hell that is saved!
 - c. We all sin (Eccl 7:20)
 - 1) We all act independently of God
 - 2) We all go against God, both knowingly, wilfully, and also ignorantly – it does not matter!
 - d. As we shall see in Chapter 2, but we can’t KEEP sinning and get away with it
 - e. People who teach any of the following are liars, have no truth in them, and make God out to be a LIAR
 - 1) That God can lie and will deceive you and lure you into sin and it is alright! THAT IS A LIE! (James 1:13,14)
 - 2) That people can sin and live that way, and not get in trouble for it (Gal 6:7; Heb 12:6-8)
 - 3) That believers don’t sin – but are now sinlessly perfect, and therefore do nothing wrong ever. At least “true believers” – that is another lie!

III. Conclusion

- A. First John is an intensely Practical Book, giving assurance about our relationship with God, and about the established truth of the Gospel, and about the Christian’s life
- B. The Apostle John begins Chapter One talking about someone he calls, the Word of Life
 1. His Manifestation – the fact that God was here in the flesh
 2. His Application – that His coming changed everything, especially when what He taught is acted upon, or applied to our lives
 3. His Revelation – there are specific truths that Jesus reveals about God, and John shows them to us
- C. What was John Revealing/explaining in chapter one?
 1. ***That God is Light*** (1:5) He is pure, holy, perfect, and right
 2. ***That Christians Cannot Walk (Live) in Both Sin and Righteousness*** (1John 1:6)
 3. ***That Christians Can Live Clean*** (1:7,9)
 4. ***That Christians do sin*** (1:8)
- D. There are a lot of truths in chapter one
- E. Choose one to apply in your life’s situation this evening!