

# 1 John

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**AUTHOR:** John

**TIME WRITTEN:** From Ephesus

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 62nd Book in the Bible
- 23rd book in the New Testament
- 18th of 21 epistle books
- 61 have preceded it. 4 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 5

**VERSES:** 105

**WORDS:** 2,523

**KEY WORD:** Fellowship With God

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **1 John 1:3-4** - "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.  
4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."
2. **1 John 5:11-13** - "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.  
12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.  
13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

**KEY CHAPTER:** 1 John 1

1. The two central passages for continued fellowship with God are:
  - a. John 15
  - b. 1 John 1
2. John 15 relates the positive side of fellowship, that is, abiding in Christ.
3. 1 John 1 unfolds the other side, pointing out that when Christians do not abide in Christ they must seek forgiveness before fellowship can be restored.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 1 JOHN**

1. The apostle John is the author of this epistle. Of the 27 New testament books, John authored five of them.
  - a. John
  - b. 1 John
  - c. 2 John
  - d. 3 John
  - e. Revelation
2. The apostle John.
  - a. In Acts 8:14 John is associated with "the apostles who were at Jerusalem."
  - b. In Galatians 2:9 Paul calls him one of the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church.
  - c. Apart from Revelation 1, the New testament is silent about his later years, but early Christian tradition uniformly tells us that he left Jerusalem (probably not long before its destruction in A.D. 70) and that he ministered in and around Ephesus .

- d. The seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, were evidently a part of his ministry.
  - e. Although there is no address in 1 John, it is likely that the apostle directed this epistle to the Asian churches that were within the geographical area of his work.
  - f. The Christians in these congregations were well established in Christian truth, and John wrote to them not as novices but as brethren grounded in apostolic doctrine. 2:7, 18-27
  - g. The apostle does not mention his own circumstances, but the use of such terms of address as “beloved” and “my little children” gives this letter a personal touch that reveals his close relationship with the original recipients.
  - h. 1 John was probably written in Ephesus after the Gospel According to John, but the date cannot be fixed with certainty.
  - i. No persecution is mentioned, suggesting a date prior to A.D. 95 when Persecution broke out during the end of Domitian’s reign (A.D. 81-96).
3. Advanced in years John wrote this fatherly epistle out of loving concern for his “children,” whose steadfastness in the truth was being threatened by:
    - The lure of worldliness .
    - The guile of false teachers.
  - a. The Gnostic heresy taught that matter is inherently evil, and a divine being therefore could not take on human flesh.
    1. This resulted in the distinction between the man Jesus and the spiritual Christ.
    2. The Gnostics also believed that their understanding of the hidden knowledge (“gnosis”) made them a kind of spiritual elite, who were above the normal distinctions of right and wrong.
    3. This led in most cases to a deplorable conduct and complete disregard of Christian ethics.
  - b. Another variation was Docetism, the doctrine that Christ only seemed to have a human body.
  - c. The result in both cases was the same—a flat denial of the Incarnation.
4. In 1:5 - 2:22, John portrays the present ministry of Christ.
    - a. His blood continually cleanses the Christian from all sin.
    - b. He is our advocate before the Father.
  5. God is light; God is love; and God is life. John is enjoying a delightful fellowship with that God is light, love, and life, and he desperately desires that his spiritual children enjoy the same fellowship.
    - a. **God is Light.**
      1. Therefore, to engage in fellowship with Him we must walk in light and not in darkness.
      2. As we walk in the light, we will regularly confess our sins, allowing the blood of Christ continually to cleanse us.
      3. Christ will act as our defense attorney before the Father.
      4. Proof of our “walk in the light” will be keeping the commandments of God and replacing any hatred we have toward others with love.
      5. To major roadblocks to hinder this walk are:
        - a. Falling in love with the world.
        - b. Falling for the alluring lies of false teachers.
    - b. **God is Love.**
      1. Since we are His children, we must walk in love. In fact, John says that if we do not love, we do not know God.
      2. Additionally, our love needs to be practical.

3. Love is more than just words; it is actions.
    - a. Love is giving, not getting.
    - b. Biblical love is unconditional in its nature.
  4. It is an “in spite of” love, Christ’s love fulfilled these qualities and when that brand of love characterizes us, we will be free of self-condemnation and experience confidence before God.
- c. **God is Life.**
1. Those who fellowship with Him must possess His quality of life.
  2. Spiritual life begins with spiritual birth, and spiritual birth begins with obedience to the gospel of Christ.

## **SUMMARY OF 1 JOHN**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- A. John writes his first epistle at a time when apostolic doctrine is being challenged by a proliferation of false teachings.
1. Like 2 Peter and Jude, 1 John has a negative and a positive thrust:
    - a. It refutes erroneous doctrine.
    - b. It encourages its readership to walk in the knowledge of the truth.
  2. John lists the criteria and characteristics of fellowship with God and shows that those in Christ can have confidence and assurance before Him.
- C. There are two major sections in the book:
1. The Basis of Fellowship. (1:1 - 2:27)
  2. The Behavior of fellowship. (2:28 - 5:21)

### **THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP. (1:1 - 2:27)**

- A. John’s prologue (1;1-4) recalls the beginning of apostolic contact with Christ.
1. It relates his desire to transmit his apostolic message to his readers so that they may share the fellowship with Jesus Christ, the personification of life.
  2. This proclamation is followed by a description of the conditions of fellowship. 1:5 - 2:14
  3. The reader’s sins have been forgiven, and they enjoy fellowship with God.
  4. As a result they know “Him who is from the beginning” and are strengthened to overcome the temptations of the Evil One. 2:12-14
  5. The cautions to fellowship are both practical and doctrinal.
    - a. Practical: The lusts of the corrupt world system which opposes God. 2:15-17
    - b. Doctrinal: The teachings of those who differentiate between Jesus and the Christ. 2:18-23

### **THE BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP. (2:28 - 5:21)**

- A. The basic theme of 1 John is summarized in 2:28—assurance through abiding in Christ. 2:28
1. 2:29 introduces the motif of regeneration.
  2. 2:29 - 3:10 argues that regeneration is manifested in the practice of righteousness.
  3. Because we are children of God through obedience to Christ, we have a firm hope of being fully conformed to Him when He appears. 3:1-3
  4. Our present likeness to Christ places us in a position of incompatibility with sin, because sin is contrary to the Person and work of Christ. 3:4-6

5. The concept in 3:6 does not contradict 1:8 because it is saying that the abider, insofar as he abides, does not sin.
  6. When the Christian does sin, he does not reflect the regenerate new man but Satan the original sinner. 3:7-10
- B. Regeneration is shown in righteousness (2:29 - 3:10, and righteousness is manifested in love (3:10-23).
1. The apostle uses the example of Cain to illustrate what love is not. Hatred is murdering in spirit, and it arises from the worldly sphere of death.
  2. John then uses the example of Christ to illustrate what love is. Love is practiced in self-sacrifice, not mere profession.
  3. This practical expression of love results in assurance before God and answered prayers because the believer is walking in obedience to God's commands to believe in Christ and love one another
- C. In 3:24 John introduces two important motifs, which are developed in 4:1-16:
- God.
  - The Holy Spirit as a mark of this indwelling.
1. The Spirit of God confesses the incarnate Christ and confirms apostolic doctrine. 4:1-6
  2. The mutual abiding of the believer in God and God in the believer is manifested in love for others, and this love produces a divine and human fellowship that testifies to and reflects the reality of the incarnation. 4:7-16
  3. It also anticipates the perfect fellowship to come and creates a readiness to face the One from whom all love is derived. 4:17-19).
- D. John joins the concepts he has presented into a circular chain of six links that begins with love for the brethren. 4:20 - 5:17
1. Love for Christians is the inseparable product of love for God. 4:20 - 5:1
  2. Love for God arises out of obedience to His commandments. 5:2-3
  3. Obedience to God is the result of faith in His Son. 5:4-5
  4. This faith is in Jesus who was the Christ not only in His baptism (the water), but also in his death (the blood; 5:6-8).
  5. The divine witness to the Person of Christ is worthy of complete belief (5:9-13). This belief produces confident access to God in prayer.
  6. Since intercessory prayer is a manifestation of love for others, the chain has come full circle.
- E. The epilogues (5:18-21) summarizes the conclusions of the epistle in a series of three certainties:
1. Sin is a threat to fellowship and it should be regarded as foreign to the Christian's believer's position in Christ. Romans 6
  2. The Christian stands with God against the satanic world system.
  3. The Incarnation produces true knowledge and communion with Christ. Since He is the true God and eternal life, the one who knows Him should avoid the lure of any substitute.