

John's Letter to the Church
1st John
Lesson 1

1 [John 1:1-4](#) What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life-- 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

As John opens this first of his small letters to the church, his focus is on the Lord. They had heard the words of the Lord with their own ears, seen the Lord with their own eyes, and actually touched the Lord with their hands. John knew the Lord personally since he had been with Jesus from the beginning of His earthly ministry. John personally knew that this Jesus was the Word of Life.

Just what was the Word of Life? Verse 2 states that this was the life that was "manifested" to them. Here John has coupled two words together, "word" and "life." John has begun this letter with the same theme and topic that he began his gospel. Do you remember the first words of His gospel?

[The Gospel of John 1:1-4](#)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

It is clear that the subject of John's message in both books is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one that had been manifested to them. He is the one that they had seen and could bear witness too, proclaiming the fact that in Jesus there was eternal life to be found. Jesus had been with God the Father in heaven and had come down in the flesh, manifested to man so that all mankind could have the opportunity to have a relationship with God. Here John is stressing the importance in the fact that you can have a relationship with two of the three persons of the Trinity. You can be in fellowship with both God the Father and God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

Here we find the first purpose of this letter. John is writing so their "joy may be made complete." What greater joy is there in this life than to share the message of Jesus Christ, with everyone you know. Such is the case with this letter from John. He wants the recipients to know about the opportunity of having eternal life that is offered by God through the Lord Jesus.

5 And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

In a nutshell, John speaks of the message brought by Jesus to the world. What is that message? It is a two part message from the Lord Jesus who is the eternal Word, the Word of Life!

First, God is light. This is God's nature! He is the pure and perfect light that is present to the dark world.

Second, in God there is no darkness at all! If you are going to be in a relationship with God, you must walk in the light! He is the source of all light and anyone who walks in darkness is living in rebellion against God's nature. God will not be present in a relationship with people who live and act against Him.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

Here is a simple test! If you live in the darkness of this world, you are not in fellowship with God. What does darkness mean in this passage? Darkness represents those who are hostile to God in any possible way! Every person who has ever lived must choose one of two choices. The choices are: do you yield your all to God and follow after His will for your life or do you do what you want in total disrespect and difference to God's will? The later is considered "living in darkness." If you claim to have a personal relationship with God, but you never consider Him or His desires, you are lying about your relationship with Him, for there is no relationship! God is both your God and leading your life or He is not your God and you are the one leading your own life. You should never claim you have a relationship with God and that your soul belongs to Him, if you really don't, for that is a lie!

7 but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Walking in the light means that "you are relying on God at every point in your life for every need." You are a person who trusts the Lord to provide the money for specific needs rather than the local bank! You are a person who trusts the Lord for the answers to the questions about changes in your life rather than doing it on your own and then wishing you had never made the decision when things go wrong. This is having fellowship with God. You are relying on God and God is guiding your life! When this is happening, it is a sure sign that you have been cleansed from all our sins by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! The only way to have a relationship with God is to put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus as our Savior.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But we all sin! Everyone sins everyday! Even those of us who have been cleansed by the death of Christ still sin everyday! The child of God who walks in a relationship with God must always be reminded that he is still a sinner until he passes from this life. To claim

anything else is simply a lie. If a person claims that he is no longer a sinner, he can not claim that he has a relationship with God.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

As we sin we are to confess our sins. This is a part of our being in a relationship with God. How do we know what a sin is? God tells us what sins are in His Word. When we do something that is called a sin by God, we are to quickly confess that sin to Him because we are in a relationship with Him. Confession meant something different in this passage than the definition means today. In John's day, it meant to "acknowledge." In our relationship with God we are to acknowledge that what God says is a sin, in fact, is a sin. When we know what a sin is, and that we need forgiveness for that sin, God is going to readily forgive us of those sins and bring cleansing to our lives.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

If we have a relationship with God, but we are bold enough to say that we have not sinned, God is not in our lives! We make him a liar! The essence of God and His Word is not in us at all. We must always be humble in our relationship with God. At our worst we must still lay our guilt before Him and we must acknowledge our sins to their fullest extent. We must put ourselves behind and rely totally on the mercy of God.

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

This is an extremely difficult verse for many people. How can John write the words of this letter for the purpose of keeping us from sinning? We all sin everyday regardless of our relationship with God. Is this a magic potion that keeps us from sinning? Absolutely not! John is simply making sure that we know the difference between the things that are sins and the things that are not sins. On top of that, John wants us to know that when we do sin, we have an Advocate, as he calls Him. Jesus is our Advocate. This is like a modern day lawyer who stands between the guilty and the judge, pleading the case for the guilty. Jesus stands between us and the Father, proclaiming our innocence even though we have sinned.

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.*

In proclaiming our innocence because we have sinned, our Advocate, Jesus Christ, does much more than a lawyer would do for us here on earth. Jesus actually paid the penalty that was rightly ours for our sins. When a person is guilty of a crime, there is a price to pay! That price is the satisfaction or propitiation for that crime as set forth by the court. Jesus paid the price of our crime, our sin, on Calvary, April 7, 30 AD. He didn't have to pay the price for our sins! We are the guilty ones! He did it because He loved us! All those years ago, He paid the price that we should have paid. He paid it in advance once and for all time for those that enter into a relationship with Him. John wants us to know that certain things are

sins and we must do our best to not do those things, yet when we do sin, Jesus has already paid the penalty of our sin in advance.

3-5 And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

The book of 1st John is really a book that can be used as a check-list to determine if you truly belong to God or the World. Let's look back at that:

1 John 1: ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

1 John 1: ⁷but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. RESULT: YOU BELONG TO GOD!

1 John 1: ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

1 John 1: ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. RESULT: YOU BELONG TO GOD!

1 John 1: ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

And so here in 1 John 2:3-6 we find more of the checklist

1 John 2:³And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. RESULT: YOU BELONG TO GOD!

1 John 2:⁴The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

1 John 2:⁵but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: RESULT: YOU BELONG TO GOD!

⁶the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

This is quite simple! The bottom line is who you will know whether you belong to God or not by your thoughts, words, and deeds. Are you in fellowship with God? Do you take the high road on everything and walk in the light? Do you acknowledge your sin? Do you keep His

commandments? Do you keep His word? All these things represent the fruit of your faith and belief in God that prove your status with God to the world! Do you belong to God?

⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

John speaks of an old commandment. What is this old commandment? He speaks of a new commandment. What is that new commandment? Is it the new commandment or the old commandment? The context of this passage is dealing with the question, "are you walking in the light or in the darkness?" But this is not the commandment! Commandments deal with relationships, attitudes, and the heart. What is the commandment?

⁹ The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

Here's the commandment, "if you hate your brother, you are still in the darkness." If you are continuing your check list then RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

Here's the other side of this subject, which is, "if you love your brother, you are in the light." RESULT: YOU BELONG TO GOD!

This love that you have protects you from stumbling in sin. Hatred leads to sin. Sin always involves relationships. If you burn a chair, you are not sinning against that chair because you can not enter into a relationship with a chair. On the other hand, if the chair belongs to your brother and you burn it without his permission, then you have sinned against your brother. Why? You have sinned against him because your brother has the capabilities of entering into a relationship with you. Sin can only happen where relationships can be present. If you are in the light and in a relationship with God, if you break one of His desires, then you have sinned against God. Even if you do not belong to God, you can sin against Him by disobeying Him and not entering into a relationship with Him. Sin always involves God or humans or both.

¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Hatred is a sin that indicates your walk with God. Hatred indicates that your eyes are blinded to the things of God. RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

Notice that John says of the person that has hatred, he "does not know where he is going." Where is he going? To a place that he does not want to go! Hatred is sin and sin takes you places that you never want to go! People who do not belong to God and have their way lighted by His guidance do not intentionally end up in places they do not want to be! With

each turn they end up in places that they know God has prepared for them, and it is a place they want to be. People without God end up in places they do not really want to be. They don't know where they are and why they are there. Why? This is because they are still blinded in darkness without God.

Being in the light of God means that forgiveness is involved. Hatred means a lack of forgiveness is present in a person's life. Love means that forgiveness is present in a person's life. One indicates the absence of a relationship with God and the other means the presence of a relationship with God. Do you have a relationship with God? Is there hatred in your life?

¹² I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

These words should bring comfort to the hearts of all who belong to God. Can you believe it? Your sins are forgiven! Why are they forgiven? The answer is found there in the verse, "for His name's sake." You see we belong to Him! We carry His name on us. We are "His name's sake." What does that mean? The answer is that a "namesake" always refers to a relationship. Here's an example.

George W. Bush, president of the USA 2000-2008, is the son and namesake of George H.W. Bush, president of the USA 1988-1992. George Bush the son is the namesake of George Bush the father. A namesake is '*one having the same name as another*'. It is the second name-holder, rather than the original name-holder, that is the namesake. So George W. Bush is the namesake of George H.W. Bush, but not the other way around.

When we belong to God, we have taken His name upon us and we carry that name. One of the privileges of that name is that our sins are forgiven!

Ponder on this for a while! Are you representing His name in a way that would bring honor to Him? Are you representing yourself in a way that deserves His forgiveness?

¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

John addresses the fathers who knew Jesus while He was on earth. What a wonderful thing it must have been to know Jesus! These men were the witnesses of the visible presence of Jesus on earth! They were witnesses to all that Jesus lives as a resurrected Savior of the world!

John is also addressing the young men who have overcome the evil one. Who is the evil one? It is the god of this world, the old serpent, the devil himself. These young men have overcome the devil by putting their trust in the Lord as their Savior.

John is addressing the children too because they know who the real and true Father is and that is God the Father.

Notice in verse 14 how John begins to repeat the words of verse 13. It is simply enough that the fathers knew Jesus from the beginning. For young men it is important that they are strong in the word of God. This is what has allowed them to rise above the evil one.

The fathers, the young men, and the children all love God in an incredible way.

15 Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Here's a warning from John, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world." What exactly does John mean by the world? This is the word "cosmos." The word includes several elements. These include the 1) orderly arrangement, 2) the decorations, and the 3) adorning, of the world. In the days of John, the Roman Empire was the epitome of over indulgence in the adornments of the world. There was wine, women, and song. Another way to say this was drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery to its fullest extent! The members of the church should not indulge in the love the adornments of this world more than the Lord. Nor should the members of the church love the things of the world that are useful, yet can be abused,

Here also is another question for the check list of whether you belong to God or not. John says: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The result is: You do not belong to God if you love the world. RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

John explains exactly the things we should not love as members of the church. These are:

- 1) the lust of the flesh and
- 2) the lust of the eyes and
- 3) the boastful pride of life.

These are the three prime evil sins in this world. Simply put, the lust of the flesh is improper sexual relationships. Lust of the eyes is coveting things that you should not have. The pride of life is the selfish focus on yourself. If any of these things are paramount in your life, then the RESULT: YOU DON'T BELONG TO GOD!

17 And the world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

Here's a wonderful promise from the Lord! Do you see the promise? All the sinful things of this world will one day be gone! That means that everyday we live we grow closer to the end of this season and nearer to the end of God's plan for the ages. What is the real promise to us? If you belong to God, you will live with Him forever! What a blessed promise and it is our promise for our future! RESULT: YOU BELONG TO GOD!