

“That You May Know”

A Study of the Letters of John • Sunday Mornings

Week 1 (July 1st)	1 John 1:1	That Which Was From the Beginning
Week 2 (July 8th)	1 John 1:1-4	Good News of Fellowship, Joy, and Life
Week 3 (July 15th)	1 John 1:5-10	God is Light
Week 4 (July 22nd)	1 John 2:1-6	Jesus Christ: Our Propitiation and Advocate
Week 5 (July 29th)	1 John 2:7-14	A New Commandment From of Old
Week 6 (Aug 5th)	1 John 2:15-17	Do Not Love the World or Its Things
Week 7 (Aug 12th)	1 John 2:18-27	This is the Antichrist
Week 8 (Aug 19th)	1 John 2:28-3:10	We are God’s Children
Week 9 (Aug 26th)	1 John 3:11-24	Love in Deed and in Truth
Week 10 (Sept 2nd)	1 John 4:1-21	Test the Spirits
Week 11 (Sept 9th)	1 John 5:1-12	Whoever Has the Son Has Life
Week 12 (Sept 16th)	1 John 5:13-21	That You May Know
Week 13 (Sept 23rd)	2 John	Abide in the Doctrine of Christ
Week 14 (Sept 30th)	3 John	Do Not Imitate Evil, But Imitate Good

SUNDAY MORNING (July 1st) • “That You May Know” That Which Was From the Beginning (1 John 1:1)

The Father-Figure Behind the Letters

Abundant internal and external evidence points to the former fisherman—John the Son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19-20), the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23), author of the Gospel of John—as the author of these three Letters of John.

John clearly claims to be writing as an eyewitness (1 John 1:1-3). Take the time to search out and list some of the most significant events in the life of John as recorded in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. What did he witness firsthand? In what was he personally involved?

The early 2nd century writers Polycarp and Papias (c. A.D. 100) directly cited and loosely alluded to 1 John, which proves a date of composition no later than the 90s A.D. Tradition holds that shortly before A.D. 67, John joined other disciples of Jesus in departing from Jerusalem prior to its destruction in A.D. 70 by the Romans. John reportedly ministered for a number of years in the vicinity of Ephesus before being exiled to Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea to which Rome banished political criminals (Rev 1:9). Taking into account that he was working as a fisherman when Jesus called him to “fish for men” in approximately A.D. 30, John writes these letters as an aged, battle-tested “pillar” (Gal 2:9) of the faith.

He repeatedly refers (1 John 2:1, 12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; 2 John 1, 4, 13; 3 John 4) to the recipients of his letters as “children,” even “my little children.” Why do you think he refers to them in this way?

The Focus and Flow of the Letters

Echoes of the Gospel of John can be heard throughout the letters of John. Verbal forms of *believe* occur (about 100 times) in John's Gospel and consistently throughout his letters. *Believe* in what? More accurately, in whom?

- The Father's sending of Jesus into the world (1 John 1:2; 4:9)
- The sacrificial death of Jesus (1 John 1:7)
- The triumphant resurrection of Jesus (1 John 5:11)
- The ongoing intercession of Jesus (1 John 2:1)
- The future appearing of Jesus (1 John 2:28; 4:17)

John affirms the ancient truth that "No one has ever seen God" (1 John 4:12), but he gradually builds to this climactic declaration: to know Jesus is to know God (1 John 5:20). John uses *know* more than 30 times in his letters. What can (and must) be *known*?

- The propitiation of our sins in Jesus (1 John 4:10)
- "The truth" as defined by our Creator (1 John 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21; 3:18-19; 4:6; 5:6)
- The new birth (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; 3 John 11)
- Fellowship with God and his children (1 John 1:3-7)
- Completed joy (1 John 1:4)
- Perfected love (1 John 2:5; 3:18; 4:12, 17-18)
- Eternal life (1 John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20)

Why must disciples of Christ *know* these things? Because there are serious differences between:

- Light and darkness (1 John 1:5-7)
- Obedience and disobedience (1 John 2:3-6)
- Love of the world and love of the Father (1 John 2:15-17)
- The truth and lies (1 John 2:18-27)
- The children of God and the children of the devil (1 John 2:28-3:10)
- The Spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:1-6)

Therefore, "we know" is emphatically sounded at the end of John's first letter (1 John 5:18-20)

Practically speaking, what fruit does this *knowing* produce?

- We keep his commandments (1 John 2:3-4; 3:22; 5:3)
- The love of God is perfected (1 John 2:5; 3:22; 4:12, 17-18)
- God abides in us (1 John 4:12) and we in him (1 John 2:6; 3:24; 5:20)
- We walk in the same way in which Jesus walked (1 John 2:6; 3:10; 4:17; 2 John 4; 3 John 11)