I John

**Who it was written to:**

This first letter of John was written to the Christian family in general, warning them against false teaching and exhorting them to practical godliness.

**Theme:**

Develop that practical godliness that produces perfect fellowship with God.

**Why written:**

1. That the child of God might have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another. (1:3)

2. That the child of God may have fullness of joy. (1:4)

3. That he may not sin. (2:1)

4. That he may recognize the grounds of his assurance of eternal life. (5:13)

**When written:**

Approximately A. D. 90

**Where written:**

Probably at Ephesus where John lived and ministered after leaving Jerusalem

**Contents:**

I. Introduction 1:1-4

II. Fellowship with God 1:5 to 2:28

III. Divine Sonship 2:29 to 3:24

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V. God is Love 4:7-21

VI. Faith 5:1-12

VII. Conclusion: Christian Confidence 5:13-21

**I. Introduction 1:1-4**

John begins this letter without introducing himself. Quite likely he was so familiar to his audience that he needed no introduction. He begins by saying that he was a personal witness of the “Word of life” (Jesus Christ), that he had personally heard Him, saw Him and handled Him. He declares this “eternal life” to them that they may have fellowship with him and that their joy may be full.

**II. Fellowship with God 1:5 to 2:28**

Here, John gives the evidence of those who truly have fellowship with God:

1. They walk in the light (1:5-7)

There are many false teachers who twist the scriptures and deceive many, but our conduct ultimately proves whether we live in the truth of God’s Word and have the Spirit of God.

2. They repent upon the awareness of sin (1:8)

They will not tolerate sin in their lives or treat it lightly, but will deal with it upon discovery.

3. To be like Christ and obedient to His Word (2:2-6)

If we have fellowship with God, we will be an imitator and revealer of Christ and live a life of obedience to His Word as He was obedient to the Word of the Father.

4. They love the brethren (2:7-11)

They will keep this commandment that was given in the beginning and has been renewed up through the years.

5. They have no love for the world (2:12-17)

They will hate the spirit of this world and sin which is the enemy of that Life that resides within them.

6. They have pure doctrine (2:18-28)

There are many false teachers with the spirit of antichrist, but those who have fellowship with God need not be led astray by the subtle and plausible arguments of those who promote error for they have the Spirit to lead them into all truth.

**III. Divine Sonship 2:29 to 3:24**

Here, John gives the evidence of those who have divine sonship:

1. A righteous walk (2:29 to 3:10)

The Christian is to show an absolute antagonism to sin because:

a. His divine sonship and the desire to become like Jesus (2:29 to 3:1-3)

b. Sin is the transgression of the law of God – i.e. rebellion against God. (3:4)

c. Because of Christ’s character and His atoning work for us. (v. 5-7)

d. Because of the diabolical nature of sin. (v. 8)

e. Because of the godly nature of the Christian life. (v. 9)

f. Because the final test as to whether we are children of God or children of the devil lies in our actions. (v. 10)

2. Love for the brethren (3:11-18)

**IV. The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error 4:1-6**

1. The appeal v. 1

No matter how “right” a teacher, prophet etc may seem, his words are to be tested.

2. The test v. 2

Those who will confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Those who are not of God and bear a false and deceiving spirit will claim to speak for God and to present divine truth, but not by Jesus Christ. They do not glorify Him and confess that Jesus Christ, as God, came to this earth and lived as a man.

3. The conflict v. 4

It is evident that these believers had encountered these false teachers, but had held to the truth.

4. The contrast vs. 5-6

Godly men attract men who are similar in love and devotion to God. False teachers and men who are of the spirit of this world also attract those who are similar in spirit.

**V. God is Love 4:7-21**

1. The call to love v. 7

2. The reason for love: “God is love” v. 8

3. The proof of divine love: God’s sacrifice vs. 9-10

4. The claim of love: God’s love for us calls on us to love our brethren v. 11

5. The result of love in us:

a. The manifestation of God’s presence vs. 12-16

b. Boldness v. 17

c. Absence of condemning fear v. 18

6. The proof of our love:

a. The proof of our love for God is a love for our brother who is made and renewed in God’s image. v. 19-21

b. The proof of our love for the brethren is found in our love for God. 5:1-2

c. The proof of our love for God is manifested in keeping His commandments. v. 3

**VI. Faith 5:1-12**

1. The victory of faith 5:4-5

2. The threefold earthly witness of faith vs. 6-8

3. The heavenly witness vs. 9-12

**VII. Conclusion: Christian Confidence 5:13-21**

1. The substance of the Christian confidence – the assurance of eternal life. v. 13

2. The manifestation of Christian confidence.

a. Outwardly the power of offering effectual prayer. vs. 14-17

b. Inward conviction – “We know.” vs. 18-20

3. Concluding exhortation v. 21

**A brief summary of each chapter**

**Chapter 1**

We must live our lives in obedience to the Word of God (truth, “light”) that our faith be not a mere profession and that we may have fellowship with the Father, the Son and with each other.

**Chapter 2**

Sin not. Keep His commandments. The proof or evidence that we know Him, that we are “in Him” is that we keep His commandments and love our brother. Love not the world. We have an unction or anointing that teaches us the truth and keeps us from error. Abide in Him.

**Chapter 3**

We are sons of God. We shall be like Him. Those who are sons of God and desire to be like Him, must purify themselves as He is pure. Jesus came that He might take away our sins. If we belong to God, we will love our brother and will not live under sin. If we are of the devil, we will sin. Believe on Jesus Christ and love your brother, not only in word, but also in deed.

**Chapter 4**

Try the spirits. Those that are of God will love the truth and confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Love one another. As He is, so are we in this world. If we love God, we will also love each other.

**Evidences that we are in Him:**

1. We will have the love of God and manifest it toward one another. (v. 7-8)

2. We have received of the Spirit (v.13)

3. We will confess that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 15)

4. We will “dwell in love” (v. 16)

**Perfect love:**

1. Gives us boldness in the day of judgment (v. 17)

2. Removes all fear (v. 18)

**Chapter 5**

If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we are born of God. We know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. This is the love of God that we keep His commandments. Those who are born of God overcome the world by faith. The Spirit is truth. There are three that bear record in heaven . . . and these three are one. There are three that bear witness in earth . . . and these three agree in one. The witness of God is greater than the witness of men. We that believe have this witness in us. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us and if He hears us, we have what we ask for. There is a sin not unto death. All unrighteousness is sin. He that is born of God keeps himself and does not sin.

Study Questions

1. What is the theme of I John?

Develop that practical godliness that produces perfect fellowship with God.

2. Why did John write this letter?

A. That the child of God might have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another. (1:3)

B. That the child of God may have fullness of joy. (1:4)

C. That he may not sin. (2:1)

D. That he may recognize the grounds of his assurance of eternal life. (5:13)

3. What are the 6 evidences that John gives of those who truly have fellowship with God?

A. They walk in the light (1:5-7)

B. They repent upon the awareness of sin (1:8)

C. To be like Christ and obedient to His Word (2:2-6)

D. They love the brethren (2:7-11)

E. They have no love for the world (2:12-17)

F. They have pure doctrine (2:18-28)

4. What are the 2 evidences that John gives of those who have divine sonship?

A. A righteous walk (2:29 to 3:10)

B. Love for the brethren (3:11-18)

5. Concerning trying the spirits, what is the test John gave to determine whether they are of God or not?

**I John 4:2-3**

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist.

6. What is the proof of God’s love for us?

God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 4:9

7. What does God’s love require of us?

To love one another 4:11

8. The proof of our love for God is manifested in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

keeping His commandments 5:3

9. What is the victory that overcometh the world?

Our faith 5:4

10. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus is the Son of God 5:5

11. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and the

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: and these three are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Father / Word / Holy Ghost / one 5:7

12. God has given us eternal life. Where is this life?

In His Son 5:11

13. Write out II Peter 1:20, 21 (verbatim for the quiz)

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.