



**FOUNDATIONS
OF FAITH**

The Message of the Bible

Week 39: 1, 2, 3 John

The Teaching of 1 John

The Prologue (1:1–4)

1. John's opening words have a clear connection to the prologue of the Gospel of John.
2. As an introduction to the epistle, the author confirms that the message of the book concerns the Word of Life, which should be understood as the teaching about Jesus as revealed in this book.
3. Readers who read and truly understand these things will have fellowship with other believers and with God.

The Test of Fellowship (1:5–2:17)

1. Based upon the theological teaching that "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1:5), the author provides several cases by which the reader may test the compelling pattern of his/her life:
 - a. Those who claim fellowship and yet walk in darkness demonstrate lack of fellowship (1:6).
 - b. Those who characteristically walk in the Light have fellowship with one another and enjoy cleansing from sin (1:7)
 - c. Those who fail to acknowledge their sin demonstrate that they do not possess the truth (1:8, 10).
 - d. Those who characteristically confess their sins have forgiveness and cleansing (1:9).
2. The basis for fellowship and forgiveness is the work of Christ as the believer's (1) advocate and (2) propitiation. As our advocate, He speaks to the Father on our behalf. As our propitiation, He is our atoning sacrifice.
3. The demonstration of true fellowship and forgiveness is obedience, demonstrated in walking like Jesus (2:3–6).
4. Fellowship presupposes love, which is not a new command (cf. Lev 19:18; Deut 30:6). However, the nature of love as revealed through Jesus and experienced within the life of the believer is something new.
5. Fellowship also presupposes a loose grip on the world and all that it pretends to offer.

Apostates (2:18–27)

1. John acknowledges that many will walk away from the church. Such apostasy manifests the fact that they were never truly part of Christ from the start.

2. True believers, on the other hand, persevere in their belief and in their holding firm to true teaching about Jesus.
3. Thus, the author gives a theological basis for testing whether we are in the faith: We must believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son (vv. 22–24).
4. The sure safeguard against those who would deceive the believer is consistent abiding in this teaching, which is developed more in the rest of the book.

The Test of True Faith (2:28–5:4)

1. Having described true fellowship and warned against false teaching, the writer now moves to describe the prevailing characteristics of true believers.
2. True believers habitually practice righteousness (2:29).
3. True believers live a life of purity in light of the hope of being like Christ (3:1–3).
4. True believers have a consistently diminishing pattern of sin in their lives (3:4–10).
5. True believers love their brethren (3:13–18).
6. True believers live with a clear conscience before God that is exemplified in a productive prayer life (3:19–22).
7. True believers have the internal witness of the Holy Spirit confirming their abiding in Christ (3:24; 4:13).
8. True believers overcome false teaching about Christ because the One who dwells in them distinguishes between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (4:1–6).
9. True believers love one another (4:7–12).
10. True believers confess that Jesus is the Son of God (4:15).
11. True believers believe that Jesus is the Christ (5:1).

The Witness of the Spirit (5:5–12)

1. This section brings to a climax the teaching concerning Christ:
 - a. Jesus is the Son of God.
 - b. Jesus came by water and blood, i.e. the flesh.
 - c. The Spirit bears witness to the truth about Jesus by means of an internal testimony (vv. 6–10).
 - d. The testimony within the heart of the believer is that “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (v. 11).
2. Ultimately 5:12 summarizes this teaching: “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

Conclusion (5:13–21)

1. John gives the purpose for his epistle in 5:13: Those who believe in the name of the Son of God can be assured of having eternal life when they hold fast to the teaching about Christ found in this epistle.
2. Such an assurance breeds confidence of answered prayer.

3. In light of the true teaching about Christ, John concludes with a warning about idolatry, which is worship of false god(s).

The Purpose of 1 John

John declared the truth that gave believers assurance of eternal life and fellowship with God's children (cf. 5:13; 1:3).

The Teaching of 2 John

The Prologue (1–4)

1. The Salutation (1–3)
2. The Elder's Joy in Finding the Chosen Lady's Children Walking in Truth and Love (4)

The Body: The Elder's Directives for the Chosen Lady and Her Children (5–11)

1. The Elder's Appeal for Love and Obedience (5–6)
2. The Elder's Warning against False Teachers (7–9)
3. The Elder's Call to Not Receive False Teachers (10–11)

The Epilogue (12–13)

The Purpose of 2 John

The elder warned about showing hospitality to any false teachers (v.10).

The Teaching of 3 John

The Prologue (1–4)

1. The Salutation (1)
2. The Elder's Prayer for Gaius' Health and His Joy for Gaius' Walking in Truth (2–4)

The Body: The Elder's Evaluations for Gaius (5–12)

1. The Elder's Commendation of Gaius for His Support of Traveling Christian Teachers (5–8)
2. The Elder's Condemnation of Diotrephes for His Evil Deeds (9–11)
3. The Elder's Commendation of Demetrius for His Good Testimony (12)

The Epilogue (13–14)

The Purpose of 3 John

The elder commended a true believer and named an unworthy church leader.

How should I respond?