

1 JOHN

Taught by Richard Weisenburger, a Red Mountain Community Church Elder

Do you want to know God? Is the truth about God important to you? Knowing God truly is the overarching theme of John’s letters, and in this five-week class, we will look at his first letter.

In a world that was filled with conflicting views of truth, much as it is even now, Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Jesus defines eternal life as knowing God, for it is only through responding to God’s self-revelation that any of us can come to know Him and enjoy life with Him. John wrote this brief letter in a time of spiritual confusion—when there were conflicting views about God and Jesus—in order to assure his readers of their eternal life because they knew God truly in Christ. His words are as relevant today as ever.

1 John 1:1-2:4	2
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1 JOHN 1

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. — 1 John 1:1-2:4 ESV

BACKGROUND

- Authorship – The Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, the author of the fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation.
- Purpose – The general aim of the epistle is fellowship with God (the Father and Son) and with his people. The issue is not the readers’ possession of eternal life but the expression of it in their lives. John is also concerned that certain false teachings about Jesus and the gospel might cause them to lose fellowship.

ETERNAL LIFE IS A PERSON WITH WHOM WE RELATE (1:1-4)

1. John claims eyewitness authority concerning the Word of Life. (1)
2. The Eternal Life that was with the Father has appeared – John testifies to it and he proclaims it to his readers. (2)
3. John proclaims what he has seen and heard so that his readers might also have fellowship with those who were eyewitnesses and with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. (3)
4. John writes to make the joy of fellowship complete. (4)

WALKING IN THE LIGHT (1:5-2:4)

1. God is light and in Him there is no darkness – NONE! God is morally pure. This has profound implications for our having fellowship with him. (5)
2. Fellowship and darkness are mutually exclusive. If we claim fellowship while walking in darkness, we are not living according to the truth. (6)
3. To maintain fellowship, we must walk in the light. Walking in the light does not mean sinless perfection, but that we are open and honest before God regarding our sin, so that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. (7)
4. If we deny our sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not shaping our thought and attitudes. (8)
5. When we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from EVERY unrighteousness. (9)
6. If we deny our sin, we call God a liar and His word is not in us (that is, His is not shaping our thoughts and attitudes. (10)
7. Though sin is a daily reality for the believer, it is nevertheless to be vigorously resisted. If we do sin, however, we should not lose heart. Jesus, the Righteous one, is our advocate. (2:1) (See also Luke 22:31-33; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)

31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” 33 Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” — Luke 22:31-33 ESV

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. — Romans 8:34 ESV

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. — Hebrews 7:25 ESV

8. Jesus himself is the atonement not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world. He has both appeased God’s wrath (propitiation) and removed our guilt (expiation). (2:2)
9. Deeper experiential knowledge of God is demonstrating in obedience to his commandments. This knowledge must not be confused with basic saving knowledge which all believers have. (2:3-4) (See John 14:21, 23-24)

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. — John 14:21, 23-24 ESV