

Authentic Christianity

A Study of 1 John

LESSON 1: WHAT YOU BELIEVE HAS MORAL IMPLICATIONS

An Introduction to 1 John

α Written by the Apostle John probably near the end of the first century from Ephesus – so say early church fathers.

β Called a general epistle because it is not addressed to one specific group of Christians, but to Christians in general.

γ While John's Gospel seems to be more for the purpose of evangelism (cf. John 20:31), John's Epistles seem to be more for the purpose of strengthening those who already believe (cf. 1 John 5:13).

δ 1 John is both pastoral and polemical. In it John is the "apostle of love" who is black and white about the truth.

ε Throughout 1 John, in a circular pattern, John returns to three key tests to identify the one true faith:

1. The doctrinal test (it matters what you believe!)
2. The moral test (it matters how you think, speak and act!)
3. The social test (it matters how you show love!)

1 John 1:1-4

1. Note all the sensory words in v. 1-3: "heard, seen, looked at, touched." What is the cumulative effect of those expressions?

2. By capitalizing “Word” in v. 1, the NIV translators are saying it a reference to Jesus, as it is in John 1:1. But as you examine v. 2, what words seems to be used for Jesus?
3. We often speak of “fellowship” as being important in a church. John says in v. 3 that fellowship is one of his main purposes for writing this letter. But what is this fellowship? How do people enjoy it?

1 John 1:5-7

1. These verses provide a good example of one of John’s favorite ways of writing: *antithetic parallelism*. That’s setting opposites side by side to teach one main truth: “light/darkness; truth/lie.”
2. In v. 6 and 7 John says people *walk* in darkness and *walk* in light. What does he mean by *walking in “darkness”* and *“light”* in these instances?
3. What is the “lie” of v. 6? How might we, who are certain “the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin” slip into that lie?

1 John 1:8-10

1. Error voiced in v. 6-7: “A little sin won’t break my relationship with God!”

Error voiced in v. 8-9: “Maybe I sin a little, but I have reached a point where sin is no longer a part of my nature!”
2. Look at v. 9 again. Is God’s forgiving our sins conditioned upon our confessing our sins?

1 John 2:1-2

1. The straight talk on sin and forgiveness in 1:8-10 could lead to one of two extremes that John guards against in 2:1-2
 - a. We might think of sin too lightly
 - b. We might judge the sinner too harshly

2. Jesus is the Answer to our sins! What is your reaction to the following names for Jesus in these two verses?
 - a) One who speaks in our defense –
 - b) The Righteous One –
 - c) The Atoning Sacrifice –

3. There is no clearer statement of *universal justification* than v. 2!

NEXT TIME: Let the tests begin! (1 John 2:3-27)