

# HANDOUT

## Session 1: 1 John 1:1-2:11



### DISCUSS

**In your experience, what does enjoying your relationship with God look like? In your life? In others' lives?**

**In 1 John 1:5-10, what metaphor does John use to describe God and our relationship to Him?**

**What difference does it make in your perspective of life to know that God doesn't expect you to be perfect?**

**How might that change the way you envision your Christian walk? Why?**

**1 John 1:6-10. Since the light reveals our sin, what is John promising in this passage?**

**Why is denying that we have sin a lie?**

**If we're to take John at his word, what is true about our hearts if we pretend that even the little sins don't matter?**

**In your experience, what's the hardest part of admitting your sinfulness?**

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## Session 1: Psalm 119:1-16



**Does our sin separate us permanently from God?**

1 John 2:7-11. **How is love as it's laid out in 1 John different from the world's picture of love? Are there any similarities between Tony's definition and love that the world presents? What are they?**

**Why does hate for a fellow believer separate us from fellowship with God (what John calls plunging into darkness)?**

**How does John's command to love our fellow believers sit with you? What have you found difficult about loving God's people? What has come easy? Why?**

**What one step could you take this week to move toward the light and out of the dark?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Take a few minutes this week and specifically ask God to open your eyes to one way in which you can grow in fellowship with Him. Write it down and pray that God would help you work on it.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week and write out a letter to yourself, describing what you hope to learn about your relationship to God and His people in this study. Challenge yourself to grow in one area we've looked at in this session.

**Connect:** Identify one other believer (at your church, work, in your family) that you haven't really connected with before. Reach out to that person with a handshake and smile, and show them the love that comes through Jesus.

**Memorize:** If you haven't already, commit 1 John 1:9 to memory. Then, three times this week, recite the verse to yourself and spend two minutes confessing the sin that God's light shows in your life.

**Act:** Identify one area in your life where you've been less than loving toward someone else. Confess that lack of love, and then do one thing this week that to begin to show them love again.



### DISCUSS

1 John 2:12-14. **In verse 12, whom is John addressing? Why does he call them “little children”?**

**In verses 13-14, what did Tony say these groups represented?**

**Does John’s commendation of “young” believers change the way you might think about a new Christian? How?**

**According to Tony, what did the position of “fatherhood” addressed in verses 12-14 indicate?**

1 John 2:15-17. **What is the one requirement that John lays out for growing toward maturity?**

**How did Tony define “the world” or “worldliness”?**

**In your everyday life, what areas would you say “the world” carries influence?**

**Have you experienced a weakened relationship with God thanks to the influence of the world? How? Where?**

**Why would not loving the world be key to our ability to disciple new believers?**

1 John 2:18-27. **How did Tony describe these “antichrists”? What’s the goal of antichrists? How do they accomplish that goal?**

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## Session 2: 1 John 2:12-27



**What test does John lay out for determining the validity of someone's claims?**

**What other ideas or philosophies out there ultimately deny Christ and our need for Him to save us from sin?**

**In your experience, how has the Holy Spirit helped you to discern the truth?**

**What worldly teachers compete with God's voice in your life?**

**How might (or how has) the Holy Spirit combatted the worldly ideas that compete with God's truth in your life?**

1 John 2:27. **What does John challenge his readers to do? How did Tony illustrate abiding?**

**What does abiding look like for you? What disciplines have you or could you add to your life to encourage steeping in the Spirit?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pause:** Take ten minutes this week to stop what you're doing, find a quiet place, and focus on the God who redeemed you. Practice abiding in His love and compassion for you.

**Connect:** Identify a worldly temptation in your life that you feel pulls you away from God. Connect with a fellow believer and ask him or her to pray with you on that temptation.

**Memorize:** Commit 1 John 2:15 to memory. Write it on a sticky note or a card and keep it where you can see it and reflect on the importance of resisting the self-centered temptations of the world.

**Pray:** Two times this week, pray and ask God to speak loudly to you through His Holy Spirit. Then take a few minutes to just listen.

**Write:** Keep track of the various instances where you felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Write down what you felt He was saying, and how you responded.



### DISCUSS

**How should our expectation of God's return in the future affect our behavior in the present?**

1 John 3:1–3. **What does John remind his readers about their status before God?**

**What impact could the knowledge that one day you will see God have on your attitude?**

**Why is it easy to fall into a lifestyle that doesn't expect to answer to God?**

**What can you do today to modify your expectations regarding the return of our God?**

**How would that impact your life today? Tomorrow? This week?**

**In your life, how does abiding in Jesus—focusing on your relationship with Him through prayer, Bible study, and quiet listening to the Holy Spirit—affect you?**

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## Session 3: 1 John 2:28–3:23



**What will happen to your expectations (and, therefore, your actions) if you focus your attention on abiding in Jesus?**

**What do you stand to gain? According to 1 John 3, what do you stand to lose if you don't?**

**1 John 3:11–15. What does John challenge his readers to do?**

**Why is it crucial that we love our fellow believers? What does it say about our attitude toward God?**

**Describe a time when you were on the receiving end of love from a fellow believer. How did it impact you? What did you learn about God through the experience?**

**What difference did it make in your life to be loved rather than hated?**

**What obstacles might stand in the way for you, personally, to love your fellow believers?**

**1 John 3:19–24. What kind of hope does it give you to know that God transcends even our guilt and shame?**

**What can you do this week to continue to build your relationship—your fellowship—with the God who calls you His child?**



### LIVE IT OUT

**Write:** Write out the phrase “Live like Jesus is coming today” on a sticky note or a card, and put it somewhere you’ll see it regularly—a mirror, your desk, on your dashboard. Use it as a reminder to live in the expectation of Jesus’s return.

**Connect:** Identify a fellow believer who’s in need—even if it’s something as simple as raking leaves in their yard or visiting them in the hospital. Take the opportunity to act out your love, and serve that believer.

**Pray:** Spend ten minutes in prayer this week asking God to instill in you the deep confidence that comes from knowing that you are His child.

**Memorize:** Write out 1 John 3:16, and work on memorizing it this week. Use the verse to remind you what active love looks like.

**Read:** Spend fifteen minutes this week re-reading the words of Jesus in Matthew 24–25. Take the time to reflect on Jesus’s challenge to His followers to live in light of His return.



### DISCUSS

1 John 4:1-6. **Why do you think being able to identify deceivers is so important to John?**

**What does John explain as the simple difference between those who come from God and those who don't?**

**What difference does it make if Jesus came as a full human?**

**How does Jesus reveal God to us in a way we otherwise wouldn't have known?**

**Where have you seen the authority of Jesus diminished in the messaging of the world?**

**When and how have you felt the Holy Spirit warn against anti-Christ ideas? How did you respond?**

1 John 4:7-16. **According to John, whose love is manifest in us?**

**What reason does John give for us loving each other?**

**Describe a time where someone loved you like God. What did it look like? How did it make you feel? What difference did it make in your life?**

**What do we stand to lose by refusing to allow God's love to flow through us?**





**What one thing could you do to go out of your way to share God's love with them?**

**What would your life look like if you focused on giving away the love of God each day, not just receiving it?**

**What risk would you run by living a life that gives love without question? What would you stand to lose? What would you stand to gain?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Spend ten minutes this week—five minutes each on two days—asking God to open your eyes to any deception that might be sneaking into your mind. As He directs you, confess and work toward truth.

**Connect:** The idea of “pay it forward” has become a cliché in our culture, but that’s very much what’s going on in our session today. This week, look at the ways in which God has blessed you and shown you love, and then do one thing to pass God’s love on to a fellow believer.

**Write:** Take fifteen minutes this week and write out a summary of 1 John so far. According to our study, what does the Christian life look like?

**Memorize:** Commit 1 John 4:4 to memory. Meditate on the verse this week, and remember that God has overcome the world on our behalf.

**Reflect:** Take ten minutes this week and reflect on those instances where God’s love was made apparent to you through other believers. Use this time as a means to grow in your confidence of God’s love for you, but also to build your testimony that God alone is the source of love.



### DISCUSS

**Describe a time in your life where you felt (or feel) that you were trapped by the world. How did you feel in the middle of it?**

**How have you seen the power of God at work in your life to help you overcome the world?**

1 John 5:4. **What does John set up as the condition for overcoming the world?**

**Who, truly overcomes the world?**

**What part do you play in overcoming the world, according to everything laid out in 1 John?**

**In your experience, what were the results of you trying to overcome the pressures of the world on your own?**

**Can you describe a time where you leaned on God's power to deal with the world (through a temptation, or a trial, or external pressure)?**

**How were those two experiences different?**

1 John 5:6–12. **What did John identify as the three witnesses proving Jesus gives eternal life?**

**What does John say about the testimony we've received?**



**Does that mean the testimony we've received through the Church is weak or pointless? Why or why not?**

**Where is this testimony ultimately located?**

**Describe a time when you've doubted God's ability to come through for you. What led you to feel like God couldn't deliver on His promise?**

**Now think about an instance where God showed Himself utterly dependable. Were you expecting Him to come through? Why or why not?**

**What are you facing this week that you need the strength of God for?**

**What can your fellow believers help you with? How can they show you love?**

**Whom can you offer the hope of love and eternal life to this week?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Take some time this week and talk to God about the things you feel hemming you in. Take the time to present each pressure, obstacle, or temptation to God and ask Him to overcome in your life.

**Confess:** Meet with a fellow believer this week and confess those instances where you've doubted God's strength to carry you through temptation or the pressure of the world. Ask that friend to pray with you.

**Write:** Take fifteen minutes this week and make a list of the times in your life where you've seen God come through for or around you. Use it as a memorial to God's faithfulness, so you can be encouraged in times of need.

**Memorize:** Work on memorizing 1 John 5:13. John wrote his letter to his readers to help them be confident in the eternal life that's theirs through Jesus Christ. Cling to that promise this week.

**Connect:** John admonishes us to pray for our fellow believers. Identify one person you can pray for this week, and do so. Then, if appropriate, tell them that you've prayed for them.



### DISCUSS

1 John 5:13. **What is the purpose of this letter according to John?**

**How would you describe your assurance regarding your salvation?**

**In the past, what things have worried you, or threatened your confidence in your relationship to God?**

**If you could talk directly to God, and He would answer you, what would you like to hear from Him to build your confidence in your eternal destiny?**

**How would your confidence in your salvation change if you focused on God's strength, rather than your own feelings of assurance?**

1 John 5:13-15. **What further proof does John give for our confidence in God?**

**When have you seen God answer prayer in your life or the life of someone you care about?**

**What impact did it have on your relationship with God?**

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## Session 6: 1 John 5:13–21



**Where have you seen prayer—whether just simply praying or an answered prayer—change the way you approached your Christian life?**

1 John 5:16–19. **Rather than police our brothers and sisters, how does John want us to go about helping our fellow believers trapped in sin?**

**How could your fellow believers—especially your friends or the people in your small group—pray for you today?**

1 John 5:20–21. **What does John remind us about the character of Jesus?**

**What does that mean for us? How do we live differently as a result?**

**What are idols, as Tony described them?**

**What things in your life tempt you away from fellowship with God?**

**What do you stand to gain if you refuse to follow the idolatry of our world?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Spend time in prayer this week for one other believer. Pray for them by name that God would deliver them from evil, bring them close to Him, and pour His love out through them.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week and write out a list of things that worry you. What do you fear? Then, next to each, write out the character of God that best corresponds to that worry. Keep that list where you can see it every day this week.

**Connect:** Ask one of your brothers or sisters in Christ how you can encourage, uplift, or pray for them. Then do it. Right there. On the spot.

**Memorize:** This week, work on memorizing 1 John 5:20. Keep always in the front of your mind that God is true.

**Summarize:** How would you summarize the message of 1 John? Write it out or repeat it to yourself until you can explain it to a family member or friend. Then, this week, take two minutes and talk about 1 John.



### DISCUSS

**How did Tony define truth at the beginning of this session?**

**Do you see this definition of truth in our world or culture? Why or why not?**

**2 John 1–5. What is the source of the love that John (and all people) have for God’s people (the elect lady and her children)?**

**Why would truth promote love?**

**In our culture today, would you say “love” comes from feelings or from objective truth? Why?**

**What kind of impact does it have on our ability to love if our love depends on the right combination of feelings?**

**What does the love that John describes look like, if it’s based on the truth of God’s compassion toward us?**

**Do our feelings change the truth God has revealed to us?**

**Does John’s admonition to love each other in verse 5 change if we don’t feel loving?**

**2 John 6–9. What does this kind of deception look like today?**

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## Session 7: 2 John



**Why does having a truth that's independent of our feelings protect us from deceivers?**

**What have you implemented in your life to keep watch on what you believe?**

**How could other people help you in keeping watch?**

2 John 10–11. **How does John expect a church to respond to false teachers—those who deny Jesus and God's truth?**

**How's your Bible reading going? How do you regularly engage in the Word of God personally? How about publicly?**

**What one thing could you do this week to get into God's Word a little deeper?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Spend five minutes two times this week reading your Bible—the source of God's truth. Consider starting the Gospel of John.

**Write:** Consider some of the lies that the world spins around us each day. Write out a list of lies you're tempted to believe. Next to them, write out God's truth.

**Connect:** Take time this week to connect with fellow believers outside of your normal church hours. Enjoy the fellowship with God's people, but also take time to savor the time spent with others who are defined by God's truth—not the world's.

**Memorize:** Commit to memory 2 John 8. Use it to maintain your focus on the truth, and resist the lies of the devil and the world.

**Summarize:** The book of 2 John isn't long. Tony called it a postcard. Take five minutes and summarize in your head or on paper the message of the book. Then share with someone this week what stood out to you in this tiny letter.

### DISCUSS

**How does John greet Gaius? How would you describe his relationship to this younger brother in Christ?**

**Given everything we've studied in John's letters about how to live as a Christian, what stands out to you about John's attitude here?**

3 John 5–8. **What is John commending Gaius for here?**

**How does John describe the people?**

**Why is Gaius's behavior so compelling?**

**What opportunities have you (or do you) have to care for God's people? At church? In your family? Neighbors?**

**How could you reach out to them this week? What could you do to show them the love of God?**

3 John 9–10. **John identifies a potential hitch in his plan to write to the church. What was it?**

**What charge does John have against Diotrephes?**

**What does Diotrephes illustrate for us in light of John's letters?**

**Have you ever found yourself itching to resist the authority of God's word, or the leaders God has ordained for the Church? Why or why not?**

**How do you respond when faced with inconveniences in your church? What about people who inevitably make demands on your time?**



# HANDOUT

## Session 8: 3 John



**What could you do in those instances to show love to God's people? To welcome them as brothers and sisters?**

**When you see people in the church focused on themselves, how do you respond? How do you deal with the temptation to imitate their bad behavior?**

**What will you do with what you've learned in this study in the letters of John?**

**What would you like to change in your Christian life to grow closer in fellowship with God?**

**What obstacles will you face in that journey? What can you do to deal with those obstacles?**

**How can your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ help you? How can they pray for you?**

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Ask God this week to open your eyes to those brothers and sisters in Christ that you may be overlooking. Ask Him to give you an opportunity to reach out to them and show them the love of God.

**Write:** Take fifteen minutes this week and write out a description of what you'd like your Christian life to look like. How would you like someone to describe your Christian faith? Select one of those characteristics, and commit yourself to developing in that area.

**Connect:** Ask your pastor (or investigate for yourself) if there are people in your church who are struggling to connect. Make the commitment to show them hospitality in the next two weeks.

**Memorize:** Pick the verse that most stuck out to you in this study of 1, 2 & 3 John, and commit it to memory. Then, this week, share it with someone.

**Share:** Identify the one most important lesson you've taken away from this study. Take five minutes this week and share what you've learned with a friend or coworker. Use that time as an opportunity to talk about the new family that God has given you.