

## John's Essentials: A Dive into 1 John

David B. McKinney

### Lesson 1 – Introduction and Essential No. 1

**Note:** These notes are prepared by a teacher for teachers. They will suggest an outline, discussion points, and opportunities for a deeper understanding. I have written them as if I am speaking to a class.

**Introduction.** *If you had to write the essentials of the Christian faith, but had just three pieces of paper, what would you include? Don't give me an answer today. Think about your answer; we will discuss your essentials during the last lesson.*

John faced this dilemma in his first letter. He needed to encourage – and admonish -- the faithful. He had six<sup>1</sup> pages to include everything he needed to write. This is a seventh of the length of his Gospel.

We will not delve into John's encouragements and admonitions. Instead, we will focus on the three pages in which John explains *why* we should be pure and love one another.

John did not tell us that “these are the essentials of the faith, so you should be pure.” He weaves the essentials into his letter.

On the other hand, John left out a lot. He mentioned only the key points. Over the next eight weeks, we will focus on these points – the essentials that John included when he needed to boil the Gospel down to three pages.

You will notice that a lot is missing. For example, John does not include several points of faith mentioned in the Apostle's Creed.

As you consider *your* essentials, you may wonder whether John listed *all* of the essentials of our faith, or just the ones that were necessary to support his letter. I have an opinion, but will not share it until you have shared your opinions during our last lesson.

Today, we will consider whether there really *are* essentials of our faith – or whether *everything* is essential. We can rely on a really good source – Jesus.

In Mt. 5:17-18, Jesus teaches us:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

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<sup>1</sup> You can edit the number of pages to fit your Bible.

This seems to suggest that everything is essential – but Jesus continues in Verse 19:

Whoever then annuls one of the *least* of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, *shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven ...*

Thus, Jesus teaches us that (a) some commandments are less-important than others, and (b) if I, the teacher, mess up on a lesser point in these lessons, I won't go to Hell; I will be in Heaven with you but will be washing dishes! We can be comfortable that there really are important – or essential – elements of our faith.

### **Essential No. 1: God is God.**

*Read 1 Jn.1:5:*

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that GOD is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

We could spend years examining the concept of God, and still wouldn't get it right [or complete]. John concentrates this key essential into one sentence.

**God IS** GOD. You cannot say that GOD is GOD without saying:

**GOD IS.**

This should be obvious. Most people, Christian or not, believe that there is a God. A minority doesn't believe that God exists – or ever existed. We can try to point to the evidence and logic, but those who believe that there is/was no God rely on faith in their disbelief or – more troubling – their faith in their own intellects. The reality is that we cannot prove that God exists any more than they can prove that God does not. This is where faith comes in.

[If you want a summary of modern scientists' odds of the Universe spontaneously developing, email me at [sardsfamily@cox.net](mailto:sardsfamily@cox.net).]

**GOD is 100%.** John tells us that GOD is light – and only light. GOD does not have any darkness. We have, therefore, the concept of *separation* from darkness.

We know the concept of separation as holiness. In Oklahoma, we can say that GOD is 100%. GOD is only light – that is, holy.

GOD is not compromised. GOD is not grey.

[This may be too deep to discuss:]

This explains why there can be only one GOD; if there were another, the other one would be gray or purple or different or ... not 100%. If the other one is not 100%, it's not GOD.

[This *really* may be too deep:]

Think of a prism. The prism separates the pure light into infinite shades of colors that we can see (and infrared and ultraviolet colors that we can't see). Any single shade – say, yellow – is a miniscule part of the Light. Thus, if a yellow being claims to be God, we should know better – because GOD is 100% Light.

**GOD is good.** From the beginning of the Bible, we see that GOD *created* light and *separated* light from darkness. Gn. 1:3-4. We also see that “GOD saw that *light was good.*” Gn. 1:4.

So ... GOD is light. Light is good. What does that make GOD? *Good!*

[If you have time, you can discuss the times that GOD showed parts of Himself as light. Here are some starting points: Moses and the burning bush; The light in the tabernacle; Moses' shining face when he encountered GOD – but the shine faded; the light that shone when the angels announced Jesus; the Holy Spirit descends as tongues of fire; Jesus' statement that when you act for God, you are the light of the world; Revelation's light from the center of Heaven ...]

Summary: In 12 words, John identifies GOD and explains holiness. **GOD IS GOD.** God is 100%. GOD is good. This is John's – and our – First Essential.

**Is GOD just light?** No. John mentions other elements of GOD. For example, in 1 Jn. 1:1, he states that GOD is timeless – that is, “was already in existence from the beginning...”

*What else is GOD?* [Power; authority; timeless; all-knowing; love; ...] John does not cover every aspect of GOD. He covers an essential element.

Next week, we will discuss what is *not* GOD.

[Usually, two pages of notes equate to 30 minutes of my teaching. Feel free to skip this next part or add it in the appropriate place:]

**Who was John?** You can find arguments about almost everything in the New Testament. After all, we have had more than 2,000 to reflect on the Scriptures. Novelty sells, so someone comes up with a novel argument. The identity of John is no exception.

1 John was written by a good writer. The introduction has the same poetic feel, and conveys the same sense of awe, as the introduction to the Gospel of John. Most commentators think that the same author wrote the Gospel as the three letters – 1, 2, and 3 John.

Some argue that John's poetry and understanding are inconsistent with an uneducated fisherman. Many traditional sources, however, agree that John is the disciple turned apostle. Here are some of the main reasons:

1. The Gospel is missing something important: John! The other Gospels discuss the disciples and mention the disciple John prominently. Matthew discusses him in three settings, Mark in eight, and Luke in five or six. (You can search for John and skip the references to the Baptist.)
  - a. This is a common affectation. Many commentators, for example, think that Mark was the youth in the Garden of Gethsemane clothed in a sheet. The Romans grabbed by his sheet. The youth twisted out of his sheet and ran away naked. Mk. 14:49-50. The other Gospels do not mention the tale. Mark gives us the story but does not name the youth.
  - b. It would be hard for a history of Jesus' ministry to omit John. He was one of the key disciples.
  - c. Thus, the Gospel's omission of John suggests that John was the author.
2. John was a fisherman – but not just a fisherman.
  - a. His father, Zebedee, had quite an operation with servants to help. Mk. 1:19-20. The family fished from Galilee, which had a dense mixture of cultures, languages, and commercial enterprises.
  - b. Jesus also were from Galilee. He was schooled both in the Torah, Roman law and customs, Greek, and commerce. John could have been as versatile as Jesus.
  - c. Jesus gave John the honor of taking care of Mary. This suggests that Jesus appreciated John's abilities. (Jesus also may have thought about John's future lifespan, which would be much longer than Jesus' brothers and Peter.)

- d. In all likelihood, John started as a disciple of John the Baptist. John recounts that two of the Baptist's disciples decided to follow Jesus. Jn. 1:37-41. John tells us that one of them was Andrew, Peter's brother. He does not name the other – which suggests that the other disciple was John.
  - e. By the time the Gospel and letters were written, John had lived a long and successful life.
3. There is no reason to conclude that John was a crude laborer who could not have written the elegant Gospels and letters. Think of Ernest Hemingway (dropped out of High School).
4. We will proceed with the assumption that the author was, indeed, the apostle.

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**Lesson and Essential No. 2**

**Reminder.** Last week, we discussed John's cornerstone: GOD is:

GOD;

Light;

100%;

Good; and

Separated from darkness.

So, what if something is not 100%? What if it is not completely separated from darkness? What can you say about it?

Duh; It's not GOD.

**Biblical evidence: Only GOD is GOD.** First, we will consider the *Biblical* evidence that *only* GOD is GOD.

**The Bible's examples.** This is just a smattering of the Biblical examples that demonstrate that you and I are not GOD [*feel free to add or remove examples:*]

1. The Tower of Babel: Our ancestors decided to rely on our own resources and build an idol to ourselves. How'd that work out? Gen. 11:4ff.
2. Introduction: GOD introduced Himself to Moses as GOD. Ex. 3:4-6. (burning bush).
3. Gnats: Pharaoh's magicians tried to match God miracle for miracle. They struck out on the third try; GOD sent gnats (or fleas or – horror! mosquitoes). The magicians couldn't match the miracle and told Pharaoh that the miracle was from GOD. Ex. 8:16 ff.
4. Fire: The priests of Baal and the Ashera agreed to a seemingly unfair contest to see whether GOD or Baal/Ashera really was God: 450 of Baal's priests would ask Baal to bring fire on an ox. They tried and failed. Then, Baal's priests soaked Elisha's ox with water. Elisha alone asked GOD to bring fire. He did – and burned up the stone altar too. 1 Ki. 18:15-39. "[The people] said "The LORD, He is GOD, the Lord, He is GOD." v. 39.
5. Saul (later known as Paul) knew God – or so he thought. Then, he met Jesus. He was unable to bear the Light; indeed, the Light blinded him. Acts 9:3-4. Clearly, Saul wasn't the Light.

Each example demonstrates who *isn't* GOD: You and I, and the guy who wants you to move into his commune and give him all your money. Thus, the **second Essential** is: **I'm not GOD. You aren't GOD either.**

**How much time do we need to spend on this concept?** John thought it was important enough to include in his Essentials. *Why? Is this controversial? Do you know anyone who thinks he/she, or someone else, is perfect in his/her self-contained package? Consider:*

1. Some people claim that they don't know whether there is a God and don't care. Why? They are satisfied with their self-contained goodness.
2. Some claim that they (and perhaps their friends) have such advanced intellects that they can reason out anything. Their intellects are so developed that they don't need God or anything else. Some local congregations are based on this concept. This is an example of the delusion that we are, at least in part, Gods.
3. Some devote themselves to physical regimens, mineral supplements, and extreme medical care, in the belief (or hope) that they will live forever. Others just refuse to consider their mortality.
4. Some lavish money and time on the poor and downtrodden, and think they are perfect.

### **The Bible's teaching.**

1. **Paul: Everyone falls short.** Paul put it this way: "*all* have sinned and *come short of the glory of GOD.*" Rom. 3:23.

Since none of us is completely perfect – and, even more basically – we fall short of GOD's glory -- we aren't 100%. By definition, that means that we aren't GOD.

Paul is talking about everyone – *believers and nonbelievers*. To drive home the point to us in this Sunday School class, however...

2. **Christians: Walk in the Light.** Before we were Christians, we walked in the dark and did not know where we were going. John 12:35. Once we were in darkness but now we are (or should be) in the Lord's Light. Eph. 5:8. The darkness has power, but God delivers Christians from the darkness. Col. 1:13. Followers of Jesus have the Light of life. John 8:12.

3. **John's blunt reminder to Christians.** Even so, however, John tells us straight out:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves...

...

If we say that we have not sinned, we make [Jesus] a liar and His word is not in us.

1 Jn. 1: 8, 10.

Note that John was writing fellow Christians. He is telling *us* that *we* aren't perfect – and *we* aren't GOD.

**Discussion Points.** *Do you know anyone who thinks he/she, or someone else, is so advanced in his/her walk with Jesus that he/she is 100% holy?*

*How is that belief (or delusion) working?* The delusion is more common than we might imagine – outside the church and inside.

*Have any preachers given the impression that they are 100% holy? How did that turn out?*

*How tempted are you to be proud – or at least satisfied – that you have become a Christian?*

*Is accepting Jesus enough? What is our goal?* (See Essential 8.)

[If you want to stir up some controversy, you can mention the “GOD wants you to be just the way you are” movement that washed over the church about 25 years ago.]

*Does this mean that we are 100% evil?* No; Essentials 4 – 8 will explore our movement from darkness to light – and from separation to fellowship from GOD. It does, however, mean that we have a way to go – and are still a distance from GOD.

*What does this mean for us?*

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### Lesson and Essential No. 3

#### Jesus, Part 1

Jesus is the focus of our faith. It stands to reason that John considers several aspects of Jesus to be essentials.

This week, we consider some of the essential aspects of Jesus.

#### 1. **Jesus is the Son of GOD.**

Throughout his letter, John identifies Jesus as the one with whom we need to connect so He can give us understanding, knowledge, and truth. John says:

[W]hat we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with *His Son Jesus Christ*.

This Jesus, with whom John wants us to be friends, is the Son of GOD.

And we know *that the Son of GOD* has come, and given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in *HIS Son Jesus Christ*. *This is the true GOD* and eternal life.

John emphasizes Jesus' position as the Son of GOD in nine passages: 1 John 13, 1:7, 2:22 – 24, 3:8, 3:23, 4:9 – 11, 4:14 – 15, 5:5, 5:9 – 13, and 5:20.

So, what does it mean to be the Son of GOD? In some ways, we can say that everyone is created, directly or indirectly, by GOD. Obviously, John means something more.

- a. **John's description of the Son of GOD.** We could explore the various definitions of "Son of ...." forever. This lesson, however, relates to the essential concepts included in 1 John. Let's start with the parts of the Sonship that are important to John.

#### i. **Jesus is Divine.**

1. Jesus was with GOD from the beginning and will be for eternity. 1 Jn. 1:1 – 2.
2. Three elements testify that Jesus is the Son of God: The Spirit (of GOD), the water (baptism and identification by GOD), and the blood (crucifixion). "[T]he three are in agreement." 1 Jn. 5:8.

ii. **Our only path to GOD.** GOD commands us to “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ ...” 1 Jn. 3:23.

1. If you love the Father, you must accept (literally confess) His son. 1 Jn. 2:23, 5:1.
2. If you deny Jesus, then you deny the Father too. 1 Jn. 2:23.
3. In other words, we do not have another path to GOD – or to eternal life. 1 Jn. 5:12.

*If you like to draw pictures, you can draw mathematical sets here, represented by circles. Set One doesn't intersect. One set partially overlaps. One set has a small circle contained in a big circle. One has just one circle because the two sets are identical. You can show that Sets One and Two won't work because you can't love GOD without Jesus, or vice versa. Only Sets Three and Four are consistent with 1 John – but remember that we have an entire New Testament to help us decide which Set is correct. We'll get to other books in a minute.*

b. **Jesus' Mission.** Jesus was sent<sup>1</sup>:

- i. To destroy the devil's work; in other words, to clean house and start over. 1 Jn. 3:8.
- ii. To save the world. 1 Jn. 4:14.
- iii. To pay for our sins. 1 Jn. 2:1.
- iv. To advocate for us. 1 Jn. 2:2.
- v. To share eternal life with us. 1 Jn. 5:12.

c. **The Son of GOD in other Bible passages.** We could teach an eight-week session on the meaning of the Son of GOD. These selected passages expand the concept:

i. Luke quotes the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary [Luke 1:31]:

[Your son Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High ...

In this context, “Son of ...” meant *the same as*, in the same way that the disciples referred to James and John as the “sons of thunder,” meaning the

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<sup>1</sup> This isn't the totality of Jesus' mission. It is a summary of the parts of His mission mentioned in 1 John.

“same as thunder.” [Mark 3:17; Ryrie.] James and John had the same zeal and energy. Jesus has GOD’s character and essence.

- ii. Jesus refers to himself as the *only begotten* Son of GOD – which is what Jesus calls Himself in Jn. 3:16:

For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His *only begotten Son*, that whoever believes in HIM shall not perish, but have eternal life.

See also 1 Jn 4:9.

Jesus is the Son of God both by His character, essence, and authority – and by his direct lineage.

We know of natural children who look, sound, and act, like their father. We know of natural children who don’t act anything like their father. Jesus is the whole package; he is the Son of GOD in every other way.

- iii. In his Gospel, John goes farther and identifies Jesus not just as like GOD, not just as part of GOD, but actually as GOD (Jn. 1:1):

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, *and the Word was GOD.*

- iv. Jesus Himself declares that:

1. He is the Son of GOD. Luke 23:70;
2. GOD sent Jesus into the world. John 17:18; and
3. He will be seated at GOD’s right hand. Luke 23:69; Mt. 26:75. Here, Jesus is quoting Daniel 7:13. *Read it.* By quoting Daniel, Jesus is declaring that GOD has given Jesus eternal dominion over all of the world’s people.<sup>2</sup>

- v. Part iv suggests that Jesus could be part of Set Three: a part of GOD but not all GOD. Jesus assures us that this is not the case:

... *You, Father, are in Me and I in You...* The glory which You have given me I have given to them, that they may be one, *just as We are one; ...*

John 17:21 – 22. If Jesus and the Father are one, Set Four shows us the relationship between GOD and Jesus. Jesus took on a mission in the world, but that does not diminish His identity with GOD.

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<sup>2</sup> Be prepared to remind the class that Jesus also demonstrated dominion over the entire world: Water, wind, fish, fowl, grain, wine, pigs, disease, death, and demons.

## 2. Jesus is the Real Physical Deal.

John hastens to point out that Jesus also was a real, physical, human being. Just before John identified Jesus as the Son of GOD, he said (1 Jn. 1:3):

[W]hat we have *seen and heard* we proclaim to you also, so that you may have fellowship with us ...

John also confirms that Jesus was *begotten*. 1 Jn. 4:9.

We know the difference between an idea and a physical entity. If you buy stock in a company, you own an idea or concept. You don't even get a stock certificate any more. You – and everyone else related to the company – buy into the same idea.

If you buy a shovel, you don't have a title – but it is yours in a tangible way. You see it, touch it, get tired using it, and hear it break when you try too hard to dig the root ball out. It is a physical entity.

Jesus wasn't just an idea or a spirit. He was born the old fashioned way. He was a tangible, physical, human being.

Spirits and ideas might die – but Jesus also was cut, got hungry and thirsty, ate, drank, slept, walked, got wet, rode a donkey, cried, sweated, bled, and died. His feet were tired and dirty. Luke 2:21 (circumcision), and 4:2 (hunger in the wilderness); John 19:28 (thirst); Luke 22 (Last Supper); John 2 (the wedding wine); Luke 8:23) 3:21 (baptism), 19:30ff (donkey or colt); John 11:35 (wept), Luke 22:44 (sweated); John 19:1, 2 (scourged and crown of thorns) and 19:33 (died); Luke 7:36 ff. (feet).

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**Lesson and Essential No. 4**

**Jesus, Part 2**

This week, we focus on Jesus' work in reconciling us to God.

**Essential 4: Jesus is our payment for our sins and impurities.** As John puts it:

[J]esus Himself is the *propitiation* for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

1 Jn. 2:2.

*[I invented this analogy. You may or may not want to use it. A trained theologian probably could point out insufficiencies in it. If you don't like it, you can use the formal lesson included below – or mix the two together. I may start with a formal definition and then use the example. I encourage you to look at the Wikipedia definition of Propitiation – Christian theology; the current webpage version makes sense to me.]*

**What is propitiation?** It is a Greek term that means to cancel GOD's wrath by offering a gift. Jesus is the gift that cancels, or satisfies, GOD's wrath.

**Analogy to human relationships.** GOD uses analogies to human relationships to help us understand Him. For example, Jer. 9 compares the wayward Jews to adulterers. GOD basically tells them that He will divorce them and take the house.

So, here is a human example of propitiation:

Abby and Beth are identical twins. They have an inseparable bond and a superhuman communication.

Beth marries Carl.<sup>1</sup> They have a good relationship until Carl gets a wandering eye. Beth accepts Carl's apologies and assurance that he will remain faithful. Finally, however, Beth has enough. Although she still cares for Carl, she divorces him. She takes the house and a whopping alimony award payable for the rest of Carl's life. Carl cannot pay the alimony and his reputation is ruined, so he moves away.

Beth sees that Abby misses Carl. She travels to Carl and encourages Carl to consider a reconciliation. Carl, however, cannot pay his back alimony.

So, Beth steps in and pays off Carl's back alimony. She satisfies Carl's obligations. In Greek terms, Beth *expiates* Carl's obligations.

Carl now has a chance to pay his future alimony. If he does, Carl covers his obligations – or *atones* for them.

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<sup>1</sup> You can write A, B and C on the white board for Abby, Beth and Carl.

However, everyone knows that Carl will not be able to pay the future alimony. Beth goes back to work – on the relationship between Carl and Beth. She encourages and even begs them both to reconcile. She even pays Carl's travel expenses to return to town and ask Beth's forgiveness.

Beth sees that Carl is heartbroken and serious about a reconciliation. She forgives Carl's future alimony and they remarry. They rekindle the love that they had at the beginning of their marriage.

This is *propitiation*: Beth does everything possible (a) to pay off Carl's obligations *and* (b) to *restore the relationship*. Beth uses her relationship with Abby to advocate for the restoration.

Now, in this analogy, Abby is an example of GOD; Beth is an example of Jesus, and Carl is an example of you.

Some modern theologians suggest that there is no difference between an expiation or a propitiation. John, however, does not say that when Jesus sacrificed Himself, he just paid off our obligations. He says that Jesus sacrificed Himself – and advocated for us to GOD -- to satisfy our sins *and* restore our relationship with God.

[*Here is the more formal explanation.*]

**What is propitiation?** It is a Greek term that means to cancel GOD's wrath by offering a gift. Jesus is the gift that cancels, or satisfies, GOD's wrath.

1. *God's Wrath*. It may be trendy to think of sin as a separation from GOD. The Bible teaches us that sin causes more than this separation. GOD does not like sin – not even a little bit. GOD's wrath results in terrible consequences – and a breach in our relationship with GOD.

[*You may want to cut or shorten the Old Testament section:*] The Old Testament makes it clear that GOD develops *wrath* against sin and the sinner:

GOD is a righteous judge, and a GOD who has indignation [i.e., wrath] every day. If a man *does not repent*, He will sharpen His sword ...

Ps. 7:11-12.

GOD is loving and "slow to anger" (or wrath). Ne. 9:17. Even this passage that emphasizes GOD's love also acknowledges that GOD's wrath is the inevitable result of our stubborn sin.

Jeremiah is full of GOD's entreaties for Judah to repent or face His wrath. It shows how patient GOD is with us – but the inevitable and terrible consequence if we do not repent. See, e.g., Jer. 3:1-5, 12 – 16 – and especially 4:4:

Circumcise yourselves to GOD and remove the foreskins of your heart, ... or else My wrath will go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.

The previous passage shows that GOD's wrath is more than an emotion. It includes a terrible action against the sinner.

Paul reminds us that GOD has not changed His mind about sin:

For the wrath of GOD is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness ...

Rom. 1:17.

Jesus confirms that GOD still opposes sin and has terrible consequences for those who persist. He tells the parable of the rich man who reveled in self-indulgence, while Lazarus was poor but was not given even crumbs from the rich man's table. What happened to the sinner? He died and remained in eternal torment without hope. The sinner could not reconcile himself to GOD. Luke 16:19 ff.

*[You might or might not want to mention that the poor man has a name – Lazarus – but the rich man is abandoned in Hades and even his name is forgotten.]*

2. *Atonement.* Atonement is the "Old Testament Light" version of propitiation. A sinner could seek temporary relief from GOD's wrath by repenting and making a sacrificial gift of a lamb. This was good for the sinner, but bad for the lamb; the lamb was killed and drained of its blood!

Both repentance and sacrifice were required – but they were not enough. The sacrifice was a symbol of the sinner's guilt and repentance, *plus GOD's gift of a pardon.* Lv. 17:11.

Atonement – sometimes called expiation – does not fix the main problem, which is our inability to keep a good relationship with GOD.

3. *NT Propitiation.* The Greek word for "propitiation" is hilasmos. The verb is hilaskomai. A propitiation involves these elements:
  - a. Our repentance.
  - b. A sacrifice.
  - c. GOD's gifts – *plural* -- of:
    - i. A pardon from our sins *and*
    - ii. A permanent restoration of our relationship with Him.
4. *Jesus' Role.* What does this mean for us? We still sin. To put it mildly, GOD doesn't like it. For Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins:
  - a. We must repent.

- b. Jesus is the sacrifice. We know that Jesus paid for our sin with His suffering and death. As John puts it, “the blood of Jesus [God’s] Son cleanses us from all sin.” His death opens the door to:
- c. GOD’s gift of a pardon and restoration.

**God’s Pardon.** The short, Oklahoma, version is that Jesus has furnished the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. If we repent and accept Jesus’ gift of Himself as a sacrifice, Jesus furnishes a satisfaction of our sins and breaches of obligations to GOD.

To dumb the concept of propitiation down, Jesus is a “satisfaction of” a debt for sin, as in someone’s payment of your mortgage and obtaining a receipt saying “paid in full.”

When your mortgage is paid in full, you receive a *release* of the mortgage. When you repent and accept Jesus’ satisfaction of your sins, you receive a release from the burden of your sins. Sometimes, it may take time for you to accept that you have been released.

**GOD’s Gift.** We don’t deserve a pardon any more than an Old Testament sinner deserved a pardon as a result of a sacrifice. GOD *gives* us a pardon.

**What does “the sins of the whole world” mean?** Sometimes, we humans tend to quibble about the meanings of words. [*You may want to omit:* Recently, the Supreme Court of Oklahoma ruled that when the Legislature said that *only* a specific was court available to hear certain claims, “only” didn’t really mean “only.”]

There is no Scriptural ambiguity in the meaning of “the sins of the whole world.” Jesus has satisfied *all* of your sins – both the ones that you consider unforgivable, and the ones you don’t want to mention in your prayers because you think Jesus shouldn’t be bothered with them.

Jesus also satisfied every other person’s sins. What does this mean for you? It means that you should not hold another person’s sin against him/her, because Jesus has satisfied it. Jesus admonished us not to judge others. Mt. 7:1. Why? When we judge someone, we basically call Jesus a fraud; if Jesus did not sacrifice for everyone, He did not sacrifice for you.

### **Dying to sin.**

[*You can omit this, or use a different example, if you want:* When I was diagnosed with leukemia, I got to wait a month before the oncologist received the lab results and determined which kind I had. That was a month of wondering whether I was running or walking into Heaven. After a few days, I realized that my worldly obligations, concerns, and burdens, were over. If I had the aggressive kind, I wouldn’t need to keep running and working out! It really was true: Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.<sup>2</sup>]

Jesus has satisfied our sin and burdens. We have, in effect, died to sin; our sin-related obligations to GOD are over. We have the freedom to act as a new person. We may

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<sup>2</sup> Kris Kristofferson, *Me and Bobbie McGee*.

have some money to pay, fines, or prison time, in front of us, but those are our civic responsibilities.

Fortunately, we don't just stay dead. We have a new life to live. Next week, we will discuss this new life.

**Gratitude.** [*You may want to move this to Lesson 5:*] When Jesus healed a blind man, he “began glorifying GOD.” He boldly proclaimed that Jesus was sent from GOD to heal. Luke 18:43; John 9. Jesus healed two other blind men who “followed him.” Mt. 20:34.

*Ask: When you understood Jesus has paid for your sins and your debts have been satisfied, how did you react? Glory to GOD? Worship? Gratitude? Joy? Pay it forward? Share the good news? What?*

**Homework.** [*Read the questions in Lessons 5. Consider asking the class to consider some of the questions this week.*]

**John's Essentials: A Dive into 1 John**  
David B. McKinney

**Lesson and Essential No. 5**

**Our Response to Jesus**

Last week, we focused on Jesus' work in reconciling us to God. This week, we discuss the response we need to make.

**Essential 5: When we repent and believe, Jesus restores us and makes us better.**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 Jn. 2:2.

*[Ask: Have you seen the commercials that offer a free water heater? A soft voice says "just buy a new air conditioner and heater." A new heat and air system costs \$7,500; a hot water heater costs less than \$1,000.*

*What other examples are there of "free stuff" that isn't really free? Do the slick ads make you more skeptical of anyone who offers you something?*

*I write children's books. Sometimes, I offer a book to a young family just because it's fun. Many times, the first reaction is "who is this guy?" Fortunately, most families set aside their skepticism when I just offer to hand them a book.]*

Jesus already has paid for our sins. We just need to get over our skepticism and accept His gift.

What's the use of accepting a gift if you don't use it? *[Nothing.]* If we believe Jesus and accept His gift, we need to use it. This is not a case of "use it or lose it;" it's a case of "if you don't intend to use it, you don't really get it."

The purpose of Jesus' gift is to *cleanse us* – now and in the future. If we accept His gift, we need to use it for its intended purpose. We need to repent and open ourselves to Jesus' cleansing.

**The Cleanse.** *Have you ever had a colonoscopy? Have you ever had a bad burn scrubbed? Have you ever been through rehab? Did you like it?* Human cleansing can be unpleasant and painful.

When we open ourselves to Jesus, we have an opportunity to let him bathe us with warmth and love, and to let our old nature go. This is not the only way to be cleansed from our sins, however. If need be, Jesus can cleanse us with a power washer.

*[Do you want to share an example of a gentle change from your former nature? How about an example of a painful confrontation with your sins – and a cathartic change?]*

[The next two sections are copied from Lesson 4. You may want to use them here:]

### **Dying to sin.**

[You can omit this, or use a different example, if you want: When I was diagnosed with leukemia, I got to wait a month before the oncologist received the lab results and determined which kind I had. That was a month of wondering whether I was running or walking into Heaven. After a few days, I realized that my worldly obligations, concerns, and burdens, were over. If I had the aggressive kind, I wouldn't need to keep running and working out! It really was true for me: Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.<sup>1</sup>]

Jesus has satisfied our sin and burdens. We have, in effect, died to sin; our sin-related obligations to GOD are over. We have the freedom to act as a new person. We may have some money to pay, or prison time, in front of us, but those are our civic responsibilities.

Fortunately, we don't just stay dead. We get a new life to live.

**Gratitude.** [You may want to move this to Lesson 5:] When Jesus healed a blind man, he "began glorifying GOD." He boldly proclaimed that Jesus was sent from GOD to heal. Luke 18:43; John 9. Jesus healed other blind men who "followed him." Mt. 20:34.

*Ask: When you understood that Jesus paid for your sins and your debts have been satisfied, how did you react? Glory to GOD? Worship? Gratitude? Joy? Pay it forward? Share the good news? What?*

**The Ginsu Knives.** One of the first successful infomercials offered the Ginsu Knife. The announcer proclaimed that it would cut through a tin can, slice a tomato, and then slice through a piece of paper.

That was, however, not all! For the same low price, you got a potato peeler, a serrated bread knife, and a set of steak knives!

It may be irreligious to suggest it, but Jesus' gift of salvation and a relationship with GOD is a little like a Ginsu Knife. Think of all the gifts you receive for the same low price (to you, not Jesus who paid a lot):

**Love.** When we accept Jesus' gift and *release from our sin and our nature*, we are filled with gratitude. See above. GOD's love is in us. 1John 4:9. We love the Jesus who releases us and gives us hope:

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ born of God, and whoever loves the Father *loves the child* born of Him.

1 John 5:1.

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<sup>1</sup> Kris Kristofferson, *Me and Bobbie McGee*.

Through Jesus, we fall back in love with God – and with others:

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and GOD abides in him. By this, love is perfected in us ...

1 John 4:16 – 17.

**A New Home.** 1 John 4:12 – 13.

**Someone to Talk To.** 1 John 5:14 ff.

**A New Life.** Jesus gives us a new life; of course, we need to accept this gift too:

He who has the Son has the life ...

1 John 5:12.

*[If you could wipe away your past and start over -- but remember your hard lessons – what would you do different? I would not buy an AMC Pacer. I would not put that off-color photo in my college yearbook. I might not skip my senior year in college. I might exercise more and keep up with my friends. You might want to give some examples from your life.]*

Our past sins are wiped away. We do get to start over with a new life. We keep our memory – but now we have Jesus' understanding to guide us:

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true ...

1 John 5:20.

**Eternal Life.** Our new life goes on forever. But you need to come back for Lesson 8!

**Holy Spirit.** You need to come back next week!

**Victory.** We overcome the worldly attacks. 1 John 5:4.

*What other gifts do you get when you accept Jesus' gift? [List them. I can think of Spiritual gifts and others – but you get to lead the class to a discovery of the other gifts “for the same low price.”]*

**Can you get the gifts any other way?** The answer is “No.” We are offered redemption, a new and lasting relationship with God, Jesus' cleansing, eternal life, love, and the Holy Spirit – only one way – Through Jesus:

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 John 5:12.

*Is this fair? What do you think?*

*[If you have time and the courage, you can get into the difference between justice and mercy. It is just for everyone to wallow in his/her miserable situation far away from God. We earned it. GOD is merciful to give us everything we could ask for – but only if we accept His gift His way.]*

*[Or, you may want to end on a high note and skip the last point.]*

## John's Essentials: A Dive into 1 John

David B. McKinney

### Lesson and Essential No. 6

#### The Spirit

John wrote his letter when some groups over-thought the Gospel and came up with weird concepts. You may have heard of the Gnostics, who believed that Jesus could not possibly be human and GOD at the same time. *[If you want, you can get into the weeds of Gnosticism. I think the weeds may distract from this lesson.]*

John may have emphasized certain points to counter the over-thinkers. As we have seen in previous chapters, John talks a lot about GOD, Jesus, and our relationship with them.

There was not much controversy about the Spirit. John discusses the Spirit almost with the attitude that every Christian knows the Spirit and there is little need to spend ink on our earthly connection to GOD. John does not refer to the Spirit until the end of Chapter 3, and discusses the Spirit in four passages as compared to ten passages that discuss the Son of God.

Think about food. If you talked to a friend, would you be more likely to discuss the best Mexican restaurant – or the need to eat something to avoid starvation? Eating is such a part of our daily lives that we may take eating for granted. Similarly, early Christians were familiar with the Spirit.

*[Ask: Do you agree that the Spirit is not as common a part of our experience as it was in 50 A.D.? Why?]*

*[One reason that John does not dwell on the Spirit is that the Gnostics did not have as much heartburn over the Spirit of GOD than over the idea that Jesus could be both human and GOD.]*

John does, however, include the Spirit in his essentials.

**The Truth.** Ask: How do you *know* that Jesus is the Son of GOD? John gives his answer in two parts; both answers focus on the Spirit:

1. The Spirit *tells* us that Jesus is the Son. The Spirit gives us the assurance that Jesus is real:

By this you know the Spirit of GOD: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from GOD.

1 John 4:2; and

This is the One ... Jesus Christ.... *It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* For there are three that testify: *the Spirit* and the water and the blood, and the three are in agreement.

1 John 5:6.

Accordingly, we know that Jesus is the Son because the Spirit tells us the truth and gives us assurance.

2. *Our very relationship with the Spirit* is our proof that Jesus is really the Son:

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

1 John 4:13. The fact that the Spirit works within us is proof that Jesus is the Son. Without our acceptance of Jesus, we would not have the Spirit.

If you like to play the skeptic and question the historical record, the Spirit is with you to remind you of the truth. We also can consider the way we have changed since we accepted Jesus and the Spirit came to guide us to our job in GOD's Kingdom. Look at your track record and consider

By this we know that we love the children of GOD, when we love GOD and observe His commandments.

1 John 5: 2.

The Spirit shows us the truth not just about Jesus, but about ourselves.

**The Family.** Now that we have repented and accepted Jesus, we are in GOD's family. We live – or “abide” -- together:

This is [GOD's] commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1 John 3:23-4.

The Spirit lives with you. You live with the Spirit. This is the way you are adopted into GOD's family while you are still on earth.

The Spirit is more than GOD's signet ring signifying that you are part of the family. The Spirit and you *are* part of GOD's family. With the Spirit, we have fellowship with GOD and Jesus. 1 John 1:3, 7.

The Spirit is proof that we are “born of GOD ... and love the child born of Him (i.e., Jesus).” 1 John 5:1.

Paul emphasizes this point. He says that we “receive adoption as sons.” Gal. 4:5.<sup>1</sup> The Spirit confirms our adoption into the family:

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of GOD.

Rom. 8:16.

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<sup>1</sup> If you want to get into it, you can point out that in Roman times, sons had more rights and authority than daughters. Paul is saying that all Christians – male or female – are adopted with the full basket of a “Roman son's” rights and authority.

**Connection.** Jesus advocates to GOD for us. 1 John 2:1. He is not just our advocate, but – through the Spirit – our connection to GOD.

*[Feel free to elaborate with concepts from the Gospels or other letters.]*

How does this work? This is my example.

Many commentators have suggested that humans have a spiritual antenna. There is a problem, however. We can't decipher the signal or send an understandable message – unless we have Jesus. The signal is as garbled as a radio without a tuner, a TV with an antenna but no filter, or a cable without a modem.

Jesus sends the Spirit to live with us and to act as our modem. Through the Spirit, we can comprehend GOD's messages – and can pray in ways that make sense to GOD even if they don't make sense to us.

*[You can use your own example, or – if you prefer – none.]*

**Is that All?** Does this lesson cover all aspects of the Spirit? Absolutely not. John considers the Spirit an essential that the Christians knew well – and discusses the most-obvious aspects of our life with the Spirit. This lesson discusses the essentials that John mentions in his letter.

*[Ask: What did John not discuss? What else can you say about the Spirit? What would you add to your list of essentials about the Spirit?]*

*[Here is a partial list:*

*The Spiritual gifts. Must we get all of them?*

*The Spirit's appointment of our place in the Kingdom – i.e., our functional gifts.*

*Revelation.*

*Healing.*

*Holiness.*

*Purity.]*

## John's Essentials: A Dive into 1 John

David B. McKinney

### Lesson and Essential No. 7

#### Our Reaction

**Essential No. 7** is that **we Christians will change for the better.**

*Ask: How do you know you have received Christ? How has your life changed? How have your attitudes improved? How is your love life – not just with Jesus and your “other,” but with colleagues and even strangers?*

John has several answers to the question. We will discuss his answers and then discuss ways that you can answer the question for yourself.

1. **Gratitude.** [*Use what you want from Lesson 4 or 5:*] When Jesus healed a blind man, he “began glorifying GOD.” He boldly proclaimed that Jesus was sent from GOD to heal. Luke 18:43; John 9. Jesus healed other blind men who “followed him.” Mt. 20:34.

We walk through life full of gratitude to Jesus.

2. **Love.** [*Use what you want from Lesson 5:*] Through Jesus, we fall back in love with God – and with others:

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and GOD abides in him. By this, love is perfected in us ...

1 John 4:16 – 17.

[*This is new:*] Because of our love for GOD, *we also love others.*

We love, because He first loved us.... [T]he one who loves GOD should love his brother also.

1 John 4:19-21.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God ...

1 John 4:7.

Love is part of – and evidence of -- our new life. We Christians practice love; we don't just preach it. 1 John 3:14, 18.

3. **Confidence.** We know we are redeemed by Jesus' sacrifice and have a new home with the Spirit. This gives us the confidence to walk through life without fear:

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

1 John 4:18.

*[Consider asking: What is the difference between courage and the absence of fear? Courage acknowledges that there are bad consequences ahead, fears them, and goes ahead anyway. The absence of fear means that we are confident that we will have good consequences. O death, where is thy sting?]*

4. **Hope.** We have the hope that comes from a GOD who loves us and gives us confidence. 1 John 3:2 – 3.

5. **Generosity.**

But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

1 John 3:17.

6. **Less temptation.** Jesus was tempted in the desert. He did not like it. He repeatedly admonished us to ask GOD's protection from temptation. See the Lord's Prayer and Luke 22:40, 46.

John tells us that those who abide with GOD are protected from temptation:

We know that no one who is born of GOD sins; but He who was born of GOD keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

1 John 5:18. John does not mean that a Christian will never commit a sin; he means that we will not be conquered by sin. See Point 7. For example, John discusses ways for us to encourage and correct each other when we commit an occasional sin. 1 John 5:16.

So, we Christians will – or should be -- tempted less and less. *Discuss:*

*Have you experienced, a reduction in temptation? Have you seen others who came to Jesus and experienced a reduction?*

*How often do you pray to be spared from temptation? Should we add this to our regular prayers?*

## 7. You will overcome!

For whatever is born of GOD overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.

1 John 5:4.

As a result of our faith and Jesus' gift of redemption, we have a new life and are reborn of the Spirit. John 3:3 – 8. Our old life loses its hold on us. We have, indeed, been raised from the death of our former ways. Eph. 2:1-10.

We will, therefore, begin to act and think more like Jesus. 1 John 3:5.

## 8. You will keep Jesus' commandments.

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 2:1-2.

This is John's way of saying what Jesus told us in Matt. 7:21:

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

See Jesus' longer passage in Matt. 25:31 ff. [*You can read parts if you wish.*]

We are now living for GOD's good works. Eph. 2:10. As we become pure, we will honor Jesus' commandments; see 1 John 3:5.

John declares that the practice of sin is lawlessness and is of the devil. Jesus came to destroy sin – in us and in the world. 1 John 3:4, 8.

**If a Christian is stuck, refer back to Lessons 5 and 6.** Where is your focus – on yourself? Your circumstances? Or ... Jesus?

**How do you know if you are becoming more like Christ? Here are some practical tips:**

**Journal.** Keep a journal of your walk with the Spirit. How confident are you? Do you have hope? Are you tempted? How grateful and generous are you? Are you becoming more and more pure?

**Small Group.** We Methodists should know about the need to account to trusted believers. This was one of John Wesley's early practices. His Holy Club members asked each other Wesley's questions each week. The questions, in updated language, are appended to this lesson. [*Use what you want from the list.*]

Our trusted friends should ask us how we are walking with the Spirit – and give us their observations.

It is easy to deceive ourselves in two ways: "I'm just fine" or "I'm horrible." Trusted friends should give us unbiased observations.

If we are becoming more like Jesus, we should be able to see the trend by reviewing our journal and by our friends' observations.

**Remember next week:** We will have a short lesson and then discuss *your* essentials:

What did John over-emphasize?

What should he have added?

What's on your list?

Think about your personal list and be ready to discuss it next week.

## **An Updated List of the Holy Club's Questions**

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?

## John's Essentials: A Dive into 1 John

David B. McKinney

### Lesson 8

#### Eternal Life

#### *Your Essentials*

**Essential No. 8** is that **we have eternal life.**

There is no doubt that eternal life was essential to John. He discusses eternal life in five separate passages starting with the first sentence of his letter. 1 John 1:2.

**What does John say about eternal life?** Actually, not much – except that we have it.

Jesus promised us eternal life. 1 John 2:25. We receive eternal life through our relationship with Jesus. 1 John 1:2.

Eternal life is not available to those whose hearts are full of hate and do not *abide* in Jesus. 1 John 3:15. Lip service does not cut it; we need to *live* with Jesus now in order to have eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12.

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 John 5:12.

One purpose of John's letter is to assure believers that they have eternal life. 1 John 5:13.

**What is eternal life?** How can we know? We can study the Scriptures, but Bronze Age words cannot adequately describe an eternity with God. John gives us a way to some understanding:

And we know that the Son of GOD has come, and *has given us understanding* so that we may know Him who is true; and *we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true GOD and eternal life.*

In other words, if you want to know what eternal life is like, consider your life when you and Jesus are full partners and Spiritual roommates. We will abide with Jesus forever.

Barclay riffs on the word used for eternal life – *aimos*. He says that this word is properly applied only to GOD's life. Of course, GOD's life is timeless and eternal.

Barclay, therefore, suggests that John is saying that if we abide in and with Jesus, we have a piece of GOD's life eternal.

**That's it.** John doesn't get into details. So ...

**Why is eternal life one of John's essentials?** A perfectly-acceptable answer is that *eternal life is important – and is cool.* Jesus is not just playing a game that ends after the fourth quarter. Jesus died for eternity – His eternal redemption of sin and believers' eternal life with Him.

There may be another answer. John leaves us a clue in Chapter 2. After his discussion of several essentials ending with eternal life, John explains a reason for his discussion:

These things I have written to you *concerning those who are trying to deceive you.*

1 John 2:26.

It is undeniable that some cultists were taking John's name in vain. If you want an extreme example, search for *The Apocryphon of John*, a weird Gnostic scroll found in Egypt. The practice of falsely claiming that someone famous said something crazy is not new.

Perhaps a cult claimed that we do not have eternal life. If true, would we need Jesus? Do we need to be redeemed from sin if our sin dies with us anyway? We could live the life of sad resignation captured in Peggy Lee's<sup>1</sup> song:

Is that all there is?

Is that all there is?

If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing.

Let's break out the booze and have a ball.

For a recording, click on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9pS7iZzNgQ>

Fortunately, John is emphatic: We live with GOD eternal ... eternally.

### **Are John's essentials "all that there is?"**

There is much more to our life with Jesus. We asked you to consider whether (a) John discussed all the main points, or (b) He discussed the points that were important to his letter.

*[You can lead the discussion however you prefer. Here are some possible approaches:]*

List John's essentials. Ask the class what does not belong on the list. Then, ask them to list other points that should be considered essential.

Project a slide of the Apostle's Creed (attached). John does not discuss the concepts shown in the larger words. What else, if anything, should be considered essential?

The last attachment is an incomplete accumulation of points that John did not mention; you might want to prime the pump by mentioning some of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller.

# The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit<sup>2</sup>,

born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of God the  
Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the  
quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> John says that Jesus is GOD's "begotten" son.

## **John Did Not Mention ...**

Communion.

Baptism.

What actions constitute sin, other than the absence of love.

What sins cannot be forgiven. (John says there are such sins but does not discuss them.)

Our relation with family members, business colleagues, government, and others (beyond loving them).

The disciplines called the Means of Grace (fasting, etc.).

The fruits of the Spirit (beyond love).

The functional gifts of the Spirit.

The future.

Jesus' return.

How to be ready.

What Heaven is like.

Mary.

Prophecies pointing to Jesus.

Biblical symbolism.

Our lifestyles.

Details of prayer (beyond confirming that we can ask and receive).

When is Jesus coming back?

Tithing.

Who can be a preacher?

How should a church be organized?

Can we divorce and remarry?

Judging others.