

1 John Notes

Studies completed with Joe Focht, Chuck Smith, Jon Courson, Warren Wiersbe, Matthew Henry, Damian Kyle, NIV Study Bible, David Guzik, Kenneth Wuest, and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown.

Introduction:

John is a universal letter written sometime after 90 AD.

1 John was written that you may know that you have assurance of eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

- 7 reasons why John wrote this letter: 1:3; 1:4; 2:1; 2:13-17; 2:21-24; 2:26; and 5:13.
- 7 tests of our profession, “if we say:” 1:6; 1:8; 1:10; 2:4; 2:6; 2:9 and 4:20.
- 7 traits of the new birth, “born of God:” 2:29; 3:9(a); 3:9(b); 4:7; 5:1; 5:4 and 5:18.
- 7 contrasts in the letter, “hereby we know:” 2:3; 2:5; 3:16; 3:19; 3:24; 4:6; and 4:13.

This letter counters many of the early Gnostic teachings (1:1; 4:2; 5:6). Gnosticism taught that the body was evil and that the spirit was good. This required them to develop heresies about Christ that said He was never divine or that He only received the Spirit-life after His baptism by John and lost it before going to the cross. Gnostics lived out these teachings by either disregarding all law and permitting sin, because the spiritual life was all that mattered, or they lived ascetic lives that punished the body to heighten the spiritual life.

- In this letter, John details a true, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ demonstrated in the life of a believer in objective and material ways.

Chapter 1:

1:1 – “That which” – It is a who; Jesus Christ.

- “from the beginning” – Lit. “from beyond the vanishing point.”
 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)
- “we” – Not just John, but many others also.
- “looked upon” – Lit. “gazed upon or studied.”
- “our hands have handled” – Lit. “to investigate by touching.” (Luke 24:39)
 - John personally leaned on Jesus during the Last Supper. (John 13:23)
 - John is basing his personal relationship and all he is going to say on something real and tangible. These are not just fanciful ideas.
- “Word of life” – (Greek “logos”) – John 1:1,14,18.

1:2 – “manifested” – Or “revealed openly.” Only Jesus perfectly reveals the heart of God. (John 1:14)

- “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18)
- “eternal life” – Knowing God through Jesus Christ is eternal life. (John 17:3; see also John 3:16; 5:26; 6:48; 11:25)

1:3 – “fellowship” – (Greek “koinonia”) Lit. “all things common.” This is also translated “communion.”

- “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son” – The point of Christianity is that we have this fellowship with God Himself.
 - There is no horizontal fellowship with each other without the vertical fellowship with God.
 - Fellowship is an indication of relationship.

- 1:4 – “joy may be full” – Lit. “joy may continue to be full.”
- Our joy is directly related to our present fellowship with God through Jesus. (Ps. 51:12)
- 1:5 – “God is light” – God dwells in unapproachable light. (1 Tim. 6:16; see also John 1:9; 3:19)
- 1:6 – “If we say...” – Hypocrisy.
- “we” – John (who is over 90 years old at this time) puts himself in the same category as us.
- 1:7 – “if we walk” – Tenses lit. “if it is our habit or lifestyle of walking.”
- “But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.” (Eph. 5:13)
 - It’s not a matter of how you walk, but where you walk. Nobody is perfect in practice. But is there are process of recognition & restoration when we falter?
 - “one with another” – Rule of antecedents determines this is fellowship between me and Jesus.
 - Fellowship with God is an indication of a relationship with God.
 - “the blood of Jesus Christ” – Christ’s blood, not our spirituality or morality or Christian service or anything else, is what cleanses us so we can fellowship with God once again.
 - “cleanses us” – Lit. “continually cleanses us from all sin.” Sometimes this takes a while.
- 1:8 – “If we say...” – Duplicity.
- “If we say that we have no sin” – The Bible does not support the doctrine of sinless perfection.
 - “sin” – Singular. This refers to the sin nature.
 - “we deceive ourselves” – The self-deceived cannot admit guilt.
- 1:9 – “confess” – (Greek “homoligeo”) Lit. “to say the same thing.” To confess is to agree with God.
- This speaks more of our attitude toward sin than the actual act of confession.
 - The tense is continually present, which means John is not referring to a once-for-all confession of sin at conversion or in baptism.
 - “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” – Confession doesn’t save us, Jesus does.
 - “forgive us” – It is an act of faith on our part to believe that He will forgive, even when we feel rather guilty.
 - “cleanse us” – (Greek “catharizo”) Lit. “to drain out the poison.” We get our English word “catharize” from this Greek root.
 - “faithful and just” – Jesus allows God to “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:26)
- 1:10 – “If we say...” – Apostasy.
- “make him a liar” – Then Christ died for nothing. (Gal. 2:21)

Chapter 2:

- 2:1 – “that you sin not” – As believers we no longer sin because we have to.
- “sin” – Sin is what breaks our fellowship with God.
 - “advocate” – (Greek “parakletos”) Lit. “one who pleads our cause.” Defense attorney. (John 14:16,26; 15:26)
 - Our lawyer’s dad is the judge.
 - Satan is the accuser of the brethren. (Rev. 12:10)

- 2:2 – “propitiation” – Lit. “atoning sacrifice.” The ground we stand upon as we approach a holy God is covered in the blood of His Son. (Heb. 7:25)
- “but also for the whole world” – The atoning sacrifice of Christ is not limited to the elect.
- 2:3 – “keep His commandments” – Summed up by loving God and loving others. (Mark 12:30-31)
- A genuine believer experiences a changed life – from the inside-out.
 - “commandments” – This is not the word John uses for the OT Law, but instead refers to the precepts communicated by Jesus and the NT authors.
 - True belief will be evidenced in our regular behavior.
- 2:5 – “love of God perfected” – Lit. “love of God is continually being perfected.”
- “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:21)
- 2:6 – “as He walked” – We are to “be imitators of God as dear children.” (Eph. 5:1)
- The example of Jesus is the clearest presentation of holiness that we have.
- 2:7 – “an old commandment” – The commands to love God and love others were given in the OT. (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18)
- 2:8 – “a new commandment” – Love as Jesus has loved us. Jesus’ love is marked by the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the best interest of another expecting nothing in return. (John 13:34; 15:12)
- “the true light” – The revelation of God in Jesus Christ. (John 1:9)
- 2:10 – “no cause for stumbling” – Genuinely loving others frees us from the self-centeredness and covetousness that draws us into sin.
- 2:11 – “hates his brother” – Hatred can be expressed by animosity and vitriol, but it can also be expressed by apathy and indifference. (1 John 3:15)
- “blinded his eyes” – Hatred blinds the eyes of the hateful and makes it impossible to see.
- 2:12 – “little children” – (Gr. “technon”) Lit. “born ones.” All who have been born-again.
- All Christians start out as little children of God through the forgiveness of our sins.
 - “forgiven” – Lit. “permanently once and for all forgiven.”
- 2:13 – “fathers” – Christians who have been in the Lord for some time.
- A father is someone who not only cares for his own needs, but also the needs of his family. This is the definition of the mature Christian life.
 - “you have known Him” – Spiritual maturity is directly connected with our personal and relational knowledge of God.
 - “young men” – Those 20-45 years old. Speaks of the vibrancy and strength of youth.
 - “little children” – (Greek “paidion”) This speaks of new believers; young, hungry, and growing, but also immature.

- 2:14 – “have written” – Written in the epistolary past tense. It is written to be read from the perspective of the readers, who when they read this it will be after it was written.
- “you have known Him” – Repeated so as to be emphatic. There is no spiritual growth without personally and relationally knowing Jesus.
 - “word of God abides in you” – For the Word of God to abide in us, we must spend time in it.
 - It is the Word that allows us to mature from little men to fathers. Feed on it!
 - “abides” – Lit. “to dwell at home with.”
- 2:15 – “love not the world” – Lit. “stop loving the world.” It assumes we already love the world.
- “the world” – The first picture of a world system was at Babel in Genesis 11.
 - Jesus prayed that His followers would be in the world, but not of it. (John 17:14-18)
 - “love of the Father” – Not “love for the Father.” If we love the world, there isn’t room for the Father’s love to dwell in us.
 - “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:13)
 - God and the world are so different and so opposed that you cannot love one without hating the other.
- 2:16 – “all that is in the world” – This is the world that we are to stop loving; the worldly system that opposes God.
- “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” – The world appeals to normal human desires, but tempts us to satisfy them in forbidden ways.
 - Gen. 3 – the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for wisdom.
 - Matt. 4 – stones to bread, jumping from the temple, and the kingdoms of the world.
 - “pride of life” – Kenneth Wuest translates this phrase, “the insolent and empty assurance which trust in the things of the creature life.” The idea is, attaining possessions to secure a safe and happy life.
- 2:17 – “is passing away” – Lit. “is in the process of passing away.” Currently, it has already begun.
- “abides forever” – This stands in contrast to the world that is passing away.
- 2:18 – “it is the last hour” – Idea ‘it is the last of times.’ We are in the final age.
- “the Antichrist” – He is referred to many different ways throughout the Bible. He is the little horn in Dan. 7:8, the king of fierce countenance in Dan. 8:23, the Prince that shall come in Dan. 9:26, the willful king in Dan. 11:36-45, the one who comes in his own name in John 5:43, and the son of perdition, the man of sin, and the lawless one in 2 Thess. 2:3,8.
 - “antichrists” – Lit. “instead of Christ.” These are fakes and substitutes for the real Christ.
 - John speaks of antichrists 3 ways: attitude behind movements (1 John 4:3), plural for false prophets (1 John 2:18), or singular for the final Antichrist (Rev. 13,16,19).
- 2:19 – “They went out from us” – They become apostate by separating from the Church.
- These are tares among the wheat, demonstrating who they are by leaving.
 - It is a healthy body that can purge impurities from itself.

2:20 – “you” – Plural. This is speaking of the ‘born ones.’

- “anointing” – (Greek “charisma”) It is the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, but the basis is always in grace. All believers have an anointing.
- “know all things” – (Gr. “oidas”) Lit. “imparted or intuitive knowledge.”
 - The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. (John 14:26; 16:13)
 - This opposes the Gnostic heresies of secret truth.

2:22 – “liar” – 1 John 4:20.

- “denies the Father and the Son” – “He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.” (Dan. 11:37)
 - Any time we describe God and Jesus to be different from the Bible’s revelation of Him, we essentially deny God even if we are using His name.

2:23 – “denies the Son” – Reducing Jesus to an example, a great teacher, a prophet, or anything other than God in human flesh is a deception of antichrist.

- “he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also” – You can only be restored to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. (John 12:44-45; 13:20; 14:6,9; 2 Cor. 5:19)

2:24 – “abide” – Lit. “to be at home in.”

- “which you heard from the beginning” – The truth of the Gospel as was taught by Jesus and the apostles.

2:25 – “the promise that He has promised us – eternal life” – Not health and wealth, not prosperity, etc.

2:27 – “you” – Plural. John is again speaking to believers.

- “not need that anyone teach you” – The Spirit leads you into all truth. The pastor-teacher is only to confirm the teaching of the Spirit. A new, special, or heavy revelation that is not plainly found in the Scriptures or confirmed by the Spirit can be immediately discarded.
 - The things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)

2:28 – “when He appears, we may have confidence” – John includes himself. He is 90 years old and still living in expectation of seeing Jesus’ return. (1 Thess. 4:17)

- “confidence” – Lit. “freedom of speech.”
 - There is a spiritual boldness that comes from walking in the light and abiding in Him.
- “not be ashamed before Him” – This implies that some believers will experience some shame upon Christ’s return.

2:29 – “know that He is righteous” – (Greek “oidas”) Lit. “imparted knowledge.”

- “know that everyone” – (Greek “gnosco”) Lit. “experiential knowledge.”
- “practices righteousness” – This describes a manner of lifestyle and is a mark of the genuine believer.

Chapter 3:

3:1 – “Behold” – Lit. “consider this.”

- “manner of love” – Lit. “foreign, exotic, or out-of-this-world kind of love.”
 - God’s love for us is unlike any love we have ever received in this world.
 - God loves us as He loved Jesus. (John 17:23)
- “called” – Lit. “named.”
- “children of God” – “As many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, to those who believe.” (John 1:12)
 - Father love for former enemies.
- “the world does not know us” – We cannot be at home in a world that killed Jesus.

3:2 – “see Him as He is” – “Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.” (1 Cor. 13:12)

- “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18)
- “[Jesus Christ] will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Phil. 3:21)

3:3 – “this hope” – The imminent return of Jesus Christ.

- “purifies himself” – If we truly believe Jesus could return at any moment, we would not willfully be living in sin.
 - “Do business till I come.” (Luke 19:13)

3:4 – “commits sin” – Tenses throughout are lit. “continually practices sin as a lifestyle.”

- This doesn’t mean we don’t ever sin. (1 John 1:8-9)
- This is not legalism that would cause some to fear losing their salvation.

3:5 – “manifested to take away our sins” – Jesus’ mission was to save people from their sins. (Matt. 1:21)

- “in Him there was no sin” – Jesus did not sin in nature or in practice.

3:7 – “practices righteousness is righteous” – You tell a tree by its fruit. (Matthew 7:15-23)

- Religious people try to put good works on a bad tree (Mt. 7:21-23); but Jesus came to change the tree.

3:8 – “destroy” – Lit. “loose, to render inoperative, to rob of power.” We are no longer under the control of the devil.

3:9 – “born of God” – That is, born again.

- “he cannot sin” – Lit. “cannot continually practice sin.” Believers can’t sin and get away with it.
 - The grace of God that cleanses us from sin also serves to keep us from sinning.
 - “The grace that cannot change my life will not save my soul.” (Spurgeon)
- “His seed” – We were born again of incorruptible seed, the Word of God. (1 Pet. 1:23)
 - Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by Your truth, Your Word is truth.” (John 17:17)

- 3:10 – “the children of God and the children of the devil” – The lifestyle of each corresponds to the father of each as the source of their actions.
- “practice righteousness...love his brother” – Moral purity and care for others perfectly captures Jesus Christ’s supernatural qualities of grace and truth. (See also 1 John 3:23.)
- 3:11 – “love one another” – Repeated from 1 John 2:7-13.
- 3:12 – “Cain” – God gave Cain the choice: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” (Gen. 4:7)
- “murder” – Lit. “to slit the throat.” This word is typically used to describe the killing of a sacrificial animal, but here it describes the method of murder the Cain employed to kill Abel.
- 3:13 – “Do not marvel...if the world hates you” – Abel was killed merely for worshipping God acceptably. The world has attacked these people from the beginning.
- 3:14 – “We know” – God-given, Christ-like love is a reason for our assurance.
- Not just saying we love, or claiming to love the masses, but loving those near us. (1 John 4:20)
 - “Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular.” (CS Lewis)
 - “know” – (Greek “oidas”) Lit. “imparted, intuitive knowledge.”
 - “passed from death to life” – The normal course of nature is to pass from life to death, but God reverses that for us spiritually as a result of the power of the resurrection of Christ.
 - “love the brethren” – This is a supernatural love of fellow Christians that loves them for no reason other than our common faith in Jesus Christ.
- 3:15 – “hates his brother is a murderer” – Jesus equated hate and murder in Matthew 5:21-24.
- John once attempted to call down fire on those who were rejected Jesus. (Luke 9:54)
- 3:16 – “By this we know love” – Humankind would never know this kind of self-sacrificial, beneficial love without it being demonstrated for us in Jesus Christ.
- “He laid down His life for us” – God is not a life-taker; He is a life-giver.
 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)
 - “lay down our lives” – “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13)
- 3:17 – “this world’s goods” – Material wealth.
- “sees his brother in need” – The tenses speak of watching someone for a long period of time living in genuine need of food, clothing, and shelter.
 - “shuts up his heart” – Lit. “stops up, once and for all, compassion for another.” It is no longer allowing the circumstances of another to touch, or move, us.
 - My heart toward the beggars of Philly...
 - “How does the love of God abide” – True faith in Jesus is going to express itself in practical care for others, especially Christians.
- 3:18 – “not love in word or tongue” – Talk is cheap. Fake love and flattering words are hypocrisy.

- 3:19 – “by this we know that we are of the truth” – Our actions are the greatest evidence of genuine faith, even for ourselves.
- 3:20 – “God is greater than our heart” – Some people can convince themselves of anything.
 - “...I do not even judge myself... I am judged by God.” (1 Cor. 4:3-5)
- 3:21 – “confidence toward God” – The assurance of our heart is an added grace to enjoy when we have it, but not to rely upon. (Rom. 8:16)
 - “confidence” – Lit. “freedom of speech.”
- 3:22 – “whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments” – Our walk allows us to pray “in His name,” prayers He promised to grant. (John 15:7)
 - “we receive from Him” – As we love and give to others, it opens up space for God to give to us.
- 3:23 – “believe on the name” – The means by which sin is eradicated from our lives. (John 6:29)
 - Sin is not eliminated by “trying,” but by “trusting.”
 - “love one another” – Loving others stands in contrast to the life of sin.
 - John again combines genuine faith in Jesus with the love of the brethren.
- 3:24 – “how we know” – Again, speaking for our assurance. John is pointing to God’s work in us.
 - “by the Spirit” – The only way we can ever approach living in the manner of Jesus is by the Spirit. (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13)

Chapter 4:

- 4:1-6 – The theme of this section is to “believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 3:23)
- 4:1 – “every spirit” – In contrast to the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1 John 3:24.
 - “do not believe every spirit” – Love is directed by belief. True love is discerning.
 - Being a Christian should not make us more ignorant or more gullible.
 - “test the spirits” – The nature of God as demonstrated in the life of Jesus and described throughout the Word of God is the measuring stick for this test.
 - “false prophets” – Wolves in sheep’s clothing. (Matt. 7:15)
- 4:2 – “confesses” – (Greek “homoligeo”) Lit. “to say the same thing.” (1 John 1:9)
 - “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” – “True prophecy, and true teaching, will present a true Jesus.” (Guzik)
 - “come in the flesh” – Lit. “come into flesh.” It assumes the pre-existence of Jesus.
 - In 1 John 2:22, the test for a false teacher refers to the deity of Jesus; here His humanity.
- 4:3 – “the spirit of Antichrist...is now already in the world” – That spirit was evident in John’s day and has only grown to be more prevalent since.
- 4:4 – “little children” – Lit. “born ones.”
 - “overcome them” – The Truth overcomes the world. But the false teachers reduce the Truth to make it acceptable to the world, and thereby make the Truth subservient to the world. Reducing the Word of God to just another book.
 - “because He” – Jesus is the only reason we can overcome the world and these false spirits.

4:5 – “and the world hears them” – These guys see great followings, but without changed lives.

4:6 – “hears us” – The Apostles’ doctrine; the Bible.

- “spirit of truth” – Jesus and His Word are the truth. (John 14:6; 17:7)

4:7-19 – The theme of this section is to “love one another.” (1 John 3:23)

4:7 – “love” – Love is spoken of 32 times in next 18 verses.

- Love is the measuring stick of the maturity of the believer.
- “knows” – (Greek “gnosco”) Lit. “experiential knowledge.”

4:8 – “God is love” – The essential nature of God is love.

4:9 – “love of God was manifested” – We know God loves us by His sending of His Son to die on the cross, more than any other temporary thing we may desire of Him.

- “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)
- “live through Him” – Life starts at the cross.

4:10 – “not that we loved God” – God is the initiator of our relationships with Him. (v. 19)

- It is no surprise the people love God; He is so loveable. It is His love for us, the unlovable, that is so amazing.
- “propitiation” – Lit. “atoning sacrifice.” The idea is that Jesus was the payment for our sins.

4:11 – “if” – Lit. “since.”

- “God so loved us” – While we were yet sinners...and enemies of His. (Rom. 5:8)
- When we understand His love for us, we will not begrudge that from anyone else.

4:12 – “No one has seen God” – But Jesus has declared Him to us. (John 1:18)

- “If we love one another, God abides in us” – Christian love is an assurance of the divine inhabitation.
- “abides” – Lit. “to make oneself at home in.” (Used 6 times in these 5 verses.)

4:13 – “His Spirit” – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love...” (Gal. 5:22)

4:14 – “we have seen and testify” – Speaking of the apostles. (1 John 1:1-4)

- “Savior of the world” – Jesus’ death covers all of humanity, but applies especially to those who believe. (1 Tim. 4:10)

4:15 – “confesses” – (Greek “homoligeo”) Lit. “to say the same thing.”

- “the Son of God” – There is only one. (John 14:6)

4:16 – “God is love” – Love is defined in 1 Cor. 13.

- The basis of God’s grace is satisfied justice, not mere permissiveness.

- 4:17 – “perfected” – In Greek the word is repeated for emphasis. Lit. “perfectly perfect.”
- The love of God, to be made complete in us, must not only be given by God, but must also be received by us.
 - “boldness” – Lit. “freedom of speech.”
 - “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16)
- 4:18 – “no fear” – This is speaking of a fear of punishment, condemnation, or judgment. (v. 17)
- We are to have a Godly fear, or reverence, for Almighty God. But it is not a fear that drives me away. Godly conviction is accompanied by love and acceptance. (1 Pet. 1:17; Heb. 12:28)
 - When we are motivated by fear and guilt, it is not of God when we feel like we need to do something to make Him accept us. Jesus already took it all upon Himself.
 - “perfect love” – Lit. “the perfecting of God’s love toward you.”
- 4:19 – “because He first loved us” – Humans are responders.
- We cannot give what we do not have.
- 4:20 – “his brother” – A member of the body of Christ Himself.
- “he is a liar” – We simply need to be honest with ourselves.
 - Fear (v. 18) and pretense (v. 20) usually go together. But when our hearts are confident toward God, there is no need for us to pretend, either to God or to other people.
 - “whom he has not seen” – The practical nature of Godly love tends to the direct care and tangible provision offered to meet someone’s need. This becomes more complicated and difficult when it moves into the realm of less personal and intangible. If we cannot offer the easier love, then there is no way we could offer the more difficult love.
 - We often struggle with this verse because we view God as easier to love than our fellow humans, because God is better and more benevolent than humans. But that is an indication that we are basing our love on the object of our love and not on the source of our love. John’s point is that Godly, “agape” love is not elicited by the goodness of the one being loved, but finds its source in God Himself and then is given to those with no merit.
- 4:21 – “who loves God must love his brother also” – The two great commandments. (Mark 12:29-31)

Chapter 5:

- 5:1 – “believes” – Lit. “trust, or to lean heavily upon.” The basis of our salvation.
- “the Christ” – The Messiah.
- 5:2 – “we love the children of God, when we love God” – The greatest thing you could ever do for others is to love God. We are of the greatest service to others when we are in closest fellowship with Him.
- 5:3 – “love of God” – Lit. “love for God.” Speaking of the love Christians have for God.
- For John, the love of God was less emotion and more action. Love is a choice to obey God.
 - “His commandments” – Summed up by loving God and loving others.
 - “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)
 - “not burdensome” – God’s commandments are always for our good and our protection.

5:4 – “faith” – “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” (John 6:29)

5:5 – “overcomes” – (Greek “nikao”) Lit. “to come off the field of battle victorious.”

- “And they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (Rev. 12:11)

5:6 – “water and blood” – Speaking of Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion (Tertullian). In both cases, God shows His approval by speaking this is my beloved Son in whom I am (already) well pleased (Matt. 3:17) and by raising Jesus from the dead.

- Jesus fully incarnated in this world, partaking of both water and blood. (1 John 1:1-3)
- “Spirit bears witness” – The Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus and confirms us in Jesus.
- “witness” – Also translated “testimony” in this passage. (vv. 10-11)

5:7-8 – Some translations omit parts of these verses...but there is sufficient enough evidence that these are legitimate verses that the NKJV translators would include it.

- When the Johannine Comma isn’t included, the genders don’t match. But when it is included, they all line up.

5:7 – “these three are one” – Speaking of the Tri-Unity of God.

5:9 – “If” – Lit. “Since.”

- People often say, ‘I wish I had faith.’ But they have faith to believe lots of things.
- “we receive the witness of men” – We still give some weight to news-people and weather forecasters, in addition to family members and neighbors that we speak and listen to.
- “God is greater” – Only God is always correct.

5:10 – “believes in the Son of God” – Against the all-roads-lead-to-heaven myth. (John 14:6)

- Only Jesus claims to have come down from perfection to lead us up to perfection.
- “has the witness in himself” – “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Rom. 8:16)
- “made Him a liar” – To fail to believe what God says is true, is to claim that God is false.

5:11 – “has given” – Past tense. Eternal life starts the moment we believe in Jesus. (John 3:16)

5:12 – “life” – Lit. “the life.” Eternal life.

5:13 – “know” – (Greek “oida”) Lit. “complete, imparted knowledge.”

- “continue to believe” – Belief that ceases, isn’t true belief at all.

5:14 – “ask anything according to His will” – Jesus said we are to ask “in His name.” (John 14:13)

- Prayer is the God-appointed means for the believer to receive what God wants to give. (John 16:24; James 4:2)

- 5:16 – “brother” – Seems to refer to a professing believer, possibly with 1 John 2:19 in mind.
- “sin leading to death” – Two ideas: physical death (like Ananias and Sapphira, and those in 1 Cor. 11:30 who have fallen asleep as a result of misusing communion) or spiritual/eternal death (Jesus said all manner of sin would be forgiven except the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost – Matt. 12:31).
 - The context of the letter is referring to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. (1 John 5:13)
 - God will not answer the prayer that desires to save people against their will, whether before death or from purgatory.
- 5:18 – “does not sin” – Lit. “does not continue in sin.” Speaking of the lifestyle.
- “keeps himself” – Lit. “keeps him.” It is Jesus doing the keeping, not us.
 - “does not sin...the wicked one does not touch him” – When faced with spiritual warfare, the Christian must focus on serving God and obeying His word. It is God’s work to defend His children; it is the children’s responsibility to obey God.
 - “touch” – Lit. “to fasten oneself to, to adhere to, or to cling to.” (John 20:17)
 - The wicked one may afflict or oppress Christians, but he cannot possess them. (Eph. 1:13)
- 5:19 – “know” – (Greek “ginosko”) Lit. “experiential knowledge.” (Three times in vv. 19-20.)
- “wicked” – (Greek “poneros”) Lit. “evil that desires to bring others down with it.”
- 5:20 – “This is the true God and eternal life” – John Stott calls this passage the strongest statement of the deity of Jesus Christ found in the Bible.
- 5:21 – “idols” – Anything that dictates the course of our lives instead of Jesus and the Word of God.
- Believing and trusting in Jesus is the only cure for the sin “leading to death.”