



**CALVARY**  
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN  
NOVEMBER 1, 2020



# THIS IS HOW YOU KNOW: AUTHENTICITY

1 JOHN 1:1-2:11

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 John 1:2-11. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**TAKEAWAY:** The authentic Christian life—one of true joy and fullness—is only possible in and through Christ.

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**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** Our theology must be lived out. What we say we believe about God should speak, not only through our words, but also through our lives.

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**GOSPEL CONNECTION:** God's command from the beginning was fully realized, perfected, and demonstrated through the life and sacrificial death of Christ.

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## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.*

- 1 Can you remember a time when you were stuck in the dark? How did you feel? When you finally found a light source, how did things change?
  
- 2 How does this compare to the difference between living apart from Christ and living in relationship with Him?

John made it clear that the Christian life is to amount to more than mere “talk”; we must also “walk” or live what we believe. If we are in fellowship with God, our lives will back up the things we say. If we continue in sin then our lives will contradict our words about Jesus, making us hypocrites. Walking involves progress, and Christians are to advance in the spiritual life. Just as a child must learn to walk and overcome many difficulties in doing so, a Christian must learn to “walk in the light.” No amount of self-discipline, no set of man-made rules and regulations, can control our old nature. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to “put to death” the old nature and produce good fruit in keeping with our new nature. We have to go to Jesus.

### ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

**Who are the people you love most in the world? How do you know you love them? How do you demonstrate it to them?**

**What are the things you love most? What are the indicators of how you love those things (time spent, resources invested, etc.)?**

As John described the life that is real, he used three words repeatedly: life, love, and light. In today’s passage, we find three good reasons why Christians should love one another: (1) God commands us to love. (2) We are born of God, and God’s love lives in us. (3) God first revealed His love to us.

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## UNDERSTANDING

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

Notes:

> Have a volunteer read 1 John 1:1-4.

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.<sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.<sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> We write this to make our joy complete.*

It is difficult to read the opening verses of 1 John without being confronted by the tangible nature of Jesus. John used repeated sensory language (seeing, hearing, touching) to affirm the reality of Jesus Christ as a person. It's as if John was saying to his flock, "I saw Him with my own eyes. I touched Him with my own hands. Everything He said and did was true!" The Word of God (logos) took on flesh in the person of Jesus. He wasn't a figment of anyone's imagination. He wasn't a spirit or a ghost. He was flesh and blood.

- Why do you think John emphasized the humanity of Jesus so much? Why is the incarnation (Jesus becoming flesh) so pivotal for our relationship with God?
- What does it mean that Jesus is the "Word of life"?

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John had a purpose in making sure that his fellow believers rightly understood the person of Jesus as the Word of life. He wanted them to experience fellowship with God and with one another. After all, life with God always means life in community with other believers.

Notes:

- Why did John emphasize fellowship? Why is fellowship with other believers so important? Why is it important for our fellowship with God?
- Why do you think John concluded the prologue focused on joy? What does it mean for one's joy to be "complete"? How did this get to the point of John's letter?
- Read John 1:1-18. What common themes do you notice when comparing this passages to 1 John 1:1-4? What words, phrases, and ideas are repeated in both?
- Why are both Jesus' deity and humanity essential to the gospel? Why can't the gospel just include one of these doctrines?

Reading the prologue of 1 John, it is likely readers recall John 1:1-18. The language and content are strikingly similar. In both his Gospel and Letter, John emphasized Christ's existence from the beginning, Jesus as the "Word," seeing and hearing Jesus in the flesh, and the fellowship of God with Christ. Where John's Gospel emphasized the preexistence of Christ and His glory as the Word from the beginning, John's Letter emphasized the humanity of Jesus as experienced in the flesh. Together we see the miracle and mystery of Jesus, who is fully God and fully man.

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- > Have volunteers read 1 John 1:5-10 and 1 John 2:1-6.

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

Notes:

*2 <sup>1</sup> My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. <sup>3</sup> We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. <sup>4</sup> The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup> But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

John continued his declaration regarding the Word of Life. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. None at all. This means God is the truest source of light. In darkness we can hide. In darkness we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are safer by not being exposed. Yet, if we claim to be walking with Christ, then the call is to walk in the light with Him—the true Light! Much of the Christian life is lived in the tension between light and dark.

- What are some ways you feel the pull between walking in the light and walking in darkness?

- What are some ways we might be content to leave certain areas of life in the dark? Why is this impossible for those who are truly following Jesus?

Notes:

We live in a culture that is self-oriented and teaches us to make ourselves the first priority. Sacrifice doesn't come naturally to us. Often, when we see someone act outside of human nature on behalf of someone else, we are inspired. John reminded us that Christ is the greatest example of this, as He (our Advocate) was the full and final sacrifice on our behalf.

- What would you say is the greatest sacrifice you have ever made for another person? What is a sacrifice someone else made that particularly impacted you?
- How do you respond to this kind of sacrifice made on your behalf? How does it change the way we relate to God? How does it inform your daily walk with Him?
- How should Christ's full and final sacrifice compel you to love and serve others?

Our lives are to be a response to the reality of Christ's atoning sacrifice for us. Everything we say and do should reflect the person and work of Christ. What we say we believe must be matched with our actions. Our theology is meaningless if we don't put it into practice. John made clear the practical means of walking in the light of Christ. We do what He says! That's how we abide with Him—as we are walking, we do the things He has commanded.

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- How do these verses instruct believers to walk in the light of Christ?
  - What is at stake in our obedience? Why are our words alone insufficient?
  - How is God convicting you of places you have “talked the talk” but not “walked the walk” according to His Word? How will you respond?

Notes:

> Have a volunteer read 1 John 2:7-11.

*Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. <sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. <sup>9</sup> Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.*

Verse 7 begins with the word beloved. We are reminded of John’s pastoral heart as he wrote with both grace and truth. His care and concern for his brothers and sisters in Christ was rooted in a deep love and affection for them, a love made possible only through the love of Christ. Because he loved them, he wanted to see them walk in the way that reflected the words and ways of Jesus.

- What is the “old commandment” that John referenced? Why would he remind his readers of it?

- Why is it important for followers of Christ to remember the “old” things of the faith?

Notes:

While John began by saying the command was not new at the core, he did highlight a new component to it. The love isn't new, but in Christ we now have a full understanding of what that love means. Jesus showed us what the truest love for others looks like as He laid down His life. As John wrote to his fellow believers, he likely recalled the words of Jesus that he had recorded in his Gospel account: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

- Though the command was old, how had it also become new?
- How should the love that Jesus displayed for us affect the way we love others? How is this new according to the world's definition of love?

John continued by demonstrating how this foundational command to love, as demonstrated in Jesus, should be lived out. How we walk with our fellow believers is a direct indicator of our relationship with God. We can't walk in the light with God and in darkness with a brother or sister in Christ. Those two realities aren't compatible. We can't say we love God and not demonstrate that love to other people. We can't say we love God on Sundays, but put Him out of mind on Monday at the office. We can't claim to follow God, and then treat those who are different from us as less-than.

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- Why is love for God and love for others always connected?

Notes:

- How does discord and hatred with others affect our relationship with God?

## APPLICATION

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

- 1 Where do you currently feel the strongest pull between walking in the light versus the dark? Where are you most tempted to go back into the darkness?
- 2 Where are you struggling to put God's words and ways into practice? Where are you more comfortable keeping your belief in God "in theory only"?
- 3 What is the role of the church body in helping one another walk in the light with Christ? How can our group support you in this?

## PRAY

Take some time to repent of the ways you have chosen darkness over light. Ask the Lord, through His Word and Spirit, to dispel the darkness that tempts you. Ask for the power, courage, and trust to walk in the light with Him, putting into practice everything He has said.

## FOLLOW UP

Notes:

*Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:*

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - This week we discussed that we can know we are followers of Jesus if we walk in the light of God. How have you been challenged by this reality this week?
  - How does your love for others give evidence that you walk in the light of God?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize 1 John 1:7.

## 1 JOHN 1:1-2:11

1:1 The words what was from the beginning echo both Gn 1:1 and Jn 1:1. God's purpose in his Son has an eternal dimension. John wrote as an eye-witness. Christ was not just a spiritual vision but an actual human being. He is the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14) who gives eternal life to all who believe in him.

Notes:

1:2 God made Christ known. Human hearts and minds require God's aid to see his truth (Mt 16:17; Jn 3:3). The Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, has always existed alongside the Father.

1:3 The phrase we also declare to you shows that John passed on faithfully to his readers what the apostolic generation had received. Fellowship refers to the close ties of kinship that God extends to his people.

1:4 A major reason why John wrote this epistle was so our joy may be complete. There is great happiness in knowing the forgiveness of sins and pursuing the will of God. God is the one who acts to complete a believer's joy.

1:5 John had divine guidance in the message he related. As an apostle he actually lived alongside the Son of God. Darkness had crept in among the readers whom John addressed. To dispel it John testified to him who is light. God sent the light of the world, Jesus (Jn 8:12).

1:6 The words if we say may indicate that John was paraphrasing false views that needed to be exposed and corrected. To walk in darkness is to persist in sin. Since God is light (v. 5), his people are called and enabled to live by the light of his wisdom, truth, and love.

1:7 To walk in the light is to live consistent with God's commands and character. Fellowship, the shared knowledge of God's light and love, is one of life's deepest satisfactions. With the phrase the blood of Jesus, John identified the focal point of Christ's saving work in the cross.

Notes:

1:8 In both Scripture and church history, people have excused their wrongful deeds by claiming to be right with God. John diagnosed an ancient and recurrent human tendency.

1:9 Confessing our sins does not mean a shallow reciting of misdeeds. It means owning up to wrongdoing and bringing our lives into line with God's goodness and commands. God can forgive and cleanse us from terrible transgressions.

1:10 Since God is light and there is no darkness in him (v. 5), to claim to be without sin is to claim to be on par with God, but God says there is no one like him (Is 45:18). If his word is not in us, the saving message of Christ has not taken root. There may be surface knowledge of Christian religion, but the heart has not been transformed.

2:1 Jesus's death was not the end of his ministry but the move to a new phase. Now he serves as our advocate or helper and mediator at the Father's right hand.

2:2 Jesus's perfect obedience and sacrificial death satisfied God's just demand for sin to be punished (atoning sacrifice). But his punishment was for others, not for himself. The phrase for those of the whole world does not mean the salvation of all people. It does mean that, in keeping with God's promise to bless all the nations through Abraham and his descendants (Gn 12:3), Jesus's saving death extends the offer of salvation to all nations.

2:3 John taught an understanding of Christian faith that includes profound assurance, not just the “maybe” of spiritual optimism.

Notes:

2:4 The words his commands mean the same thing as “his word” in v. 5 and Jesus’s example in v. 6 (“just as he walked”). The true follower of Jesus is not just a talker but a doer (Jms 1:22).

2:5–6 The life of Jesus Christ is the paradigm or pattern for the believer’s life. The love of God in v. 5 could be either God’s love for us or our love for God. The former is probably correct.

2:7 Dear friends is literally “Beloved.” This was a favorite term of address for John (3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). It is a reminder that Christians are what they are—“beloved”—because God has loved them (4:10). The love command was intensified and perfected in its expression by Jesus. Yet it is old, rooted in God’s love and his commands in the OT (Lv 19:18; Dt 6:5).

2:8 God is light (1:5), and Christ has come into the world. This means the gloom of present evil and sin is giving way as the true light is already shining.

2:9–11 Relationships with fellow believers are key indicators of whether one is walking in the light or in darkness. Walks, here and elsewhere in 1 John, is a metaphor for the course of a person’s life.