

KNOW — THAT YOU — KNOW

THE MARKS OF REAL FAITH

in John's Letters



STUDY GUIDE



FIRST BAPTIST
MERIDIANVILLE
REAL. FAMILY.

This Study Guide Belongs To: _____

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A Pastoral Foreword

My Dear Children,

John wrote with a pastor's heart. He wanted believers to know the truth, walk in the light, reject deception, and live with confidence in Jesus Christ. He did not want them trapped in uncertainty or misled by empty professions. He wanted them to abide in Christ.

That is my prayer for you in this series and study guide.

John gives us clear marks of genuine faith. He calls us to believe the real Jesus, confess our sin, obey Christ's commands, love God's people, reject the world's desires, hold fast to truth, and live in the transforming power of the gospel.

These marks do not earn salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. Yet the grace that saves us does not leave us unchanged. Genuine faith produces a new direction, new desires, and a growing resemblance to Jesus.

John writes, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." My desire is that this study would bring both a clearer understanding of genuine salvation and a deeper confidence in the salvation God gives through His Son.

Assurance is not found by ignoring sin, trusting changing emotions, or relying only on a past experience. It grows as we look to Christ, believe God's promises, abide in His Word, and recognize His grace at work within us.

My dear children, I want you to know that you belong to Him. I want you to live free from paralyzing doubt, able to pray boldly, love sacrificially, resist sin, endure hardship, and faithfully do all that God calls you to do.

As we study, read carefully, listen prayerfully, and respond honestly. Ask the Spirit to expose sin, correct false belief, strengthen weak faith, and produce visible obedience.

Above all, abide in Christ.

Remain in His truth, His love, His fellowship, and His commands. My prayer is that we will not simply know more about John's letters, but that we will know Christ more deeply, follow Him more faithfully, and rest more confidently in the eternal life He has given us.

My dear children, walk in the light, love one another, and abide in Him.

Dr. Bob Wilson

Lead Pastor

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Introduction to the Letters of John

The three Letters of John are among the shortest books in the New Testament, yet they address some of the most important questions a Christian can ask: Who is the real Jesus? What does genuine salvation look like? Can a believer know that he possesses eternal life? How should Christians respond to sin, false teaching, fear, division, and the pressures of the world?

John writes as a pastor who is deeply concerned for the spiritual health of God's people. His words are affectionate but direct. He repeatedly calls his readers "little children," yet he does not soften the truth. He wants genuine believers to possess confidence, but he refuses to offer false assurance to those whose profession is contradicted by their beliefs and behavior. He writes to protect the church from deception, strengthen fellowship, promote obedience and love, and assure those who truly believe in the Son of God that they have eternal life.

The central concern of these letters may be summarized as **assurance of salvation in the face of spiritual deception and opposition**. John wants his readers to abide in the truth they received from the beginning and to recognize the visible marks of the new life God gives through Christ.

Author

The three letters do not identify their author by name. First John begins immediately with a declaration concerning "that which was from the beginning," while Second and Third John identify the writer simply as "the elder." Nevertheless, the testimony of the early church strongly associates these letters with the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' twelve disciples and the author traditionally connected with the Fourth Gospel.

The internal evidence also supports apostolic authorship. The writer of First John claims to have personally heard, seen, carefully observed, and touched the incarnate Christ:

"That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands..." 1 John 1:1

The author writes as an eyewitness with recognized spiritual authority. He does not present theories he has developed or traditions he has received secondhand. He declares what he personally encountered in Jesus Christ. The similarities between First John and the Gospel of John are also substantial. Both writings repeatedly employ contrasts such as light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death, love and hatred, God and the world. They share similar vocabulary, sentence structure, theology, and emphasis on Jesus as the eternal Son who came in the flesh. Bible.org notes that the Gospel and the letters stand closer to one another in style and content than almost any other New Testament writings.

Second and Third John were almost certainly written by the same author. Both identify the writer as "the elder," and their language, themes, and concerns closely parallel First John. The title does not necessarily identify a different person. By this point in his ministry, John was an elderly apostolic leader who possessed spiritual authority among the churches. In First John, no introduction was needed because he addressed people who knew him personally as their spiritual father. In Second and Third John, the shorter and more specific nature of the letters made the designation "the elder" appropriate.

We therefore receive the letters as the work of the apostle John, an eyewitness of Jesus and a trusted shepherd of the early church.

Date and Place of Writing

The precise date of the Letters of John cannot be established with certainty. Their close relationship to the Gospel of John suggests that the Gospel and letters were written within a relatively limited period. Many scholars place them in the latter decades of the first century, often around AD 80–95. Greek scholar Daniel B. Wallace argues for an earlier date in the late AD 60s, proposing that the letters followed the Gospel and reflected the urgency surrounding the Jewish War. That proposal is possible but is not the majority position.

The early church associated John's later ministry with Ephesus in Asia Minor. It is therefore likely that the letters were written from Ephesus and addressed to churches in the surrounding region. First John may have functioned as a circular message intended to be read among several congregations. It lacks the normal opening greeting, named recipients, and closing found in most New Testament letters. In form and tone, it often reads more like a pastoral sermon or theological homily than a private letter.

The churches were probably composed largely of Gentile believers. The final warning, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," would have carried particular weight among Christians living in communities filled with pagan temples, civic religion, emperor worship, and household gods.

Audience

First John addresses a group of believers whom the apostle knows and loves. He calls them "little children," "beloved," "brothers," "young men," and "fathers." These expressions reveal a warm pastoral relationship. John is not writing as a detached theologian. He is writing as a spiritual father who is concerned that his children remain faithful.

The congregations had recently experienced painful division. Certain teachers had separated from the Christian community: "They went out from us, but they were not of us." 1 John 2:19

These individuals had once been associated with the churches but had rejected essential truths about Jesus. After departing, they continued attempting to influence those who remained. They claimed superior spiritual understanding, minimized the seriousness of sin, and denied some aspect of Christ's true incarnation. Their departure created confusion among faithful believers. Some may have wondered whether those who left possessed deeper knowledge or whether the church had misunderstood the gospel.

John writes to reassure the faithful that the apostolic message they received was true. He reminds them that he personally witnessed the incarnate Christ and that the Holy Spirit confirms the truth within those who belong to God. The believers did not need the supposedly advanced knowledge offered by the deceivers. They needed to remain in the truth they had heard "from the beginning."

Second John is addressed to "the elect lady and her children." This may refer to a Christian woman and her family, but it more likely symbolizes a local congregation and its members. John commends them for walking in truth and love but warns them not to receive or support teachers who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

Third John is addressed to an individual believer named Gaius. John commends him for his faithfulness and hospitality toward traveling gospel workers. He contrasts Gaius with Diotrephes, a proud and controlling leader who rejected apostolic authority, spread malicious accusations, and refused hospitality to faithful Christians. Demetrius is then commended as a man with a good testimony.

Together, these letters address churches and individuals facing doctrinal confusion, relational division, competing leadership, and questions about how truth and love should shape Christian fellowship.

Historical Setting and False Teaching

John does not provide a complete description of the false teachers, so we should avoid claiming more than the text reveals. Nevertheless, several features of their teaching are clear.

They denied that Jesus was the Christ and rejected the full truth of His incarnation. John calls anyone who denies the Father and the Son a liar and an antichrist. Second John specifically describes the deceivers as those who “do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.”

They apparently separated the divine Christ from the historical man Jesus or denied that the eternal Son had genuinely assumed human flesh. This teaching threatened the heart of the gospel. If Jesus did not truly become human, then He could not genuinely suffer, shed His blood, die as the atoning sacrifice for sin, or bodily rise from the dead.

Their doctrinal error was accompanied by moral and relational failure. They claimed fellowship with God while walking in darkness. They claimed to be without sin. They professed to know God while refusing His commands. They failed to demonstrate love for God’s people. Their departure from the fellowship, denial of Christ, and disregard for holy living exposed the emptiness of their claims.

John therefore does not treat doctrine, morality, and relationships as separate issues. A distorted Christ produces a distorted gospel, and a distorted gospel eventually produces a distorted life.

Purpose

John states several reasons for writing First John:

- “That you too may have fellowship with us” (1:3).
- “That our joy may be complete” (1:4).
- “That you may not sin” (2:1).
- To warn about “those who are trying to deceive you” (2:26).
- “That you may know that you have eternal life” (5:13).

The final purpose statement is the most comprehensive: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:13

The Gospel of John was written so that people might believe Jesus is the Christ and have life in His name. First John was written so that those who believe might know they possess that life. John wants to protect true believers from deception and establish their assurance on the truth of the gospel.

His purpose is both corrective and constructive. He exposes false belief, sinful practice, and loveless religion, but he also strengthens believers by directing them to Christ’s incarnation, atoning sacrifice, advocacy, promises, and preserving power.

Second John applies these concerns to Christian partnership. Believers must walk in truth and love without supporting those who deny Christ.

Third John applies them to hospitality and church leadership. Believers should support faithful gospel workers, reject prideful control, and imitate what is good.

Key Themes

The Real Jesus

The Letters of John begin and end with Jesus Christ. He is the eternal life who was with the Father and was made manifest. He truly came in human flesh, shed His blood, died as the propitiation for sin, rose from the dead, and now serves as the believer's righteous Advocate.

Right belief about Jesus is not optional. A person cannot know the Father while rejecting or reshaping the Son. Genuine Christianity receives Jesus as God has revealed Him rather than creating a more convenient version.

Assurance of Salvation

John wants believers to know they have eternal life. Assurance does not rest merely on a past decision, changing emotions, or personal sincerity. It rests first in the objective work and promise of God in Christ. It is then confirmed by the visible fruit of new life.

John repeatedly uses expressions such as "by this we know." Genuine faith produces recognizable marks. These marks do not save us, but they provide evidence that God's saving life is present within us.

The Three Tests of Genuine Faith

John's teaching may be organized around three interrelated tests.

The doctrinal test: Do we believe the truth about Jesus Christ?

The moral test: Do we practice obedience and turn from sin?

The relational test: Do we love God and His people?

These tests repeatedly overlap. John does not present them as isolated steps or a mechanical checklist. They are different expressions of the same new life.

Light and Darkness

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Because God is holy and true, those who know Him cannot remain comfortable in darkness. Walking in the light does not mean claiming sinless perfection. It means living honestly before God, confessing sin, receiving Christ's cleansing, and pursuing holiness.

Sin, Confession, and Christ's Advocacy

John takes sin seriously. Sin is lawlessness and rebellion against God. Yet he also offers profound comfort. When believers confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them. When they sin, Jesus Christ the righteous stands as their Advocate before the Father.

Christ did not come merely to excuse sin. He came to take away sins and destroy the works of the devil.

Love

Love is one of the clearest marks of genuine faith. John does not define love by emotion, cultural approval, or vague kindness. He defines it by the cross: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.” 1 John 3:16

Those who have received Christ’s sacrificial love must love others in deed and truth. Hatred, bitterness, indifference, and selfish control contradict the claim to know God.

Truth and Discernment

John calls believers to test every spiritual claim. Sincerity, popularity, confidence, and spiritual language do not guarantee truth. Every message must be evaluated by its teaching about Jesus and its agreement with apostolic revelation.

Truth and love must never be separated. Love without truth becomes sentimentality and compromise. Truth without love becomes coldness and pride.

Abiding

To abide means to remain, continue, and make one’s home in Christ and His truth. John calls believers to abide in what they heard from the beginning, abide in Christ, abide in love, and allow God’s Word to abide in them.

Abiding is not passive. It involves continuing faith, obedience, dependence, love, and perseverance.

The World

John warns believers not to love the world or the things in the world. “The world” refers to the system of sinful values, desires, and loyalties organized in rebellion against God. It appeals through the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The world is passing away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

Christian Fellowship and Gospel Partnership

Fellowship is more than social interaction. It is shared life with the Father, the Son, and God’s people. True doctrine creates true fellowship.

Second and Third John show that fellowship also includes wise partnership. Christians must not support teachers who deny Christ, but they should generously assist faithful workers who advance the truth.

Reading the Letters Faithfully

The Letters of John should not be read merely as a collection of tests designed to make every believer doubt his salvation. Nor should they be used to offer careless assurance to anyone who has made a religious profession.

John’s purpose is to expose false faith and strengthen genuine faith.

As we study, we must hold two truths together. First, salvation rests entirely in the grace of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ. Second, the grace that saves also transforms. Genuine believers are not perfect, but their lives possess a new direction. They confess rather than conceal sin. They desire obedience rather than settled rebellion. They love God's people rather than comfortably nurturing hatred. They remain in apostolic truth rather than abandoning the real Jesus.

John invites us to examine ourselves, but he does not leave us staring endlessly at ourselves. He continually directs our attention back to Christ, the Son of God who came in the flesh, shed His blood for sinners, rose in victory, advocates for His people, and gives eternal life to all who believe.

How to Use This Study Guide

This guide is designed to help you spend time in God's Word throughout the week, not simply listen to a sermon on Sunday. Scripture calls us not only to hear the Word, but to receive it, meditate on it, and put it into practice (James 1:22; Psalm 1:2). Set aside some unhurried time before Sunday to read the passage carefully, work through the questions, explore related Scriptures, and ask the Lord to prepare your heart to hear from Him. Bring the guide with you to worship, use it to follow the message and take notes, then return to it during the week for prayer, reflection, and application.

Each week is built around three simple movements:

Prepare: Read and examine the biblical text before the sermon. Pay attention to the surrounding context, repeated words, important ideas, historical background, and related passages. Like the Bereans who “examined the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11), approach the text thoughtfully and expectantly. Ask God to open your eyes to the truth of His Word (Psalm 119:18) and give you a humble and teachable heart.

Listen: Come to worship ready to hear and receive the Word. Follow the message, complete the main points, and record important insights. Write down truths that convict, encourage, clarify, or challenge you. Jesus repeatedly said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Listening biblically means more than hearing words. It means receiving God's truth with a willingness to respond.

Respond: God's Word is meant to shape our lives. Take time after the message to reflect, pray, and act on what you have learned. Do not stop with simply understanding the passage. Ask where your thinking needs to change, what sin needs to be confessed, what promise needs to be trusted, what command needs to be obeyed, or what relationship needs attention. As Jesus taught, the wise person is the one who hears His words **and does them** (Matthew 7:24).

Work through the guide gradually over the course of the week. The goal is not simply to fill every blank or finish every question. The goal is to let the Word of Christ “dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16), to allow Scripture to search your heart (Hebrews 4:12), strengthen your assurance, deepen your love for Christ, and help you abide in Him more faithfully (John 15:4–5).

KNOW THAT YOU KNOW

Series Schedule

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WEEK 1 - The Mark of Right Belief:

You Believe the Real Jesus - 1 John 1:1–4

Is your faith anchored in the true Christ, or in a version of Jesus you have created?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 1:1–4 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what John says about Jesus.

On your second reading, underline the words that describe what the apostles heard, saw, touched, and proclaimed.

Examine the Context

1 John was written by the apostle John, one of Jesus' closest disciples and an eyewitness of His ministry, death, and resurrection.

False teachers were influencing the churches by denying or distorting the truth about Jesus. Some denied that the eternal Son of God had truly come in human flesh. John begins by grounding Christian faith in the historical, revealed, and apostolically proclaimed Christ.

Look Closely

1. What descriptions of Jesus do you see in verses 1–2?
2. Why does John repeatedly emphasize hearing, seeing, and touching Jesus?
3. What does John say the proclamation of Christ produces in verses 3–4?

Historical and Theological Insight

Christianity is not based upon secret knowledge, private visions, or personal spiritual discoveries. It is grounded in God revealing Himself through the incarnation of His Son and the trustworthy testimony of those who witnessed Him.

Search the Scriptures

John 20:24–31

Thomas initially refused to believe without physical evidence. Jesus then invited him to see His wounds and touch Him. John concludes that his Gospel was written so readers may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name.

Study question: According to verses 30–31, what must a person believe about Jesus to have life?

Luke 24:36–49

Jesus tells His disciples to look at His hands and feet and says, “A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Study question: Why does Luke emphasize that the disciples saw, heard, and touched the risen Christ?

Colossians 1:15–20

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the Creator of all things, the head of the church, and the One through whom God reconciles sinners.

Study question: Which descriptions in this passage challenge a small or personalized view of Jesus?

Philippians 2:5–11

Jesus existed in the form of God, took the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, and was exalted as Lord.

Study question: What did Christ lay aside, and what did He take upon Himself?

Prepare Your Heart

Have you accepted the Jesus revealed in Scripture, or have you reshaped Jesus to fit your preferences?

Pray for the Spirit to show you who Jesus is and show others Jesus as we gather for worship and preaching.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Right Belief:

You Believe the Real Jesus - 1 John 1:1–4

Big Idea: Real faith receives the historical Jesus revealed by God, proclaimed by the apostles, and experienced in the fellowship of His people.

1. Receive the Christ Who Has Been _____ Verses 1–2

Christianity is not discovered. It is _____.

Reject a personalized, reshaped Jesus.

Key Insight:

2. Rest in the Gospel That Has Been _____ Verse 3a

Assurance comes through apostolic truth, not private _____.

Key Insight:

3. Live in Fellowship That Produces _____ Verses 3b–4

Right belief leads to shared life and deep joy.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

1. How does my understanding of Jesus compare with the Jesus revealed in Scripture?
2. Have I reduced Jesus to a teacher, helper, example, political symbol, or source of personal success?
3. Is my assurance grounded in God's revealed truth or primarily in my emotions and past experiences?
4. Am I meaningfully sharing life with other believers, or am I attempting to follow Christ in isolation?
5. What truth about Jesus do I need to believe, obey, or share this week?

This Week's Challenge

Identify one belief about Jesus that needs to be corrected, strengthened, or more fully applied. Return to Scripture and submit your understanding to what God has revealed.

Prayer

"Father, help me receive Your Son as You have revealed Him. Guard me from reshaping Jesus around my preferences. Ground my faith in the truth of the gospel and draw me into deeper fellowship with You and Your people. Amen."

WEEK 2 - The Mark of Walking in the Light

You Confess Sin - 1 John 1:5–2:2

Are you hiding your sin, or honestly confessing and turning from it?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 1:5–2:2 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what John says about God’s holiness and human sin.

On your second reading, underline each occurrence of the words **light, darkness, sin, truth, confess, cleanse, and advocate**.

Examine the Context

John has established that fellowship with God comes through the real Jesus proclaimed by the apostles. He now explains what fellowship with a holy God looks like in everyday life.

Some false teachers claimed to know God while minimizing or denying sin. John confronts three false claims introduced by the words, “If we say.” Genuine believers do not claim to be sinless. They walk in the light by honestly confessing sin and trusting Christ’s cleansing work.

Look Closely

What does the statement “God is light” reveal about His character?

What three false claims does John confront in verses 6, 8, and 10?

What promises are given to those who confess their sins?

What does Jesus do for believers who sin according to 2:1–2?

Historical and Theological Insight

To confess sin means to agree with God about it. Confession does not earn forgiveness or persuade God to become merciful. The believer confesses because Jesus has already provided cleansing through His blood and now serves as our righteous Advocate before the Father.

Search the Scriptures

Psalms 51:1–12

David responds to his sin by appealing to God's mercy, confessing his guilt, and asking for cleansing and renewal.

Study question: What does David acknowledge about his sin, and what does he ask God to do?

Proverbs 28:13

The one who conceals sin does not prosper, but the one who confesses and forsakes it receives mercy.

Study question: What two responses to sin are contrasted in this verse?

Luke 18:9–14

Jesus contrasts a self-righteous Pharisee with a tax collector who openly admits his guilt and cries for mercy.

Study question: Why did the tax collector go home justified rather than the Pharisee?

Hebrews 4:14–16

Because Jesus is our great High Priest, believers may approach God's throne with confidence to receive mercy and grace.

Study question: How should Christ's priestly work change the way we approach God after we sin?

Prepare Your Heart

What sin have you been minimizing, excusing, hiding, or refusing to name honestly?

Pray for the Spirit to expose darkness in your life and lead you toward honest confession, repentance, and renewed trust in Christ.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Walking in the Light

You Confess Sin - 1 John 1:5–2:2

Big Idea: Those who walk in God's light do not deny their sin. They confess it and run to the cleansing work of Jesus Christ.

1. Let God's _____ Define Your Sin - Verse 5

Stop minimizing what God calls darkness.

Key Insight:

2. Reject Empty Claims About Your _____ - Verses 6–10

Saying "I'm fine" is often spiritual blindness.

Key Insight:

3. Run to Christ, Not _____ from Him - 1 John 2:1–2

Confession leads to advocacy, not rejection.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

What sin have I been minimizing, renaming, or defending?

Where is there a contradiction between what I profess and how I live?

Do I tend to run toward Christ or hide from Him when I sin?

Is there someone to whom I need to confess, apologize, or make restitution?

What specific step of repentance will I take this week?

This Week's Challenge

Name one hidden or excused sin clearly before God. Confess it, receive Christ's forgiveness, and take one practical step away from it.

Prayer

"Holy Father, bring every hidden area of my life into Your light. Help me stop minimizing, excusing, and defending my sin. Thank You that Jesus is my righteous Advocate and the sacrifice for my sins. Give me grace to confess honestly, repent sincerely, and walk faithfully with You. Amen."

WEEK 3 - The Mark of Obedience

You Follow His Commands - 1 John 2:3–6

Is your life marked by submission to Christ, or by selective obedience?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 2:3–6 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice the relationship between knowing Christ and obeying His commands.

On your second reading, underline the words **know**, **keep**, **truth**, **abide**, and **walk**.

Examine the Context

John has explained that genuine believers confess sin rather than denying it. He now shows that knowing Christ also produces a growing pattern of obedience.

John is not teaching that obedience earns salvation. He is teaching that obedience gives evidence that a person truly knows Christ. A profession of faith that produces no submission to Jesus is empty.

Look Closely

According to verse 3, how can a person know that he knows Christ?

What does John say about the person who claims to know Christ but does not keep His commands?

What does it mean for God's love to be perfected or completed in a believer?

According to verse 6, what pattern should shape the believer's life?

Historical and Theological Insight

The word translated "keep" carries the idea of guarding, treasuring, and taking seriously. John is not describing sinless perfection. He is describing a settled desire to submit to Christ's authority and a pattern of repentance when we fail.

Search the Scriptures

John 14:15–24

Jesus connects love for Him with obedience to His commands.

Study question: What does obedience reveal about a person’s relationship with Christ?

Matthew 7:21–27

Jesus warns that merely calling Him “Lord” is not enough. The wise person hears His words and puts them into practice.

Study question: What is the difference between the wise builder and the foolish builder?

James 1:22–25

James warns believers not to hear the Word without doing what it says.

Study question: Why is hearing without obedience a form of self-deception?

Philippians 2:5–8

Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death.

Study question: What does Christ’s obedience teach us about submission when obedience is costly?

Prepare Your Heart

Where has your obedience to Jesus become selective, delayed, or conditional?

Pray for the Spirit to reveal any area where you are resisting Christ’s authority and to give you courage to obey.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Obedience

You Follow His Commands - 1 John 2:3–6

Big Idea: Obedience does not earn salvation, but it provides visible evidence that we truly know Christ.

1. Anchor Assurance in _____, Not Emotion - Verse 3

Feelings fluctuate. Obedience reveals.

Key Insight:

2. Expose the Lie of Empty _____ - Verse 4

Saying you know Him without obedience is self-deception.

Key Insight:

3. Imitate Christ in _____ Life - Verses 5–6

Walk like Jesus where you actually live.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Where has my obedience become selective?

Do I obey Christ only when His commands are convenient or agreeable?

What would walking like Jesus look like in my home, work, school, or relationships?

What command of Christ am I presently resisting?

What act of obedience will I complete this week?

This Week's Challenge

Identify one area of selective obedience and place it fully under Christ's authority. Take the first practical step before the week ends.

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, forgive me for claiming Your name while resisting Your authority. Help me treasure Your commands and walk as You walked. Give me courage to obey when obedience is difficult, inconvenient, or costly. Shape my life so that it gives honest evidence that I know You. Amen."

WEEK 4 - The Mark of Love

You Love God's People - 1 John 2:7–14

Do you genuinely love other believers, or are you holding onto bitterness and division?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 2:7–14 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice the contrast between love and hatred.

On your second reading, underline the words **commandment, love, hate, light, darkness, know, forgiven,** and **overcome**.

Examine the Context

John has shown that true faith produces obedience. He now applies that obedience specifically to the command to love God's people.

The command is both old and new. It is old because God had always commanded His people to love. It is new because Jesus embodied and clarified sacrificial love through His life and death.

Look Closely

Why does John describe the command to love as both old and new?

What does hatred reveal about a person's spiritual condition?

How does hatred affect a person's ability to see clearly?

What truths does John remind believers of in verses 12–14?

Historical and Theological Insight

Christian love is not defined by cultural approval, emotional warmth, or avoiding disagreement. It is defined by Jesus. Biblical love seeks another person's true good through holy, truthful, patient, and sacrificial action.

Search the Scriptures

John 13:34–35

Jesus commands His disciples to love one another as He has loved them.

Study question: What does love among believers reveal to the watching world?

Matthew 5:43–48

Jesus commands His followers to love even their enemies and pray for those who persecute them.

Study question: How does this kind of love reflect the character of the Father?

Ephesians 4:31–5:2

Paul commands believers to put away bitterness and walk in love as Christ loved us.

Study question: What attitudes must be removed, and what Christlike qualities must replace them?

Colossians 3:12–14

Believers are told to put on compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love.

Study question: How should remembering Christ's forgiveness shape the way we treat others?

Prepare Your Heart

Is there another believer toward whom you are holding resentment, contempt, suspicion, or unforgiveness?

Pray for the Spirit to reveal bitterness and produce Christlike love in your relationships.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Love

You Love God's People - 1 John 2:7–14

Big Idea: The light of Christ becomes visible when those who belong to Him love one another.

1. Love as Christ _____ It - Verses 7–8

Love is shaped by Christ, not culture.

Key Insight:

2. Test Your Life by Your _____ - Verses 9–11

Bitterness is not small. It is revealing.

Key Insight:

3. Live Out of Your _____ in Christ - Verses 12–14

Love flows from who you are, not what you earn.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Am I holding bitterness, resentment, or suspicion toward another believer?

Have I confused love with complete agreement, approval, or emotional closeness?

How should Christ's forgiveness shape the way I treat others?

Is there a relationship in which I need to pursue peace or reconciliation?

What practical act of Christian love will I demonstrate this week?

This Week's Challenge

Take one deliberate step toward forgiveness, reconciliation, encouragement, hospitality, or service.

Prayer

"Father, thank You for forgiving me and bringing me into Your family. Expose every root of bitterness, resentment, and pride in my heart. Teach me to love others as Christ has loved me. Help my relationships show that I am walking in Your light. Amen."

WEEK 5 - The Mark of New Desire

You Don't Love the World - 1 John 2:15–17

What do your desires reveal, love for God or love for this world?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 2:15–17 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what John commands believers not to love.

On your second reading, underline the words **love, world, desires, pride, passing away, and abides**.

Examine the Context

John has reminded believers of their forgiveness, knowledge of God, spiritual strength, and victory over the evil one. He now warns them not to give their hearts to the world.

“The world” does not refer to creation or to the people whom God loves. It refers to the values, desires, and systems of humanity organized in rebellion against God.

Look Closely

What does John command believers not to love?

What three expressions of worldly desire are listed in verse 16?

Where do these desires come from?

What contrast does John make in verse 17?

Historical and Theological Insight

The world competes for the ruling affection of the heart through pleasure, possessions, and pride. Good things become idols when they become the source of our identity, security, satisfaction, or hope.

Search the Scriptures

Genesis 3:1–7

Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom.

Study question: How do the temptations in Genesis 3 resemble the categories in 1 John 2:16?

Matthew 4:1–11

Satan tempts Jesus through physical appetite, public display, and worldly power.

Study question: How did Jesus answer each temptation?

Matthew 6:19–24

Jesus warns against storing up earthly treasures and declares that no one can serve both God and money.

Study question: What do our treasures reveal about our hearts?

Romans 12:1–2

Believers are commanded not to conform to this age but to be transformed through renewed minds.

Study question: What must change if believers are to resist the pattern of the world?

Prepare Your Heart

What possession, pleasure, achievement, relationship, or source of approval most competes for your heart?

Pray for the Spirit to expose worldly desires and deepen your love for God and eternal things.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of New Desire

You Don't Love the World - 1 John 2:15–17

Big Idea: Those who belong to God cannot give their deepest affection to a world organized in rebellion against Him.

1. Identify What _____ for Your Heart - Verse 15

You cannot love both God and the world.

Key Insight:

2. Recognize the Pull of Sinful _____ - Verse 16

Flesh, eyes, and pride remain the same battle.

Key Insight:

3. Invest in What Actually _____ - Verse 17

Live for what outlives you.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

What possession, achievement, pleasure, or relationship competes for my deepest affection?

Which temptation is strongest for me: pleasure, possessions, or position?

What temporary thing am I treating as ultimate?

What do my spending, schedule, and attention reveal about my priorities?

What eternal investment should replace a temporary pursuit?

This Week's Challenge

Fast from one worldly distraction and redirect that time, attention, or resource toward worship, generosity, Scripture, or service.

Prayer

“Father, expose every misplaced love in my heart. Keep me from giving ultimate affection to temporary things. Teach me to recognize the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. Help me live for what lasts and love You above everything else. Amen.”

WEEK 6 - The Mark of Truth

You Hold Fast to Sound Doctrine - 1 John 2:18–27; 2 John

Are you grounded in truth, or easily influenced by every confident voice?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 2:18–27 and 2 John at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what the false teachers denied about Jesus.

On your second reading, underline the words **antichrist, truth, lie, deny, abide, anointing, teaching, and deceiver**.

Examine the Context

False teachers had separated from the churches and were attempting to draw believers away from apostolic truth. They claimed spiritual insight while denying essential truths about Jesus.

John identifies them as antichrists because they opposed and replaced the true Christ. He calls believers to remain in what they had heard from the beginning and refuse to support those who actively spread false teaching.

Look Closely

What did the departure of the false teachers reveal?

What central truth about Jesus did they deny?

What does John tell believers to let abide in them?

What warning does 2 John give about receiving and supporting false teachers?

Historical and Theological Insight

The “anointing” refers to the Holy Spirit’s presence and work in believers. John is not saying Christians need no teachers. He is teaching that the Spirit enables believers to recognize and remain in apostolic truth rather than being dependent on secret knowledge offered by false teachers.

Search the Scriptures

Acts 20:28–31

Paul warns the Ephesian elders that false teachers will arise both outside and inside the church.

Study question: What responsibility do church leaders have when deception threatens the flock?

Galatians 1:6–9

Paul condemns any message that distorts the gospel of Christ.

Study question: How seriously does Paul treat a false gospel?

Colossians 2:6–10

Believers are told to continue in Christ and avoid being taken captive by empty philosophy and human tradition.

Study question: What does Paul say believers possess fully in Christ?

Jude 3–4

Jude urges believers to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Study question: Why must Christians actively defend the truth?

Prepare Your Heart

What teachers, personalities, media voices, or cultural influences most shape your beliefs?

Pray for the Spirit to deepen your understanding of Scripture and give you courage to hold fast to truth with love.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Truth

You Hold Fast to Sound Doctrine - 1 John 2:18–27; 2 John

Big Idea: Genuine believers remain anchored in the apostolic truth about Jesus and refuse to support teaching that denies Him.

1. Recognize That Deception Is Real and _____ - 1 John 2:18–19

Not everyone who leaves was ever truly in.

Key Insight:

2. Cling to the Truth You Have _____ - 1 John 2:20–24

Do not move on from what you first heard.

Key Insight:

3. Refuse to _____ What Denies Christ - 1 John 2:25–27; 2 John

Love does not tolerate false teaching.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Could I clearly explain who Jesus is and what He has done?

What teachers or voices have the greatest influence over me?

Do I evaluate teaching biblically or primarily by emotion and personality?

Have I confused Christian kindness with endorsing serious error?

What doctrine do I need to understand more clearly?

This Week's Challenge

Choose one essential truth about Jesus and study it deeply enough to explain it clearly to another person.

Prayer

“God of truth, guard me from deception and give me discernment. Help me remain in the gospel I have received and refuse every teaching that diminishes or denies Christ. Make me courageous in truth, humble in spirit, and loving toward those who are confused. Amen.”

WEEK 7 - The Mark of Hope

You Live Ready for His Return - 1 John 2:28–3:3

Are you preparing to meet Christ, or living as though He will never return?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 2:28–3:3 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what John says about Christ's appearing.

On your second reading, underline the words **abide, appears, confidence, shame, children, love, hope, and purifies**.

Examine the Context

After warning believers about false teachers, John calls them to remain in Christ. Their faithfulness in the present is connected to confidence when Jesus returns.

John then reminds them of their identity as God's children and their future transformation. Because believers will one day be like Christ, they pursue purity now.

Look Closely

What two possible responses to Christ's appearing are mentioned in 2:28?

What evidence does verse 29 associate with being born of God?

What amazes John about the Father's love?

How does hope in Christ's return affect the believer's present life?

Historical and Theological Insight

The New Testament presents Christ's return as both comfort and motivation. Biblical hope is not uncertain wishing. It is confident expectation rooted in God's promise. That future certainty produces present faithfulness and holiness.

Search the Scriptures

John 14:1–3

Jesus promises to prepare a place for His disciples and return for them.

Study question: What comfort does Jesus give His troubled disciples?

Acts 1:9–11

The angels tell the disciples that Jesus will return in the same manner in which He ascended.

Study question: What certainty is given about Christ's return?

Titus 2:11–14

God's grace teaches believers to reject ungodliness while waiting for Christ's appearing.

Study question: How should waiting for Christ shape present conduct?

2 Peter 3:10–14

Peter connects the coming day of the Lord with holy and godly living.

Study question: What kind of people should believers be in light of Christ's return?

Prepare Your Heart

Would the return of Christ produce joyful anticipation or embarrassment about the way you are living?

Pray for the Spirit to renew your hope and help you live ready to meet Christ.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Hope

You Live Ready for His Return - 1 John 2:28–3:3

Big Idea: Hope in Christ's return produces confidence, identity, and present holiness.

1. Abide So You Will Not _____ Back - 1 John 2:28

Ongoing closeness produces confidence.

Key Insight:

2. Remember Who You Are _____ - 1 John 3:1

Identity drives conduct.

Key Insight:

3. Pursue Purity in Light of His _____ - 1 John 3:2–3

Future hope fuels present holiness.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Would Christ's return bring anticipation or embarrassment to me?

Am I abiding in Christ or merely maintaining religious activity?

Where am I seeking identity from the world rather than from the Father?

What impurity is inconsistent with my future in Christ?

What would living ready look like this week?

This Week's Challenge

Remove one habit that would make you ashamed at Christ's appearing and replace it with a practice that draws you closer to Him.

Prayer

"Father, thank You for calling me Your child and giving me hope in Christ's return. Help me abide in Jesus, live with confidence, and pursue purity. Keep me from living as though this world is all there is. Make me ready to see my Savior. Amen."

WEEK 8 - The Mark of Transformation

Your Life Is Changing - 1 John 3:4–10

Is sin still your settled pattern, or is righteousness increasingly taking root?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 3:4–10 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what John says about the seriousness of sin.

On your second reading, underline the words **sin, lawlessness, appeared, righteous, devil, born of God,** and **practice**.

Examine the Context

John has said that everyone who hopes in Christ purifies himself. He now explains why ongoing, unrepentant sin is incompatible with the new birth.

John is not teaching that Christians never sin. He has already rejected that claim. He is contrasting a settled practice of sin with a life being transformed by Christ.

Look Closely

How does John define sin in verse 4?

What two reasons are given for Christ's appearing?

What does the repeated practice of sin reveal?

How are the children of God distinguished from the children of the devil?

Historical and Theological Insight

John uses language describing ongoing practice and settled direction. The distinction is not between people who sin and people who never sin. It is between those who remain comfortable under sin's rule and those who fight sin because God has given them new life.

Search the Scriptures

Romans 6:1–14

Paul explains that believers have died to sin's rule and are alive to God in Christ.

Study question: Why is continuing comfortably in sin inconsistent with union with Christ?

Titus 2:11–14

Grace trains believers to renounce ungodliness and live self-controlled, upright lives.

Study question: What does saving grace teach believers to reject and pursue?

Galatians 5:16–25

Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit.

Study question: What evidence shows that the Spirit is producing change in a person's life?

Hebrews 12:1–11

God disciplines His children for their good so that they may share His holiness.

Study question: What does God's discipline reveal about His relationship with believers?

Prepare Your Heart

What repeated pattern of sin have you begun to excuse, tolerate, or manage rather than fight?

Pray for the Spirit to expose sinful patterns and produce genuine repentance and transformation.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Transformation

Your Life Is Changing - 1 John 3:4–10

Big Idea: Christ came to destroy the rule of sin, and those born of God cannot remain content under its control.

1. Take Sin Seriously: It Is _____ - Verse 4

Sin is rebellion, not merely weakness.

Key Insight:

2. Remember Why Christ _____ - Verses 5–8

He came to remove sin and destroy the devil's work.

Key Insight:

3. Examine Your _____, Not Your Moments - Verses 9–10

Direction reveals birth.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Have I softened the seriousness of my sin?

What pattern has remained largely unchanged in my life?

Am I fighting sin or learning to live comfortably with it?

Where can I see evidence that Christ is changing me?

What sin-fighting practice should I begin?

This Week's Challenge

Identify one repeated pattern of sin and create a practical plan involving confession, accountability, avoidance, and a righteous replacement.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, You came to take away sin and destroy the works of the devil. Forgive me for excusing what You died to defeat. Give me a growing hatred for sin, a deeper love for righteousness, and clear evidence of Your transforming grace in my life. Amen.”

WEEK 9 - The Mark of Sacrificial Love

You Love in Action - 1 John 3:11–24; 3 John

Is your love costly and visible, or does it exist only in words?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 3:11–24 and 3 John at least twice.

On your first reading, compare Cain's hatred with Christ's sacrifice.

On your second reading, notice the examples of Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius in 3 John.

Examine the Context

John has identified love as one of the clearest distinctions between God's children and the children of the devil. He now contrasts Cain, who took his brother's life, with Christ, who laid down His life for us.

Third John provides practical examples of people who either advanced the gospel through hospitality or hindered it through pride and control.

Look Closely

Why did Cain hate and murder Abel?

How does John define love in 1 John 3:16?

What does John say about seeing a brother in need and refusing to help?

How do Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius differ from one another?

Historical and Theological Insight

Traveling Christian teachers depended on the hospitality and support of local believers. Welcoming faithful workers was not merely kindness. It was participation in the advance of the gospel. Refusing them out of pride or control could hinder gospel ministry.

Search the Scriptures

Luke 10:25–37

Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Study question: What did genuine love require the Samaritan to risk and sacrifice?

John 15:9–13

Jesus describes the greatest love as laying down one's life for friends.

Study question: How does Christ's sacrifice define the standard of Christian love?

James 2:14–17

James warns that words of concern without practical help are empty.

Study question: What does faith without action reveal?

Philippians 2:19–30

Timothy and Epaphroditus serve as examples of selfless concern and sacrificial service.

Study question: What qualities made these men faithful servants of Christ and His church?

Prepare Your Heart

Whose need have you seen but ignored because helping would cost time, money, comfort, or convenience?

Pray for the Spirit to make Christ's sacrificial love visible through your actions.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Sacrificial Love

You Love in Action - 1 John 3:11–24; 3 John

Big Idea: The love of Christ becomes visible when believers sacrifice for one another and support the advance of the gospel.

1. Reject _____-Centered Living - 1 John 3:11–15

Indifference is closer to hatred than you think.

Key Insight:

2. Define Love by _____ - 1 John 3:16–18

Love gives, not just feels.

Key Insight:

3. Support What Advances the _____ - 1 John 3:19–24; 3 John

Your priorities reveal your heart.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Whose need have I seen but ignored?

What would sacrificial love require me to give?

Do I use my influence to advance the gospel or protect my own importance?

Do my actions resemble Gaius, Diotrephes, or Demetrius?

How can my home, resources, or relationships support gospel ministry?

This Week's Challenge

Meet one visible need through a specific sacrifice of time, money, comfort, attention, or hospitality.

Prayer

“Father, thank You that Jesus laid down His life for me. Deliver me from selfishness, indifference, envy, and the desire for prominence. Teach me to love in deed and truth. Use my time, home, resources, and influence to strengthen Your people and advance the gospel. Amen.”

WEEK 10 - The Mark of Discernment

You Test What You Hear - 1 John 4:1–6

Do you carefully test what you hear, or accept whatever sounds spiritual?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 4:1–6 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice why John commands believers to test spiritual claims.

On your second reading, underline the words **believe, test, spirits, prophets, confess, antichrist, world, hear, truth, and error**.

Examine the Context

False teachers claimed spiritual authority while denying the real Christ. John warns believers that not every spiritual claim originates with God.

The central test concerns what a teacher confesses about Jesus and whether the teaching agrees with the apostolic message.

Look Closely

Why must believers test the spirits?

What confession identifies teaching that is from God?

What does the world's response reveal about false teachers?

How does John distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error?

Historical and Theological Insight

In the first-century church, traveling teachers and prophets often moved among congregations. Spiritual claims could not be accepted merely because they were passionate, miraculous, or impressive. They had to be tested by the truth about Christ and the apostolic gospel.

Search the Scriptures

Deuteronomy 13:1–5

Israel is warned not to follow a prophet who performs signs but leads people away from the true God.

Study question: Why are impressive signs not enough to prove a message is from God?

Acts 17:10–12

The Bereans examine the Scriptures daily to test Paul's message.

Study question: What made the Bereans noble in their response to teaching?

Matthew 7:15–23

Jesus warns about false prophets who appear harmless and may even claim powerful works.

Study question: What test does Jesus give for recognizing false teachers?

2 Timothy 4:1–5

Paul warns that people will gather teachers who tell them what they want to hear.

Study question: What responsibility does Timothy have in a culture that rejects sound teaching?

Prepare Your Heart

Do you evaluate spiritual teaching by Scripture, or by personality, popularity, emotion, and presentation?

Pray for the Spirit to give you humility, biblical knowledge, and courage to test what you hear.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Discernment

You Test What You Hear - 1 John 4:1–6

Big Idea: Spiritual claims must be evaluated by what they teach about Christ and whether they agree with apostolic truth.

1. Stop Believing Everything _____ - Verse 1

Sincerity is not truth.

Key Insight:

2. Measure Everything by _____ - Verses 2–3

Right Christology is non-negotiable.

Key Insight:

3. Listen to the Right _____ - Verses 4–6

Who you follow shapes what you believe.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Do I accept claims simply because they sound spiritual?

What voices shape my beliefs most strongly?

Could I recognize teaching that presents a false or diminished Jesus?

Do I test messages by Scripture or by whether I agree with them?

Is there a misleading voice I need to stop following?

This Week's Challenge

Evaluate one influential teacher, podcast, program, or social media voice using Scripture rather than popularity, personality, or presentation.

Prayer

“Spirit of truth, guard me from deception and spiritual gullibility. Help me test every message by Scripture and the truth about Jesus. Give me wisdom to recognize error, courage to reject it, and humility to remain teachable under Your Word. Amen.”

WEEK 11 - The Mark of Confidence

You Rest in God's Love - 1 John 4:7–21

Are you living in fear of judgment, or resting confidently in Christ?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 4:7–21 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice where love begins and how God displayed it.

On your second reading, underline the words **love, born of God, know, sent, Son, propitiation, abide, fear, judgment, and brother**.

Examine the Context

John has warned believers to distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error. He now returns to the relational test of love.

God's love is not defined by vague sentiment. It was displayed when the Father sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for sinners. Those who receive that love reflect it toward others and gain confidence before the day of judgment.

Look Closely

What does love for others reveal about a person's relationship with God?

How did God demonstrate His love?

How does God's love become visible in the world?

What kind of fear is driven out by perfected love?

Historical and Theological Insight

The word "propitiation" refers to Christ's sacrifice satisfying God's righteous judgment against sin. Christian confidence does not rest in denying judgment or trusting personal goodness. It rests in the finished work of Jesus.

Search the Scriptures

Romans 5:6–11

God demonstrates His love by sending Christ to die for sinners and enemies.

Study question: What was our condition when Christ died for us?

Romans 8:31–39

Paul celebrates the security of believers in God's love through Christ.

Study question: What can separate believers from the love of God in Christ?

Ephesians 3:14–21

Paul prays that believers will grasp the immeasurable love of Christ.

Study question: How should knowing Christ's love affect a believer's strength and maturity?

Hebrews 10:19–23

Believers may draw near to God with confidence because of Christ's sacrifice.

Study question: On what basis can Christians approach God confidently?

Prepare Your Heart

Do you measure God's love by the cross, or mainly by your current circumstances and emotions?

Pray for the Spirit to deepen your confidence in Christ and make God's love visible through you.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Confidence

You Rest in God's Love - 1 John 4:7–21

Big Idea: God's love, displayed through Christ's sacrifice, gives believers confidence before Him and teaches them to love others.

1. Receive the Love That Comes from _____ - Verses 7–10

Love begins with Him, not you.

Key Insight:

2. Reflect That Love to _____ - Verses 11–16

You cannot claim what you do not show.

Key Insight:

3. Let God's Love Drive Out _____ - Verses 17–21

Fear reveals where you are not trusting.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Do I measure God's love by the cross or by my circumstances?

Am I trying to earn what God gives freely through Christ?

Where is God's love visible in the way I treat others?

What fear reveals that I am not fully resting in Christ?

How should the gospel change the way I anticipate judgment?

This Week's Challenge

When fear or insecurity rises, answer it with a specific truth about Christ's finished work and God's demonstrated love.

Prayer

"Father, thank You for loving me first and sending Your Son as the sacrifice for my sins. Help me rest in Christ rather than my performance. Drive out the fear of condemnation and make Your love visible through the way I treat others. Amen."

WEEK 12 - The Mark of Faith

You Believe and Overcome - 1 John 5:1–13

Is your faith active and enduring, or vague, passive, and fading?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 5:1–13 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice what John says about believing, obedience, and overcoming.

On your second reading, underline the words **believes, Christ, born of God, love, commandments, overcome, testimony, Son, life, and know**.

Examine the Context

John brings together the doctrinal, moral, and relational marks of genuine faith. Those born of God believe Jesus is the Christ, love God and His children, obey His commands, and overcome the world.

John then emphasizes God's testimony concerning His Son. Assurance rests not in vague spirituality or self-created confidence but in God's declaration that eternal life is found in Jesus.

Look Closely

What does belief in Jesus reveal about the new birth?

How are love for God and obedience to His commands connected?

What victory overcomes the world?

What does God testify concerning His Son?

Historical and Theological Insight

The references to water, blood, and Spirit emphasize God's testimony concerning the true identity and saving work of Jesus. While interpretations differ on some details, John's central claim is unmistakable: God Himself has testified that eternal life is found in His Son.

Search the Scriptures

John 3:14–18

Jesus explains that whoever believes in Him has eternal life.

Study question: What is the difference between those who believe and those who reject the Son?

John 5:19–24

Jesus identifies Himself as the Son who gives life and deserves the same honor as the Father.

Study question: What promise is given to the person who hears and believes?

Romans 10:8–13

Paul connects saving faith with believing in the heart and confessing Jesus as Lord.

Study question: What specific truths are included in saving faith?

1 Corinthians 15:1–8

Paul summarizes the gospel through Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances.

Study question: What historical events form the foundation of the gospel?

Prepare Your Heart

Is your confidence placed specifically in the biblical Jesus, or merely in religion, sincerity, morality, or a past experience?

Pray for the Spirit to strengthen your faith and anchor your assurance in God's testimony about His Son.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Faith

You Believe and Overcome - 1 John 5:1–13

Big Idea: Saving faith rests in the true Son of God, receives God's testimony, and possesses eternal life.

1. Trust in Christ as the _____ of God - Verses 1–5

Faith is specific, not vague.

Key Insight:

2. Submit to God's _____ - Verses 6–10

Either you believe God or call Him a liar.

Key Insight:

3. Rest in the Certainty of Eternal _____ - Verses 11–13

Assurance is God-given, not self-created.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Is my faith specifically placed in the biblical Jesus?

Where is the world pressuring me to compromise?

Do I receive God's testimony or demand that He satisfy my conditions?

Am I seeking assurance in Christ or primarily in my emotions?

How should possessing eternal life change my priorities this week?

This Week's Challenge

Write a brief explanation of why you believe Jesus is the Son of God and why eternal life is found in Him.

Prayer

"Father, thank You for giving clear testimony concerning Your Son. Strengthen my faith in Jesus Christ and help me overcome the pressures of the world. Keep me from grounding assurance in feelings or performance. Teach me to rest in Your promise that whoever has the Son has life. Amen."

WEEK 13 - The Mark of Assurance

You Live with Confidence in God - 1 John 5:14–21

Do you live like you truly belong to God, or like you remain uncertain and spiritually insecure?

BEFORE THE SERMON: PREPARE

Read 1 John 5:14–21 at least twice.

On your first reading, notice each statement beginning with “we know.”

On your second reading, underline the words **confidence, ask, will, hears, sin, born of God, evil one, true, know, and idols**.

Examine the Context

John closes his letter by describing the confidence that belongs to those who have eternal life. Assurance affects prayer, concern for wandering believers, resistance to sin, confidence in God’s protection, and loyalty to the true God.

The final warning against idols summarizes the entire letter. Every false view of Jesus, worldly desire, cherished sin, and competing loyalty threatens to replace the true God revealed in Christ.

Look Closely

What condition does John place on confident prayer?

How should believers respond when they see another Christian caught in sin?

What three truths does John say believers know in verses 18–20?

Why is the final warning about idols a fitting conclusion to the letter?

Historical and Theological Insight

John’s reference to “sin that leads to death” has been interpreted in several ways. In the context of the letter, it likely involves hardened rejection of Christ associated with the false teachers. John’s main emphasis is that believers should pray for those who wander rather than respond with indifference or gossip.

Search the Scriptures

Matthew 6:9–13

Jesus teaches His disciples to pray with God's name, kingdom, and will at the center.

Study question: How does the Lord's Prayer shape requests around God's priorities?

John 15:7–11

Jesus connects abiding in Him with effective prayer and fruitful living.

Study question: How does abiding in Christ shape what believers ask for?

Galatians 6:1–2

Spiritual believers are commanded to restore someone caught in sin with gentleness.

Study question: What attitudes should guide the restoration of a wandering believer?

1 Corinthians 10:12–14

Paul warns believers against overconfidence and commands them to flee idolatry.

Study question: What provision does God make in temptation, and what response does He require?

Prepare Your Heart

What does your prayer life reveal about your confidence in God, and what idol most competes for your trust?

Pray for the Spirit to strengthen your assurance, align your prayers with God's will, and guard your heart from idols.

DURING THE SERMON: LISTEN

The Mark of Assurance

You Live with Confidence in God - 1 John 5:14–21

Big Idea: Assurance produces confident prayer, concern for others, resistance to sin, and security in the true God.

1. Pray with Confidence in God's _____ - Verses 14–15

Assurance shows up in prayer.

Key Insight:

2. Care for Others' Spiritual _____ - Verses 16–17

Assurance produces concern for others.

Key Insight:

3. Live Secure in Christ in a Dark _____ - Verses 18–21

You belong to God. Live like it.

Key Insight:

AFTER THE SERMON: RESPOND

Does my prayer life reveal confidence that God hears me?

Am I willing to submit my desires and requests to God's will?

Whose spiritual condition should I be praying for?

What truth from 1 John gives me the greatest assurance?

What idol competes with the true God for my heart?

This Week's Challenge

Pray specifically for one wandering person, surrender one request to God's will, and identify one idol that must be removed.

Prayer

"Father, thank You that I may approach You with confidence through Christ. Align my prayers with Your will and give me genuine concern for those who wander. Keep me secure in Christ while living in a dark world. Guard my heart from every idol and help me remain faithful to the true God. Amen."

Suggested Resources for Further Study

The following resources are recommended for those who want to study John's letters more deeply. They represent conservative, evangelical scholarship and expository preaching. Inclusion does not necessarily imply agreement with every interpretation, but each resource can help readers better understand the biblical text and its application.

Expository Sermon Series

John MacArthur, "1 John"

Grace to You

An extensive verse-by-verse exposition of 1 John emphasizing assurance, holiness, obedience, love, and doctrinal truth. MacArthur's series follows the text closely and includes audio messages and transcripts.

Alistair Begg, "A Study in 1 John"

Truth For Life

A clear and pastoral exposition of 1 John with particular attention to assurance, love, obedience, truth, and perseverance. Truth For Life also provides messages from 2 John and other resources covering the Johannine letters.

John Piper, "Let Us Walk in the Light: 1 John"

Desiring God

A Christ-centered sermon series exploring eternal life, confession, assurance, obedience, love, and the believer's relationship with the world.

Mark Dever, Sermons on 1 John

Capitol Hill Baptist Church

These messages repeatedly ask whether a person can truly know God while continuing in sin, rejecting Christ, withholding love, or failing to persevere. They are especially helpful for understanding John's tests of genuine faith.

H. B. Charles Jr., Sermons and Outlines on 1 John

H. B. Charles Jr. Ministries

Accessible expository messages that combine careful explanation with memorable structure and direct application. The collection includes messages on Christ's reality, propitiation, obedience, and the believer's identity as God's child.

Accessible Commentaries

John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*

Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

A concise, clear, and pastorally useful commentary. Stott is especially helpful in tracing John's tests of belief, obedience, and love. This is one of the best starting places for teachers and serious Bible students.

Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*

New American Commentary

An accessible evangelical commentary that combines careful exegesis, theological explanation, and practical application. It is particularly useful for sermon and lesson preparation.

Ray Van Neste, *1–3 John*

ESV Expository Commentary

A readable, evangelical treatment designed to serve pastors, teachers, and Bible students. Van Neste also provides a free online commentary on 1 John through The Gospel Coalition.

John MacArthur, *1–3 John*

MacArthur New Testament Commentary

A detailed expositional commentary drawn from MacArthur's preaching ministry. It is especially useful for tracing arguments, identifying key theological themes, and developing practical applications.

Intermediate and Advanced Commentaries

Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*

Pillar New Testament Commentary

A careful and readable commentary that gives serious attention to John's language, historical setting, theology, and treatment of false teaching.

Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

A substantial historical and theological study of John's letters. Yarbrough interacts with major interpretive questions while remaining useful for pastors and teachers.

Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*

Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

A detailed but readable commentary that bridges academic research and practical ministry. Its organization is particularly helpful for tracing literary structure, theology, and application.