



Study Guide “Living the Loving Truth”

1-3 John are a series of letters that have two repeating themes: authenticity in our faith and intimacy with God. A genuine faith will value the truth of God’s word and express it’s teaching actively in the world. This authentic expression of our faith should keep us daily “Living the Loving truth.” Dr. Constable wrote “Is the light of holiness shining clearly, or are you walking in darkness? Is your love still burning brightly, or has your life deteriorated to the level of only learning God’s Word? . . . What do you want people to remember you for, your knowledge or your love? (1 Cor 13)”

1 John 1 lays a great foundation to this intimacy with God in His truth and light. **“5** Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” To have fellowship (*κοινωνία koinonia*), an intimate connection and participation, with God, then we should be practicing truth, walking in light, connecting with the loving sacrifice of Jesus. We should be Living the Loving Truth of the gospel.

As we go through this book study we pray that this will cap off our year long study to be a people of great faith that impacts the lives of the community around us; considering the journey we have been on to “Live and Love like Jesus,” by looking beyond the miracles, taking in our daily bread together, connecting with the power of the Holy Spirit, to live out our radical faith in God’s radical story, to be moved to share God’s love with the world as we live the loving truth. “Dear children, let us not love with word or tongue, but with deed and truth.” (ch 3) “God is love, and the one who resides in God, and God resides in him.” (ch 4)

April	Series
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May	Series
6-06	1 John 4
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Week 1

Living the Loving Truth

1 John 1

Scripture:

1 John 1 (NET)

The Prologue to the Letter

1 This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands have touched (concerning the word of life - 2 and the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us). 3 What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ). 4 Thus we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

God Is Light, So We Must Walk in the Light

5 Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

• Commentary

Introduction:

Although the author is not identified in this letter, there is evidence from early Christian writings and from within the text itself that the author is John. John 1:1 says, "What we have looked at and our hands have touched," and verse 3, "What we have seen and heard," together imply that the author of this book is an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus. In these letters, an inner circle perspective, not only reveals truths relayed from Jesus but invites the reader into an intimate connection. As we exit out of our series on evangelism, we can understand the desire to invite others into our fellowship with God and how our joy would be complete if they became brothers and sisters in our family in Christ.

The word fellowship (*κοινωνία koinonia*) in an intimate connection and participation with God. John is inviting the reader into his own community, which is connected to God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Living the loving truth invites those from outside the family to be intimate members in our community, finding joy in their adoption to God's family and becoming brothers and sisters together in God's family.

The Good News:

The two repeating themes we will see throughout these letters are intimacy with God (expressed above in *koinonia*) and authenticity of faith. Verses 5-10 address the latter. We will see multiple if/then clauses throughout the letters that point out the circumstances of inauthentic fellowship and faith. “If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. . . If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. . . If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.” These choices and attitudes are not conditions of salvation but evidences of faith. Walking in light instead of darkness, knowing our imperfections, does not demand that we never make a mistake, but it is in the intentions of walking in God’s presence (God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all).

Living the loving truth tells us that owning our mistakes and confessing our sins brings our lives into the light. There will not be any darkness left when we are forgiven and we have nothing left to hide. God is truth, and what His word says is true. The loving truth is the guaranteed promise that we are forgiven with a simple confession and then we can live in fellowship with a gracious, loving, righteous Father.

• **Meditation and Application:**

- What aspects of faith in church culture seem inauthentic to you?
- What aspects of faith in your own life do you find inconsistent or inauthentic to what you know to be true in scripture?
- What promises in God’s loving truth can be seen here and how do these promises give you peace on this earth? What about peace with eternity in mind? How can relying on these promises affect how you live? How you interact with other believers? How you interact with non-Christians?

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):

- Fellowship: Acts 2:42-47
- Coming into the light: John 1:1-5, 9-13, 3:16-21

Action Challenges For the Week:

- Find time to pray this week: Pray prayers of confession, coming into the light and trusting God’s loving truth that you are forgiven and purified of all unrighteousness. Then pray prayers of celebration knowing that because of this forgiveness you have an intimate *koinonia* fellowship with God the Father, through Jesus, that connects you with all believers.

Share and Pray:



Week 2

Living the Loving Truth

1 John 2

Scripture:

1 John 2 (NET)

1 (My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.) But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, 2 and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.

Keeping God's Commandments

3 Now by this we know that we have come to know God: if we keep his commandments. 4 The one who says "I have come to know God" and yet does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in such a person. 5 But whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in him. 6 The one who says he resides in God ought himself to walk just as Jesus walked.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have already heard. 8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 The one who says he is in the light but still hates his fellow Christian is still in the darkness. 10 The one who loves his fellow Christian resides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his fellow Christian is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Words of Reassurance

12 I am writing to you, little children, that your sins have been forgiven because of his name. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, that you have known him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, that you have conquered the evil one. 14 I have written to you, children, that you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, that you have known him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young people, that you are strong, and the word of God resides in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 16 because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.

Warning About False Teachers

18 Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. We know from this that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us, because if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But they went out from us to demonstrate that all of them do not belong to us.

20 Nevertheless you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21 I have not written to you that you do not know the truth, but that you do know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This one is the antichrist: the person who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. The person who confesses the Son has the Father also.

24 As for you, what you have heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 Now this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life. 26 These things I have written to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

27 Now as for you, the anointing that you received from him resides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, it is true and is not a lie. Just as it has taught you, you reside in him.

Children of God

28 And now, little children, remain in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from him in shame when he comes back. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you also know that everyone who practices righteousness has been fathered by him.

• Commentary

The running theme throughout chapter two is the necessity for the believer to remain intimately connected with the truth. Verse 24-25, “As for you, what you have heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. Now this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life.” Under the umbrella of the two continuous overarching themes of this book, authentic faith and intimate koinonia with God, chapter two of 1 John teaches us that remaining in God’s loving truth will keep us intimately connected to Him.

v1-2: **Truth of forgiveness**: Even in moments of sin, the truth of Jesus’ sacrifice continues to atone for our sins. This is not just for us, but “for the whole world.” This loving truth reminds us of God’s open door, even as sinners, and this includes the entire sinful world (all have sinned and fall short).

v3–11: **Living the Loving Truth**: There is a 3 step intimacy with God’s truth there. First, knowing the commands of God. Second, loving God’s truth does not solely focus on knowledge and understanding, but strives to obey. Scripture is God breathed and useful for changing the very way we live (2 Tim 3:16). Finally, an intimacy with this truth leads us to intimacy with Jesus, as we live and love as He did. We will have our deepest connections with God’s truth when we walk with Jesus, who said He is the truth in John 14:6. This intimacy is developed through walking in His shoes (Phil 3:10-11)

We also find another trademark “If someone says or believes. . . but acts opposite that truth. . . does not have fellowship with God.” In this iteration, it is an expansion of chapter 1’s teaching on light and darkness but applied to how one who claims to walk in light may hate his fellow brother. We see a connection to Jesus’ new command in John 13:34, “Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my



disciples.” Disciples that are living the loving truth will love as Jesus did. You love God’s word, by obeying the commandments, and in doing so, you will have an intimate connection with Jesus as one of His disciples.

v.12-17: **Rooted in the Gospel**: After a section focused on the way people live either in light or darkness, John returns back to remind the readers of the foundation of the gospel. Intimacy with the truth does not change the truth of salvation by God’s actions without the need of our works.

You are forgiven.
You have victory.
You have known the Father.
You know the truth.

Understanding these basic statements should move us to respond to God in love. We can receive these truths and everything that comes with them by living out the truth in action. Living with our eyes focused on the temporary and worldly things above God might show that we do not fully understand how incredible God’s forgiveness, victory and intimacy really are.

v.18-29: These verses give a very simple contrast between those who have intimate fellowship with God and his truth and those who do not. Those that are not connected to the truth will not only walk away from fellowship with God, but also stray from fellowship with other believers. The liar is the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ. If Jesus is not the Christ, then Jesus is not the mediator to the Father and then there is no advocate (v.1). The one who does not have the Son cannot have the Father. But the one that has the Son, knows the Truth, will live in righteousness.

This is what **Living the Loving Truth** leads us into. Life with Jesus, what He taught and how He lived, ushers us into God’s will for us in this world. This intimacy with Jesus is what will continue to protect us from false teaching and false living.

• **Meditation and Application**

- Verses 5-6 is very telling about the lives that we are to lead. Whoever obeys His word has the love of God perfected in them. There is often a contrast between those who “err on the side of love” and those who are “too dogmatic in their religion.” Much of what we learn in scripture finds us balancing two opinions that tend to polarize. Obedience to God’s word, understanding and living out His truth, makes us perfect in God’s love.

- What are some aspects of life where we see those who prioritize “the mind” or thought standing in contrast to those who prioritize “the heart” or their feelings?

- How does “Living the Loving Truth” move us to both obedience and intimacy with God? What are examples in your life where obeying someone or a teaching exemplifies your intimacy and closeness with them?

- What aspects of God’s truth bring us closer to Him? And how does that increase our fellowship with others?

- Reread the phrases in v.12-14 together and affirm each other in these truths from God. Receive these promises of forgiveness, of knowledge of God, victory over evil, and intimacy with the Father, and then extend them to others in your group today. Sometimes we need to hear



these words and remember these truths even though we would tell ourselves that we know them. Being reminded, rereading, or hearing these truths from others can give us a different feel or perspective.

Action Challenges For the Week:

- A big focus on Living the Loving truth falls into avoiding false teaching. Take time this week to identify the things that you get drawn to that you know are not of God, share with someone else, then turn from them. Focus on what God is calling you to do in contrast to those teachings. If you keep your eyes focused on God, obedient to His teaching, it will keep you from falling into those ideas that are not from the Truth.

• Share and Pray:



Week 3

Living the Loving Truth

1 John 3

Scripture:

1 John 3 (NET)

1 (See what sort of love the Father has given to us: that we should be called God's children - and indeed we are! For this reason the world does not know us: because it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is. 3 And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure).

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; indeed, sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that Jesus was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 Everyone who resides in him does not sin; everyone who sins has neither seen him nor known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you: The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous. 8 The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed: to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Everyone who has been fathered by God does not practice sin, because God's seed resides in him, and thus he is not able to sin, because he has been fathered by God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are revealed: Everyone who does not practice righteousness - the one who does not love his fellow Christian - is not of God.

God Is Love, So We Must Love One Another

11 For this is the gospel message that you have heard from the beginning: that we should love one another, 12 not like Cain who was of the evil one and brutally murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous.

13 Therefore do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians. The one who does not love remains in death. 15 Everyone who hates his fellow Christian is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. 16 We have come to know love by this: that Jesus laid down his life for us; thus we ought to lay down our lives for our fellow Christians. 17 But whoever has the world's possessions and sees his fellow Christian in need and shuts off his compassion against him, how can the love of God reside in such a person?

18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth. 19 And by this we will know that we are of the truth and will convince our conscience in his presence, 20 that if our conscience condemns us, that God is greater than our conscience and knows all things. 21 Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have confidence in the presence of God, 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing to him. 23 Now this is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he gave us the commandment. 24 And the person who keeps his commandments resides in God, and God in him. Now by this we know that God resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us.

- **Commentary**

1 John chapter 3 can be divided into two sections, focusing on what God gives us and what we are called to give, or extend, to others. It also contains the dividing line between two major sections of the entire letter. The first half has focused on believers living righteous and authentic faith, which moves into the second half which centers on the theme of love. Throughout scripture we can see many great pairings between God's holiness and His loving provision, or His just judgement and loving mercy. It is the same here as we see God's call to righteous living being paired with God's call for believers to love others.

(v.1-10) This section itself can also be broken up into two parts, v1-3 on God's adopting us into His family and v4-10 that speak of the reverberating effects of that love. We are not only brought into God's family, becoming heirs of a great inheritance, but we also become absorbed into a new culture. We are not simply children of God on paper, left to receive eternal life wherever we are at. God calls us into His family, into His home, to teach us as a Father, shape us, cheer us on through our struggles and to support us. We are purified by faith, and changed through intentional work.

That is where the idea of "practicing" sin or "practicing righteousness" comes into play. The effects of God's great adoption, the fellowship of His purpose and plans, moves our focus away from living in intentional sin. If you have seen God, your Father, and you know Him, then you will begin to look like Him.

Verses 7-8, and 9-10, give repeated contrasts between those who are in koinonia fellowship with God, and thus striving towards righteousness with those who perpetually and habitually sin. The statement comes off strong, but John is writing to specifically counter an aspect of gnosticism that separated spiritual truth from physical living. Secessionist teaching allowed people to do whatever they wanted to physically, with no implications to their spiritual well being. John is specifically writing to make clear that what we do physically does have spiritual implications.

On surface level readings it would sound like sinless living is the requirement for justification, but that is not consistent with what was written throughout this letter so far (see 1 John 1:8 and 1 John 2:1-2). The difference between the two perspectives listed in verses 7-10 could be understood in the different perspectives on the process of sanctification (changing or growing in one's life to live more righteous lives). Those following gnosticism would think they are connected spiritually, as they disregarded the process of sanctification. Followers of biblical truth, what John was calling his listeners back to, should recognize their imperfections yet be willing to work to change. Being adopted into God's loving family would move those who truly know God and have seen Him to want to be more like Him.

(v.11-24) John begins his movement into a focus on God's love that will continue to be developed through the rest of this letter. We see that the call to love one another is connected to the message of the gospel (v11), that the one who loves does not remain in death (v.13), but would sacrificially love as Jesus did (v16), and that following this command gives evidence that we reside in God (v23-24). In 1 John 3-4 it is easy to focus on the negative life actions, when we are not loving, but the focus on these chapters is on the call to love.



Love is performed through action and truth. It cannot just be said, but it must be shown. Imagine the difference in marriages between 1) a husband that says he loves his wife, but never shows it, or 2) a husband that does not express his love in word, but lives out his love in action daily. Obviously a balance of the two is very important for a healthy marriage, but just thinking about these marriages, we would see one model of a husband that seems surface level without substance, and one where words would only affirm the life of love that is being authentically lived out. The same goes for our life in God's family.

• **Meditation and Application**

1. Do you feel like you have been adopted into a new family? What does that feel like? If you do not feel it, what do you think is holding you back? What blocks do you have put up?

2. What are some similarities in current culture that seem similar to the gnostic teaching that the physical body is separated from our spiritual lives? Have you ever experienced something that has helped you understand why your physical body is connected to your spiritual, emotional, and mental self?

3. Living the Loving Truth: Do we say "God, I love you so much!" and then never follow His greatest commandments? Or do we allow our actions, attitude, and truth to speak our love for Him and our neighbors? Which communicates more as a witness to our changed lives?

4. As a child of God, how do you think God would sit with you and speak with you today about how you are living as His child in the world? What words of comfort would he offer? What words of encouragement or correction would He be saying to you?

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):

- Adoption into God's family: Galatians 4:5-6, Ephesians 1:5, Romans 8:14-17
- Sanctification: 2 Timothy 2:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Galatians 2:20

Action Challenges For the Week:

• **Is there an aspect of your life that you know is lawlessness? What do you need to give up in intentional sanctification? How can your life group help keep you accountable? What steps can you take to begin to find freedom from this heart, mind, body issue to continue to grow spiritually?**

• **Share and Pray:**

Week 4

Living the Loving Truth

1 John 4

Scripture:

1 John 4 (NET)

1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.

4 You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world's perspective and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; the person who knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

God is Love

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God. 8 The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. 10 In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11 Dear friends, if God so loved us, then we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God resides in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we reside in God and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God resides in him and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has in us. God is love, and the one who resides in love resides in God, and God resides in him. 17 By this love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as Jesus is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears punishment has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he loved us first.

20 If anyone says "I love God" and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar, because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And the commandment we have from him is this: that the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian too.

• Commentary

We see two main themes in 1 John 4 which are the two central themes of this epistle and our series: the truth of the gospel and living a life that authenticates that truth.

(v1-6) At the end of chapter 3, John mentions the Spirit of God that resides within us. Acknowledging the existence of the spiritual world meant that John had to also address the

spirits that are not from God. As believers of God's words, we know that there are spirits that are led by God and those that oppose Him. John gave the criteria to be able to differentiate between the two. Those that are led by the Spirit of God confess that Jesus is the Christ that came in the flesh.

To confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah or the anointed one, is to confess that Jesus is the savior. Confessing that the Christ came in the flesh recognizes the full humanity of Jesus's birth, life and death. This is not simply saying "I believe that Jesus lived at some point," but is more so, "I believe that God's chosen one came to earth and delivered me from my sins. My savior is Jesus Christ."

Those that are of the Spirit of God are those that recognize the full truth of the gospel message. Anything that denies these truths or works against them is by definition "antichrist" or opposing Christ. Those that are from the world speak the message of the world. This is a message that all of us would be in if it wasn't for the saving power of God's plan. Because of the possibility of being adopted in the family of God (1 John 3), we can move from being of the world to being of the Spirit of God. This is greater than moving from one location to another, it is a transformation of Spirit, heart, and thought.

(v7-21) Now those who transform their minds would authenticate this truth by also transforming the way that they live. There are many statements about God here but none more straightforward than "God is love." From this simple yet profound statement a plethora of applications can be made.

If God is love, then our understanding of love comes from God. Therefore we could not love first, that had to come from God since He is not only our creator but love comes from His essence (v10). That love is shown as Jesus who came in the flesh, which brings us back to the truth of the gospel, but propels us into following God's example of love (v11). We should also love others the way that God loved. He eliminated punishment to remove fear from our lives, which not only gives us freedom from the eternal effects of sin, but also the weight of our guilt when we do make mistakes (18). If we know the Father, and we experience His love (v7), we should be moved to love our fellow believers (v21).

God, our Father, is love.

He loved us.

Intimacy with God involves intimacy with His essence in not only receiving but being overwhelmed with, and overflowing, His love to others.

This chapter seems to end with a contrast similar to how it began, showing that if there is the possibility of love, there is also the possibility of the opposite. If you say you love God, but hate your brother, you are a liar. If the Spirit of God resides in us, there is also the existence of a spirit that would move us away from God. In both cases, it is important to identify the spirit of deceit, or hate, but as long as we continue to love, God's Spirit will be in us and His truth will be validated, and completed, through the expression of our life worship.

• **Meditation and Application**

1 John 4 can move us to see the things that we need to identify and remove from our lives, and also push us to live out His truth more intentionally and authentically.



1. Are there questions that you have about the essential confession of truth that John points out in the first section of 1 John 4? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ and that Jesus came in the flesh? Moreover, do you believe that Jesus saved you from your sins by living and dying on the cross?
2. How does this story tell God's love? What other ways have you been overwhelmingly loved by someone else? What did someone else do in your life and how did feeling that love change the way you responded to that person, or loved other people after experiencing that?
3. Are there ways that you find yourself "hating" your fellow believers? If "hate" is too strong of a word, do you ever find yourself "not loving" someone? Whether it is in jealousy, bitterness, or even simple passive neutrality, what situations could you have done more or done better to show love to someone in your life?

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):

- Jesus as the Christ - Matthew 16:13-20, Psalm 22
- Response to Salvation and Forgiveness- Psalm 16, Psalm 51, Romans 12:1-2

Action Challenges For the Week:

- Take time this week to meditate on God's love in your life. Know that He loved you first in a way that expresses the ultimate aspects of love. Allow that truth to permeate your heart and pray for God to pour that same love out through your own life. What is He calling you to do? How will you take steps to do those things?
- **Share and Pray:**



Week 5

Living the Loving Truth

1 John 5

Scripture:

1 John 5 (NET)

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been fathered by God, and everyone who loves the father loves the child fathered by him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God: whenever we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God: that we keep his commandments. And his commandments do not weigh us down, 4 because everyone who has been fathered by God conquers the world.

Testimony About the Son

This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith. 5 Now who is the person who has conquered the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 Jesus Christ is the one who came by water and blood - not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify, 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement.

9 If we accept the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, because this is the testimony of God that he has testified concerning his Son. 10 (The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified concerning his Son.) 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life.

Assurance of Eternal Life

13 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

14 And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him. 16 If anyone sees his fellow Christian committing a sin not resulting in death, he should ask, and God will grant life to the person who commits a sin not resulting in death. There is a sin resulting in death. I do not say that he should ask about that. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin not resulting in death.

18 We know that everyone fathered by God does not sin, but God protects the one he has fathered, and the evil one cannot touch him. 19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight to know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This one is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

• **Commentary**

We will split up looking at these verses into three topics. First is the assurance of salvation and the security of our eternity. Second is the testimony of God and of our lives. Last, the victory over all sins, except the one that leads to death.

Salvation: There are many different explanations and terminology when it comes to our salvation: being adopted or fathered by God, eternal life, going to Heaven, being “in” God or “in His Son.” These are all different analogies that speak to the same truth. We believe everyone has an eternal soul, but to have eternal life means that we will be with God, in His presence and more so His family for all of eternity. Heaven itself is not simply a place or destination, it is being wherever God is since every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17).

In 1 John 5 we see that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been fathered by God (v1) and they have conquered the world (v4), which is often used to be those things that are in contrast to God. Faith and belief in Jesus is where all of this conquering power comes from on our part and that leads to a very clear statement on our eternities. “God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has this eternal life.” (v11-12). John writes these things so that those who do believe “may know that you have eternal life,” or eternal life after physical death in God’s presence in Heaven. Even if we have doubts, we have an assurance that the Father would protect us, not allowing the evil one to touch us (v18).

Throughout this chapter we see a continuous thread that speaks to give the believer confidence. It may seem too easy, or maybe it is hard to be confident without proof or a receipt or an order confirmation emailed to our inbox. John wants his readers to fully understand that the power of faith and belief and how, by God’s work of adoption, we are now destined for eternal life in God’s beautiful presence. That should be enough, but if we do need some proof of affirmation we can turn to the testimonies present before us.

Testimonies: Much of 1 John contains instruction and challenge to live lives that authenticate the connection of a believer with the Father. If you walk in light instead of darkness (1 John 1:6-7), confess our sins instead of claiming sinlessness (1:8-9), keep his commandments (2:3-4), love your brother (4:20-21), live in faith believing the testimony of God over the testimony of men (5:9-12) then we will have fellowship with and knowledge of our Father in a way that affirms externally the faith that changes us eternally.

While much of 1 John speaks to the testimony our lives exemplify, but chapter five speaks to a greater testimony. God testifies concerning His Son. The water, His baptism, was a beautifully symbolic moment that the Spirit came upon Jesus. The blood that cleanses us not only testifies about God’s redemptive plan, but also gives weight to the physical body of Jesus. What is the message that these three testify about?

“11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life.” (1 John 5:11-12)

Our life changes authenticate our faith, but God’s testimony tells us that our faith in Jesus is our salvation and our victory.



Victory: We have total victory over sin, the world, and even death through Jesus Christ. The power to conquer does not come from strength or military force. It comes from faith (v4) and that faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). God gifts us faith, which gives us the power to conquer the world, through the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ whom God also gave us (John 3:16). The testimony of victory all comes from the plan and provision of a powerful God. That is why we know this win is final and secure. It rests completely on God and not on us. We are fallible, but God is perfect. Our plans change, but God is constant. His words are true and He never breaks His promises (Titus 1:1-2).

There is a sin that leads to death and there are sins that do not. There are a number of theories about what this sin is. Some theologians think that all of this in context considers "premature physical death." If this is true, then believers would be praying for people committing sins that they would survive, but not those that would have a natural consequence of "premature physical death" since there would not be someone to continue to pray for. The majority theory that is expressed is that the sin that leads to death, "spiritual death" in this case, is the choice to deny the truth of Jesus as Christ, and not accept the gift of salvation. This idea, in the context of 1 John 5 where those who have the Son have eternal life, and those who do not have the Son of God do not have life, makes more sense. To speak about temporary physical life in the midst of instruction about conquering the temporary world and moving into eternal adoption in God's family would be a big shift in focus. That would lend itself to understand that the sin that would lead to death would be to deny the gift that leads to life.

• **Meditation and Application**

Salvation is of greatest importance. Please take time to fully understand what "salvation," "eternal life," and "heaven," mean.

- 1) What do you know about the truth of the gospel and God's message?
- 2) If you are a believer, when did you open up your heart to that truth? If not, what things are you still wondering about or what questions do you still have?
- 3) How sure are you that your faith has led to eternal life? And how can you have 100% confidence in that promise?

Action Challenges For the Week:

- **As Pastor Ken would always say, we need the gospel everyday and twice on Sunday. What reminders can you set for yourself or for each other that will help you remember the incredible promise of salvation from God?**
- **Share and Pray:**

Week 6

Living the Loving Truth

2 John 1

Scripture:

2 John (NET)

Introduction and Thanksgiving

1 From the elder, to an elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth (and not I alone, but also all those who know the truth), 2 because of the truth that resides in us and will be with us forever. 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I rejoiced greatly because I have found some of your children living according to the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

Warning Against False Teachers

5 But now I ask you, lady (not as if I were writing a new commandment to you, but the one we have had from the beginning), that we love one another. 6 (Now this is love: that we walk according to his commandments.) This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning; thus you should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not confess Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh. This person is the deceiver and the antichrist! 8 Watch out, so that you do not lose the things we have worked for, but receive a full reward.

9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God. The one who remains in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him any greeting, 11 because the person who gives him a greeting shares in his evil deeds.

Conclusion

12 Though I have many other things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink, but I hope to come visit you and speak face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

13 The children of your elect sister greet you.

• Commentary

Here we have another of John's letters. This one does not have an explicit identifier to the author, but recognition of John as "the elder" here was recognized by the early church fathers. The thematic focus and similar writing to 1 John also gives weight to John as the author.

(v1-4) The greeting comes from "the elder" to "an elect lady and her children." While there are a few theories about who this lady can be, or what they represent, most lead to assumptions that are not only not supported, but contradict verbiage that John uses (i.e. maybe the lady's name was "Eklekta," the Greek word for elect, but John also uses the same word for her sister later in this letter). The two main possibilities left are that John is writing to a specific unnamed woman and her family, or to a church and its members which are personified as a lady and her children. Whether it is a household family or a church body, the truths remain the same.



Believers of the truth, which represents the sound doctrine that John advocates in his letters, send their love to those who are also in the truth. There is an inner connection between all those who live by the same core theology of Jesus Christ as their savior (v2) which is more than just a common interest. This eternal connection is transformative and leads to receiving, extending, and creating a culture of grace (the giving of something undeserved), mercy (the withholding of punishment that is deserved) and peace (the unity and connection between different parties).

The fact that John “rejoiced greatly” shows that the connection in truth and love is also an emotional connection. Truth is often initially understood as the logical truth of the mind. This is a large aspect of truth, but as we are called to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength in the greatest commandment, we realize that all these elements of ourselves are connected and affect one another. John seeing children of this community abiding in God’s truth moved him to not only approve of their life’s actions, but to be moved emotionally to rejoice and celebrate.

(v5-11) In the main body of this short letter we revisit the themes of truth and love, based on the foundation of “confess[ing] Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh.” (v7 cf. 1 John 4:2, 5:1). The direct statement against the Gnostic heresy that Jesus came only as spirit and not in the flesh being present in both 1 John and 2 John gives evidence that both letters were written around the same time.

John continues to encourage the community to love one another as commanded (v5), and that they would walk according to God’s commandments (v6). This continues the previous thought and connection to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength in these epistles which is seen in rejoicing greatly (heart), confessing Jesus as the Christ (soul), the historical truth of Jesus in the flesh (mind), and lovingly living out the commandments (strength).

John returns to the conditional statements we saw in 1 John “everyone who. . . does not have God,” by saying those who do not remain in the teaching of Christ do not have God. This is not a call to salvation by faultless perfection, but does give an acknowledgement that someone that does not love God in their actions (strength) may not be loving God in the heart, soul and mind either. If this is the case, “do not receive them into your house and do not give him any greeting.” This is not persecuting or pushing away non-believers. John is speaking against the practice of housing teachers and philosophers who visit areas and towns, relying on the community to provide for them. Here, John is telling this community to not make it easier for false teachers to come and share.

(v12-13) The conclusion of the letter gives a little more evidence that the metaphorical “lady” is the church when it concludes with “the children of your elect sister greet you.” The letter is from the children of another elect lady, or church community, that shares in the same truth. There are more things that John wants to share, and wants to do so in person. The inclusion of this leaves us wondering what else needs to be said, but also gives confirmation of the importance of the teaching that was included. Other things need to be discussed, but will happen in person, but this truth needs to be sent ahead and addressed in this letter. The direct calling out and protection against false teaching, and the encouragement to the faithful are important things to extend to other believers of the truth!



• **Meditation and Application**

1. Pastor Matt preached on 2 John and had two outlines. One with a brief outline of the letter and one simplified version. Do you remember the first three points? How were those simplified into the second outline with the 3 points of "Follow Jesus, Follow Jesus and Follow Jesus"? What aspects of love and truth do you struggle with following Jesus in?

2. As you write letters, cards, emails, texts, are you able to communicate both the connection and encouragement as well as the challenges to grow with others? What practices of letter writing and encouragement can we take from John's example here? What elements can you add into your own communication that might help when you have an important message that cannot wait until you're face to face? How many affirmations and encouragements are there? How many challenges of growth or changes in living are present?

3. As John connected to this elect lady, with the words of the children from her elect sister, how much are you personally connecting with others who live in the truth? How about your life group or generational community connecting with other life groups or other generations? And what about connecting with other elect sisters with your own church community?

Action Challenges For the Week:

• **Find a way to connect with another group that may not be your regular church connections. Whether it is within Pathway, or the greater body of Christ, try sending an encouragement to them, noticing the things you have in common, how they are living, and encourage them to continue on in their pursuit of living out the greatest commandment.**

• **Share and Pray:**



Week 7

Living the Loving Truth

3 John 1

Scripture:

3 John (NET)

Introduction and Thanksgiving

1 From the elder, to Gaius my dear brother, whom I love in truth. 2 Dear friend, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, just as you are living according to the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are living according to the truth.

The Charge to Gaius

5 Dear friend, you demonstrate faithfulness by whatever you do for the brothers (even though they are strangers). 6 They have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. 7 For they have gone forth on behalf of "The Name," accepting nothing from the pagans. 8 Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we become coworkers in cooperation with the truth.

Diotrephes the Troublemaker

9 I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not acknowledge us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call attention to the deeds he is doing - the bringing of unjustified charges against us with evil words! And not being content with that, he not only refuses to welcome the brothers himself, but hinders the people who want to do so and throws them out of the church! 11 Dear friend, do not imitate what is bad but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does what is bad has not seen God.

Worthy Demetrius

12 Demetrius has been testified to by all, even by the truth itself. We also testify to him, and you know that our testimony is true.

Conclusion

13 I have many things to write to you, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink. 14 But I hope to see you right away, and we will speak face to face. 15 Peace be with you. The friends here greet you. Greet the friends there by name.

• Commentary

Greeting and Introduction (v1-8) This is seemingly one of the most intimate and directly addressed epistles. This letter to Gaius, which is a pretty common Greek name, As John writes, he affirms Gaius, encourages, prays for and charges/challenges him to continue. It is important to see that even in letters of encouragement that challenges to grow can still be present.

In our series of "The Living and Loving Truth" we not only learn about how to live the loving life, but we see that there are people, like Gaius, who are already living this. John finds



incredible joy in this (v4). Just as John is encouraging Gaius, he challenges Gaius to do the same to others. Even those that they do not know (v5), they can be connected, encouraging and growing in truth together (v8).

In contrast to moving to partnership, we see what a broken relationship between church leadership looks like. Diotrephes stands in stark contrast to Gaius. While Gaius lives according to the truth and many testify to his love before the church, Diotrephes does not welcome the other brothers and throws them out of the church. He ignores the communications of John and is building himself up.

The two clear applications from 3 John to effectively live the loving truth are 1) to join together in unity, humbly with the other believers and 2) in mentorship to imitate what is good. The more that we are able to connect with different believers and parts of Christ's body, the church, the more mentors and good examples we will have to learn from and follow.

• **Meditation and Application**

1) In what ways do you connect with brothers and sisters around Pathway? How about outside of this church? How about outside of the bay area church? How can you increase the encouragement and connection with the body of Christ to continue living the loving truth?

2) Share about someone that you look up to in faith? What are the habits that you would like to imitate? Do you have a mentor to imitate now, and if not, what steps can you take to form a mentorship relationship with someone that you look up to in faith?

3) Can you take time to share with someone in your life group, or write a letter, to encourage someone in the way you see them living out God's truth?

• **Share and Pray:**