

# *Love in Action*

## 1 John 1: Walking in Love

### Lesson 1

1 John 1:1–10

#### *Book Profile ~*

The letter of 1 John is widely recognized as authored by the apostle John to the Christians in Asia Minor, also known as modern Turkey. It was written around A.D. 85–90 to readers who knew John well. The purpose of the letter was to refute the efforts being made by false teachers to challenge church doctrine by combining the gospel message with prevailing philosophies of the day. In it, John reiterates the main truths of the gospel message and warns against heresies leading some to compromise. The emphasis of the letter is God's love and the Christian's need to love others. It is written in simple terms that feature sharp contrasts: light and darkness, truth and error, God and Satan, life and death, love and hate.

#### *Author Profile ~*

John was an eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry and among the first called to follow Him. He was the last surviving apostle and one of the three who, along with his brother James and Peter, made up the Lord's inner circle. John referred to himself in his writings as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." He stood by Jesus at the crucifixion, being singled out by Him to care for His mother. John raced Peter to the empty tomb early on Resurrection morning and later walked with the risen Lord along the shore of Galilee. He is known as the "Apostle of Love" because love is the prominent theme in his writings. After writing his gospel account and the three letters from Ephesus, John was exiled to the island of Patmos and there wrote the Book of Revelation. He later returned to Ephesus where he lived out his final days until his death, approximately A.D. 100.

#### *In a nutshell ~*

John's personal testimony to his eyewitness account of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus was to affirm believers in the reality of their faith. He hoped that they might enter into the same kind of true fellowship he enjoyed with God.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

**Read 1 John 1:1–10.**

John was the oldest living apostle and Jesus' closest earthly friend, which meant that he was able to literally touch, see, and hear for himself the very embodiment of life—eternal life. Why would it be important for John to begin his letter with these words? Because his readers were listening to false teachers declaring that Jesus' humanity was not real. Some believed all existing matter was sinful and the body evil (Gnosticism); while others believed Jesus was merely an angel. John countered these false accusations by reminding believers that he had firsthand experience with Jesus. Throughout the remainder of his letter, he will continue to reveal his personal observations about the Lord.

*“That which was from the beginning . . .”* (v.1). The relative phrase “that which” encompasses every aspect about the *Word of Life* that the apostles knew and experienced. This *Word of Life* describes the Son as the visible expression of the invisible God.

1. Compare vv. 1–2 here with John's gospel in John 1:1–2. What similarities do you see?

2. How does John affirm here in vv. 1–2 what he earlier stated in John 1:14?

The reference to Jesus as the *Word of Life* is the Greek term *Logos*, signifying the very beginning.

3. How is Jesus Christ—the *Logos*—the agent that reveals God to humanity? See Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:15–17, and Hebrews 1:2–3a to form your answer.

*“This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him . . . he is the one who is eternal life”* (1 John 1:2 NIV). The Greek word for life is *zoe*, referring to the life of the spirit and the soul. It is expressive of the highest and best of all that Christ is, that which He imparts to all believers: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).

4. John says that the One who is life from God was manifested or revealed to us. What purpose did Jesus' life accomplish for us through His earthly ministry? See 1 John 3:5 and 8.

a. What will take place the next time He is revealed? Colossians 3:4 and 1 Peter 5:4

The fellowship between the Father and the Son has its origins in eternity. This fellowship was manifested in terms of *time* through the Incarnation—to the apostles and then to every believer. Everyone that enters this fellowship by believing in Christ is sealed with the Holy Spirit, becoming part of God's Family.

5. Read vv. 3–4 again closely. What two positive reasons does John give for writing?

John's desire is that all believers would enjoy the same kind of fellowship he enjoyed. The word used here for fellowship is *koinonia*, signifying a sharing together or having all things in common.

- a. John declares the foundation of our fellowship to be based in Christ. Who called us into this fellowship? See 1 Corinthians 1:9.

John is reaffirming the faith of his readers that was being challenged by false teachers. Christians who are in doubt as to the assurance of their salvation will be limited in their *fellowship* with the Father and Son as well as other believers. (We'll be exploring this in-depth throughout our study of 1 John.)

*Selah ~*

Looking from *your* perspective, share why fellowship is both a *privilege* and a *responsibility*.

The way believers treat one another tells the world something about God. Some people prefer to isolate themselves, believing they can live for God alone. The fact is, God created us for fellowship. He desires that we love and care for our believing brothers and sisters by *sharing* in one another's lives. He takes the matter of fellowship very seriously and so should we!

6. Personal: How much time and effort are *you* investing in the family of God? Give an example.

## *Key Verse* ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 1:9**

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

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week's end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

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## Fellowship with God and One Another

### **Read 1 John 1:5–10 for review.**

John's letter is filled with references to fellowship. The biblical concept of fellowship involves more than a conversation at church or the sharing of a meal together. The Bible speaks of it as a spiritual oneness, a deep sharing of life's concerns. It is a partnering together for a common cause. This kind of genuine fellowship—*koinonia*—can only be based upon maintaining a right heart before God.

1. What message does John convey about God in verse 5?

## *Up close ~*

Since God is light, He is perfect and holy. He is the only one who can lead people out of the darkness of sin. In order to more fully appreciate what God has done in granting us fellowship with Him, let's take a closer look at the contrast between darkness and light in Scripture. Look up the verses below and in a word or two note what you glean. Think carefully during this exercise about what happens to a believer during the process of turning from darkness to light.

- a. Acts 26:18
- b. Romans 13:12–14
- c. 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 6

d. Ephesians 6:12; and 5:8–11

e. 1 John 2:8–10

2. Several places in John's Gospel, Jesus speaks of being the *Light of the world*. Read John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36 and 46.

a. What do you learn about the power of light from these verses?

b. What does Jesus declare about those who believe in Him?

c. Summarize the affects of the Light of Truth upon *your own* life.

Jesus promised that whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Light then is an illustration to us of truth, knowledge, and righteousness; while darkness is a picture of falsehood, ignorance, and unrighteousness or sin. Those who claim to follow the Son cannot live in spiritual darkness; they must live in the light of God's presence, continually illuminated by the truth: *"If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth"* (1 John 1:6).

3. Personal: Here's your personal self-help list. Look at it to help you determine how far you've come in your own process. Briefly share your thoughts.

- Are you in close daily communion with God?
- Do you have a no-tolerance policy for any hypocrisy or sin?
- Is it easy for you to be transparent before the Lord or do you make attempts to conceal things from Him?
- How are you diligently working toward Christ-likeness?

Those who walk in the light will occasionally still find that they are sinning. Christians will not reach perfection until Jesus Christ returns and brings us home to be with Him. Our desire to walk in the light will help us to take advantage of the provision God has made for forgiveness through the shed blood of His Son.

4. What does John say about the person who claims to be sinless? v. 8

John was taking direct aim at the claims of the false teachers (1:6 and 1:10) who stated that it was possible for people to be without sin. In making this claim they were, in effect, saying that they did not need the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross. John's point is that they are only fooling themselves; they are liars and God's Word is not in them!

5. Christians need to be constantly reminded of a few facts. Look up the following references and finish the thought begun for you . . .

- a. *Sin has no power over Christians*—Romans 6:6–7

- b. *Believers have a new power to say 'no' to temptation*—1 Corinthians 10:13

- c. *Christians have the power to say 'yes' to righteous living*—Romans 6:11–14

As God's children, we are not to deny sin, but rather to *confess* it. God has graciously provided the answer to our dilemma: "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (v. 9).

*Up close ~*

Use verse 9 as a word exercise to explore the breadth and depth of this week's memory verse. Using the resources you have on hand, define each of the following words:

- a. *Confess*—

b. *Sins*—

c. *Faithful*—

d. *Just*—

e. *Forgive*—

f. *Cleanse*—

g. *Unrighteousness*—

Some people may be inclined to question that if Christ has forgiven all of their sins, then why do they need to continue confessing? Remember that John is speaking here about our *fellowship*—not our *relationship*—with the Father. The moment a person repents and believes in the name of Jesus Christ as their Savior, they become God's child, forever adopted into His family. There is nothing they could do no matter how extreme that would cause Him to “un-adopt” that individual. However, a disobedient child cannot expect to have close intimate fellowship with God the Father.

To *confess* our sin means to *agree with God* about it and to acknowledge the wrong to Him, determining not to let it happen again. By refusing to admit that sin exists, we call Him a liar and cheat ourselves out of the possibility of fellowship with Him. Confession is also necessary to ensure continued fellowship with others in the body of Christ.

Remember that the moment a person becomes a believer, he or she is unconditionally saved from the condemnation of sin and conditionally saved from the power of sin. This means that the VICTORY you have over sin's daily lure is *conditional*—there is something *you* must do. It is conditional in direct proportion to your *obedience* to Christ and your willingness to *confess*—agree with God—whenever you miss the mark! How wonderful to have the absolute scriptural assurance that whenever you confess—He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse. Hallelujah and Amen!

6. Personal: What have *you* learned so far about confession that will help you maintain a close walk with God?

# *Notes*