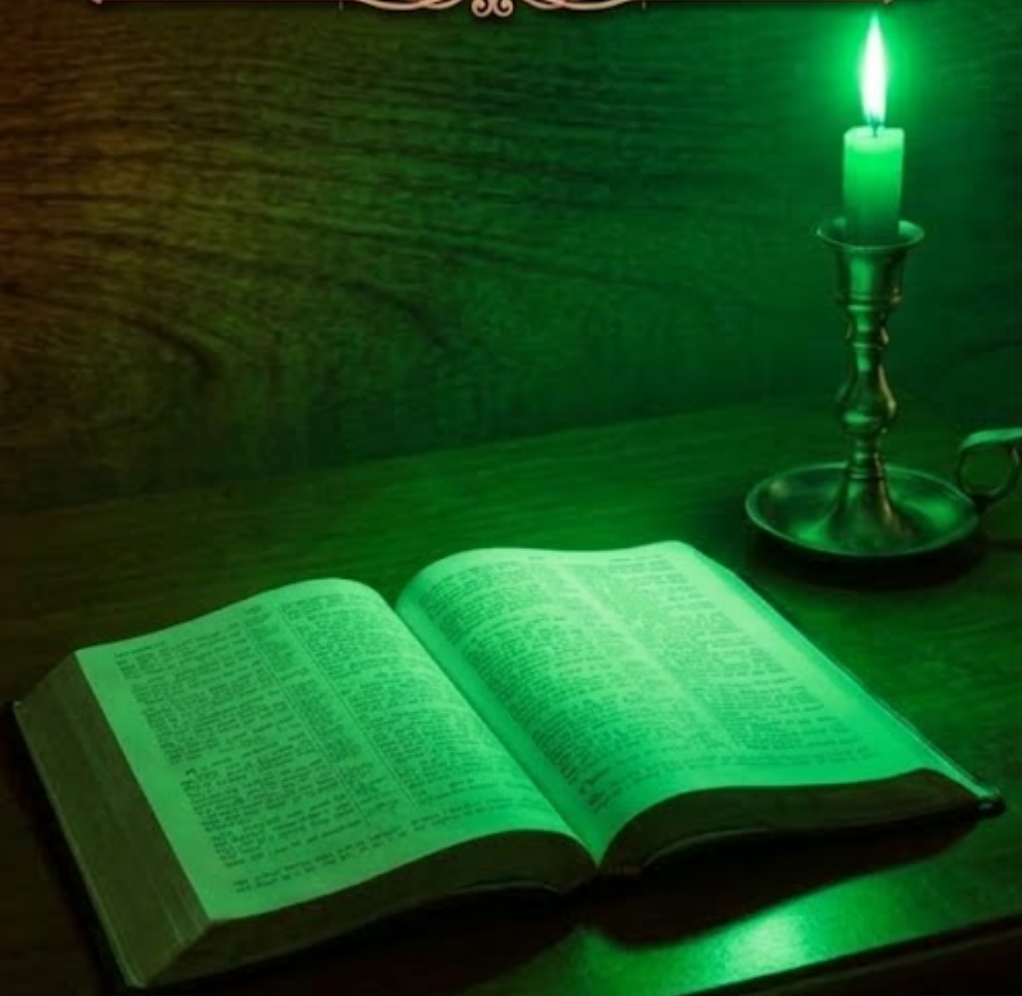


THE BOOK OF THE LETTER OF 1st JOHN FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH



The Letter of 1st John

Walking in the Light of God's Love

A 13-Session Middle School Bible Study

Part of the series *Jesus Christ, Savior of the World*

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Welcome, Teacher

Thank you for investing in the next generation. Middle schoolers are at a wonderful and tender age: they are asking big questions, forming friendships that will shape them, and deciding what they believe for themselves. First John gives them straight answers about who Jesus is, how to know God, and how to love people the way Jesus did.

This book gives you everything for a 13-week study of 1 John, in 45-minute sessions: teacher background notes, a timed session plan, a full teaching outline, an activity, discussion questions, a one-page youth handout, and a short Think, Feel, Do reflection. Each session also has a PowerPoint deck and a podcast episode that students can listen to on their own, available in the companion web app.

How Each Session Works

- Read the background notes during the week. They are for you, not for the students.
- Open with the icebreaker and prayer, then have a student read the passage aloud.
- Teach the four main points (about 15 minutes), speaking in your own words. The teaching text is a guide, not a script.
- Do the activity, then use two or three discussion questions. Do not feel you must use them all.
- Close by handing out the worksheet and praying. Encourage students to answer the Think, Feel, Do questions in the web app after the session.

Tips for Teaching Middle Schoolers

- Keep it moving. Change activities every 8 to 10 minutes.
- Ask real questions and wait. Silence usually means they are thinking.
- Be honest when you do not know. Say, “Let’s find out together.”
- Handle the topics of sin, guilt, fear, and anxiety gently. Some students carry more than you know. Point them to Jesus, and to a parent, counselor, or pastor when needed.
- Make sure every student knows that salvation is a gift of grace through faith in Jesus, and that obedience and love are the fruit of life, not the way to earn it.

About This Letter

First John is a short letter with a big heart. The apostle John, one of Jesus’ closest friends, wrote it near the end of his long life to Christians in the churches around Ephesus. John had walked with Jesus, watched Him heal, heard Him teach, seen Him die, and met Him alive again. In his old age he wrote like a loving grandfather to “my little children,” and he did not want them to be fooled or afraid.

The churches John served were facing two dangers. Some teachers had left the fellowship, denying that Jesus truly came in a real human body and saying that how people lived did not matter. At the same time, believers wondered whether they truly belonged to God. John answers both: Jesus is the real Son of God who came in the flesh, and we can know that we have eternal life.

The Big Picture

John says why he wrote in 5:13: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” The letter circles back to three signs of that life, like a spiral staircase that goes deeper each time: believing the truth about Jesus, walking in the light with obedience and honest confession, and loving one another in deed and in truth. Remind students often that these are signs of life, not ways to earn it. We love because He first loved us (4:19).

A thread that runs through every session is Jesus. He is the Word of life, the Light, our Advocate, the propitiation for our sins, the Son of God who came in the flesh, the Savior of the world, and the true God and eternal life.

Session Overview

#	PASSAGE	TITLE	KEY VERSE
1	1 John 1:1-4	Heard, Seen, Touched!	1 John 1:3
2	1 John 1:5-10	Walking in the Light	1 John 1:9
3	1 John 2:1-6	Our Advocate	1 John 2:1
4	1 John 2:7-14	The Old Command That Is Always New	1 John 2:10
5	1 John 2:15-17	Love the Father, Not the World	1 John 2:17
6	1 John 2:18-29	Spotting the Fakes	1 John 2:20
7	1 John 3:1-10	Children of God	1 John 3:1
8	1 John 3:11-24	Love in Deed and in Truth	1 John 3:18
9	1 John 4:1-6	Test the Spirits	1 John 4:4
10	1 John 4:7-12	God Is Love	1 John 4:8
11	1 John 4:13-21	Perfect Love Casts Out Fear	1 John 4:18
12	1 John 5:1-12	Victory Through Faith	1 John 5:4
13	1 John 5:13-21	That You May Know	1 John 5:13

Companion Resources

Every session has a PowerPoint deck, a one-page youth handout (also printed in this book), and a 5-minute podcast episode with a male and female voice teaching at a 5th to 7th grade level. The companion web app brings the sessions together for students: it includes the big idea, key verse, a Listen to the Lesson player, a What We Learned summary, downloadable handouts, and a three-question Think, Feel, Do reflection after each session. Reflections are stored on the student’s own device, with backup and restore.

SESSION 1 OF 13

Heard, Seen, Touched!

*1 John 1:1-4***THE BIG IDEA**

Jesus is real. John and the other apostles heard Him, saw Him, and touched Him, and knowing Jesus brings us into fellowship with God and with each other and fills us with joy.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” — 1 John 1:3

MEMORY VERSE

“And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” — 1 John 1:4

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

AUTHOR AND DATE. Early church writers, such as Irenaeus (who learned from Polycarp, a student of John), say the apostle John wrote this letter late in his life while serving the churches around Ephesus, in what is now western Turkey. Most scholars place it about AD 85-95. John was one of the three disciples closest to Jesus, along with Peter and James, and calls himself in his Gospel “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

A LETTER WITHOUT A GREETING. Ancient letters normally opened with the writer’s name and a greeting. First John has neither, and it has no closing signature. It reads more like a pastor’s sermon sent in writing to several house churches. Letters were written on papyrus, copied by hand, and read aloud when the church gathered, so the first listeners heard the whole letter in about twenty minutes.

THE PROBLEM JOHN ADDRESSES. Some teachers had left the churches and were saying that Jesus only seemed to have a human body, that salvation was about secret knowledge, and that how you live did not matter. Later writers called one form of this Docetism, from the Greek word for “to seem.” Tradition (Irenaeus) says John opposed a teacher named Cerinthus. That is why John begins with ears, eyes, and hands: Jesus had a real body that could be touched.

KEY WORDS. “Word of life” echoes John 1:1-14, where the Word became flesh. “Fellowship” is the Greek *koinonia*, meaning to share something in common, like business partners sharing in a venture. “Little children” is John’s affectionate way of speaking to the whole church, the way an elderly grandfather might.

LIFE IN THE ROMAN WORLD. Christians lived under Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96), who demanded to be honored as “lord and god.” Believers often felt pressure and loneliness. The idea that they had real fellowship with God and each other, and a joy no emperor could take away, was very comforting.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Greet students by name. Use the icebreaker question below.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray, then have a student read 1 John 1:1-4 aloud. Ask: “What three senses does John mention?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach the four points: Eyewitness, The Word of Life, Fellowship, Full Joy.
25-33	Activity	Eyewitness Reporter (see below).
33-40	Discussion	Use two or three of the discussion questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Hand out the worksheet, read the memory verse together, pray.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “Have you ever told a friend about something so amazing (a movie, a game, a trip) that you just had to share it?” Let two or three students answer. Then say: “Today John does exactly that, except he is sharing the greatest news ever.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: An Eyewitness Account

Imagine your friend tells you, “I met a famous athlete!” You would believe him a little. But if he shows you a photo, a signed jersey, and a video, you would believe him a lot. John does not give us a rumor. In verse 1 he says three times, “we have heard,” “we have seen with our eyes,” and “our hands have handled.”

Why does John keep saying it? Because some people were teaching that Jesus was only a spirit or an idea. John says, “No! I leaned my head on His chest at the Last Supper. I saw the nail scars in His hands after He rose.” Jesus is real, and He is the same Jesus we read about in the Bible.

Point 2: The Word of Life

John calls Jesus “the Word of life.” A word is how you tell someone what is inside you. When you say, “I love you,” you are showing what is in your heart. Jesus is God’s Word — He shows us what God is like. In the first chapter of John’s Gospel he said it this way: the Word was with God, the Word was God, and the Word became flesh.

Verse 2 says, “the life was manifested.” Manifested means made visible. Life itself, eternal life, had been hidden with the Father in heaven, and then it came down to earth and had a face. When you look

at Jesus, you see what God is like.

Point 3: Fellowship

In verse 3, John says why he is telling us: “that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Fellowship means sharing life together. It is more than hanging out. It is like being on a team where everyone shares the same goal.

Think of it like a family dinner table. When Jesus saves us, He pulls up a chair for us at God’s table. We are not guests who stand at the door. We share in the Father’s love, and we share life with brothers and sisters in the church.

Point 4: Full Joy

Verse 4 gives the reason for the whole letter: “that your joy may be full.” Full means like a glass filled to the top. Happiness depends on what is happening around us, but joy comes from knowing Jesus no matter what is happening.

Notice that John’s joy gets bigger when he shares Jesus. Real joy grows when we pass it on. Sharing good news makes it better, not smaller.

How This Points to Jesus

The whole letter is about Jesus. He is the Word, the Life, and the One who brings us to the Father. Jesus said in John 14:6 that no one comes to the Father except through Him. Because Jesus came in a real body, lived a real life, died a real death, and rose again, we can know Him for ourselves. John is saying, “I touched Him. I know. And you can know Him too.”

ACTIVITY: EYEWITNESS REPORTER

Divide students into pairs. One student is the Eyewitness and the other is the Reporter. The Eyewitness describes something they actually saw or did this week (lunch, a game, a pet) using all five senses. The Reporter then tells the group what the Eyewitness said. Ask: “Whose report is more believable, the eyewitness or the reporter?” Connect it: John was an eyewitness of Jesus, not a reporter passing on rumors. He used three senses in verse 1: hearing, sight, and touch.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. John says he heard, saw, and touched Jesus. Why do you think that matters so much?
2. Why do you think John begins with Jesus instead of with a greeting?
3. What does the word “fellowship” mean? What is the difference between fellowship and just being in the same room?
4. Think of a time you shared good news and your joy got bigger. What happened?
5. Who is one person you could share the good news about Jesus with this week?

WHAT WE LEARNED

First John is a letter from the apostle John, who walked with Jesus for about three years. He begins with no “Dear friends” and no “Sincerely.” He just jumps in: “That which was from the beginning” —

that is Jesus, the Word of life!

John wants us to know that Jesus is not a made-up story. John heard Jesus teach, saw Him heal and walk on water, and even touched Him after He rose from the dead. Because John knows Jesus is real, he wants us to know Him too.

When we know Jesus, we get to share life with God the Father, with Jesus, and with other believers. That is called fellowship. And John says the result is full joy.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think John wanted people to believe about Jesus when he said he heard, saw, and touched Him?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that Jesus is real and that you are invited into fellowship with God?

DO: What is one way you will share your joy in Jesus with someone this week?

Handout answer key: 1. saw, 2. Word, 3. sharing, 4. joy.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session01.mp3).

Heard, Seen, Touched!

1 John 1:1-4

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is real. John and the other apostles heard Him, saw Him, and touched Him, and knowing Jesus brings us into fellowship with God and with each other and fills us with joy.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” — 1 John 1:3

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: joy • saw • sharing • Word

1. John heard, _____, and touched Jesus.
2. Jesus is called the _____ of life.
3. Fellowship means _____ life together with God and others.
4. John wrote so that our _____ may be full.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why do you think John wants us to know that Jesus was a real person?

- Who could you share the good news of Jesus with this week?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: What do you think John wanted people to believe about Jesus when he said he heard, saw, and touched Him?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that Jesus is real and that you are invited into fellowship with God?

DO: What is one way you will share your joy in Jesus with someone this week?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, tell one person something about Jesus that you have seen Him do in your life or learned from His Word.

MEMORY VERSE

“And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” — 1 John 1:4

SESSION 2 OF 13

Walking in the Light

*1 John 1:5-10***THE BIG IDEA**

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. When we walk in the light and honestly confess our sins, Jesus' blood cleanses us and keeps our fellowship with God and others strong.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." — **1 John 1:9**

MEMORY VERSE

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." — **1 John 1:9**

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. There were no streetlights or electric lights. At night in a Roman city or village, the only light came from small clay oil lamps and the moon. Darkness meant danger, fear, and not being able to see where you were going. Light meant safety and clarity. The Bible often uses light for God's truth and goodness (Psalm 27:1; Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 9:2) and Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

JEWISH BACKGROUND. The Dead Sea Scrolls community, near John's time, spoke of "sons of light" and "sons of darkness," so John's readers were familiar with this picture. John does not teach two equal forces, however. He says God is light and in Him there is "no darkness at all" (v. 5).

"WALK." In Hebrew thinking, to walk meant to live, your daily lifestyle. "Walking in darkness" meant living in a pattern of sin, not stumbling once.

THE THREE "IF WE SAY" CLAIMS. Verses 6, 8, and 10 each begin "If we say...". These match the claims of the false teachers: (1) fellowship with God is possible no matter how we live, (2) we have no sin nature or guilt, and (3) we have never sinned. John says each is self-deception. The three "if we" statements about confession and walking in the light (vv. 7, 9) show the true path.

"CONFESS." The Greek word *homologeō* means "to say the same thing." To confess is to agree with God about what He already knows. The verb is in a form that suggests ongoing practice, not a once-for-all act. "Cleanses" also describes continuing action.

BLOOD AND CLEANSING. Jewish listeners knew that the sacrificial system taught that sin is serious and that forgiveness requires the giving of life (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22). John says that

Jesus' blood cleanses all sin because it is the perfect sacrifice.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the dark room icebreaker.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 1:5-10 aloud. Circle the three "If we say" statements.
10-25	Teaching	Teach: God Is Light, Walking in Light, Three False Claims, The Cure.
25-33	Activity	Flashlight Hunt.
33-40	Discussion	Use two or three of the discussion questions. Keep it safe: no one has to share private sins.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse (1 John 1:9), prayer of confession.

ICEBREAKER

Turn off the lights (or close the blinds) for a moment. Ask: "What is the first thing you want when it is really dark?" Turn the lights back on. Say: "Today we find out why John says God is light."

THE TEACHING

Point 1: God Is Light

John says, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (v. 5). Think about what light does. Light shows us what is real. Light drives out darkness. Light gives life to plants. When God is called light, it means He is completely good, completely true, and completely pure.

Notice the words "no darkness at all." There is not a tiny corner in God where something bad hides. Some people picture God as moody, like a person who might change His mind. John says that God is the same and trustworthy through and through.

Point 2: Walking in the Light

In verse 6, John says that if we claim to be close to God but live in darkness, we lie. In verse 7 he says that if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Walking in the light means being honest and open with God and with people, not hiding.

Think of a plant. Put it in a closet and it gets pale and sick. Put it in the sun and it grows. God's light is good for us. It makes us grow. Hiding sin is like keeping the plant in the closet.

Point 3: Three False Claims

John names three things people say to make themselves look good. In verse 6 they say, “I have fellowship with God” while living in sin. In verse 8 they say, “I have no sin.” In verse 10 they say, “I have not sinned.” John says the first is lying, the second is deceiving ourselves, and the third makes God out to be a liar.

Why does this matter? Because God already knows. Pretending only hurts us. Kids sometimes say, “I did not do it!” even when everyone saw. But God is not fooled, and the amazing part is that He does not want us to hide. He wants to forgive.

Point 4: The Cure Is Confession

Verse 9 is the heart of the lesson: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” To confess means to say the same thing God says about our sin. We do not have to make excuses. We say, “God, I did that, it was wrong, and I am sorry.”

And what does God do? He is faithful, which means He keeps His promises. He is just, which means He is fair. Jesus already paid for that sin on the cross, so God can forgive without ignoring the wrong. And He does not only forgive; He cleanses, which means He makes us clean on the inside.

How This Points to Jesus

The cleansing in verse 7 comes from “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son.” Jesus is the Light of the world, and He is also the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Because Jesus died for us, we do not need to hide from the light. We can come into it with confidence, because He has already paid the price.

ACTIVITY: FLASHLIGHT HUNT

Hide ten small objects around a dim room (the dimmer the better). Give two or three flashlights to teams. Teams race to find objects, but only light reveals them. Afterward, ask: “What did the light do?” Light shows what is really there. Then talk about how God’s light shows us ourselves honestly, but not to shame us. He shows us so that He can clean us up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things light does that help us? How is God like that?
2. Why do you think people try to hide when they do something wrong?
3. What does it mean to “confess” something? Why is it hard?
4. How does it feel to be forgiven after telling the truth about a wrong thing?
5. What is one way we can “walk in the light” at school, at home, or online?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says that God is light. Light shows what is real, it chases away darkness, and it brings life. In God there is no darkness at all — nothing hidden, nothing bad, nothing fake.

Walking in the light means living honestly with God and with others. John gives three “If we say...” warnings about pretending: saying we know God while living in darkness, saying we have no sin, and saying we have never sinned. Pretending does not work. God already sees everything.

The good news is that when we confess, which means agreeing with God about our sin, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us, and His blood cleanses us from all sin.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says that pretending we have no sin does not work?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that God already sees everything and still invites you to come to Him for forgiveness?

DO: What is one thing you will bring into the light and talk to God about this week?

Handout answer key: 1. light, 2. deceive, 3. same, 4. cleanses.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session02.mp3).

Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-10

THE BIG IDEA

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. When we walk in the light and honestly confess our sins, Jesus' blood cleanses us and keeps our fellowship with God and others strong.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." — 1 John 1:9

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: deceive • same • cleanses • light

1. God is _____, and in Him there is no darkness at all.
2. If we say we have no sin, we _____ ourselves.
3. To confess means to say the _____ thing God says about our sin.
4. The blood of Jesus _____ us from all sin.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is something you tend to hide? What would it look like to bring it into the light?

- Why is it good news that God is both faithful and just to forgive?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says that pretending we have no sin does not work?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that God already sees everything and still invites you to come to Him for forgiveness?

DO: What is one thing you will bring into the light and talk to God about this week?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Each night this week, take one minute to tell God honestly about anything you did wrong that day, and thank Him for forgiving you.

MEMORY VERSE

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." — 1 John 1:9

SESSION 3 OF 13

Our Advocate

*1 John 2:1-6***THE BIG IDEA**

When we fall, Jesus is our Advocate with the Father. He paid for our sins, and because we know Him, we want to walk the way He walked.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” — 1 John 2:1

MEMORY VERSE

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” — 1 John 2:6

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

THE WORD “ADVOCATE.” The Greek word is *parakletos*, meaning “one called alongside to help.” It was used in Roman courts for a defender or legal helper who spoke on behalf of someone accused. Jesus uses the same word in John 14:16 for the Holy Spirit, called “another Helper,” meaning that Jesus is the first. In a Roman court, trials were often public, in the open-air forum or a basilica, with crowds watching. Being accused was frightening, so a strong advocate was a great comfort.

“PROPITIATION.” The word *hilasmos* is rich in Jewish background. The Greek version of the Old Testament used the related word for the “mercy seat,” the golden lid of the ark of the covenant, where the high priest sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). In pagan religions, people tried to calm angry gods with gifts. In Christianity it is reversed: God Himself provides the sacrifice, because He loves us (see 4:10 and Romans 3:25). For middle schoolers: “Jesus took the punishment so we could be forgiven.”

“FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.” John does not say everyone will be saved, but that Jesus’ sacrifice is sufficient for people everywhere, not just for Jews or one group. This was important because the early church included Jews, Greeks, Romans, slaves, and free people.

“KNOWING GOD” AND OBEDIENCE. False teachers claimed that they had a special spiritual knowledge (the Greek word *gnosis*). They said that knowing God had nothing to do with behavior. John says that real knowledge of God shows up in obedience. He is not teaching that we earn salvation by obeying, but that obedience is the evidence that we know Jesus. See also John 14:15, where Jesus said “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

“ABIDE.” The Greek verb meno means to stay, remain, or live in. It is one of John’s favorite words (see John 15, the vine and the branches). Abiding in Jesus is like living at His house, not just visiting.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “someone to speak up for you” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 2:1-6. Ask: “What word does John use for Jesus?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach: Written So You Won’t Sin, Our Advocate, The Propitiation, Walking Like Jesus.
25-33	Activity	Courtroom Skit.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “If you were in trouble and could choose anyone to speak up for you, who would it be and why?” Let a few answer. Say: “Today we find out that we already have the best defender there could ever be.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: Written So You Will Not Sin

John begins chapter 2 with love: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.” He does not write to scare us. He writes like a loving grandfather who wants us safe. God’s goal for us is not just forgiveness, but also a life that is free from the grip of sin.

But John is honest. He knows we are not perfect. Verse 1 continues: “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Point 2: Our Advocate

An advocate is someone who stands beside you and speaks for you, like a lawyer in court. Imagine standing in front of a judge when you know you did something wrong, and the best lawyer in the world walks up and says, “I will take care of this.” That is what Jesus does for us!

Notice John says Jesus is “Jesus Christ the righteous.” Jesus never sinned. Because He is perfectly righteous, He is the only one who can speak for us. And He is not a stranger to the Judge; He is the Father’s own Son. When Jesus speaks, the Father listens.

Point 3: The Propitiation

Verse 2 says: “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Propitiation is a big word. It means that Jesus took the punishment that sin deserves, so that the debt is completely paid.

Picture a friend who steps in and pays your fine at the library, every penny, so you can walk free. Jesus did much more than that. He paid with His life. And John says it is for the whole world — everyone can come.

Point 4: Walking as Jesus Walked

How do we know that we really know Jesus? Verse 3 says, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” It does not mean we are perfect. It means we want to obey, and we try to follow Him because we love Him.

Verse 6 gives a picture: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” What was Jesus’ walk like? He was kind to the lonely, honest, humble, and He forgave. If we say we belong to Jesus, we try to live like Him. Obedience is not how we get saved. It is how we show that we are His.

How This Points to Jesus

Everything in this passage is about Jesus: He is our Advocate, He is the righteous One, He is the propitiation, and He is the pattern for how we live. Hebrews 7:25 says that He always lives to make intercession for us. Right now, Jesus is speaking up for you.

ACTIVITY: COURTROOM SKIT

Choose a volunteer to be the Judge, one to be the Accused, and one to be the Advocate (lawyer). Give a silly, harmless case (for example, “The Case of the Missing Last Slice of Pizza”). The Accused admits it is true. The Advocate does NOT say “he did not do it” but says, “I have paid the price for him.” The Judge dismisses the case. Debrief: that is what Jesus did. He did not pretend we were innocent; He paid for our sins Himself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does an advocate do? Why is it a comfort to have Jesus as ours?
2. Why do you think John says he is writing so that we “may not sin,” and then tells us what to do if we do sin?
3. What does it mean that Jesus paid for our sins? How would you explain it to a younger child?
4. What does it look like to “walk just as He walked” at school or at home?
5. How is obeying Jesus different from trying to earn His love?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John wrote this letter so that we would not sin. But he is honest: sometimes we do. When that happens, we are not left alone. We have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, who speaks to the Father on our behalf.

Jesus is more than our lawyer. He is also the propitiation for our sins, which means He took the punishment we deserved so that God’s anger against sin was fully satisfied. And that is for people all over the world.

How do we know that we truly know Jesus? John says we keep His commandments. If we say we abide in Him, we should walk as He walked. Love and obedience show that our faith is real.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think it means that Jesus is your Advocate when you sin?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing Jesus speaks up for you and has already paid the price for your sins?

DO: What is one way Jesus walked that you will try to follow this week?

Handout answer key: 1. righteous, 2. for, 3. propitiation, 4. walked.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session03.mp3).

Our Advocate

1 John 2:1-6

THE BIG IDEA

When we fall, Jesus is our Advocate with the Father. He paid for our sins, and because we know Him, we want to walk the way He walked.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” — 1 John 2:1

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: walked • righteous • propitiation • for

1. Jesus Christ the _____ is our Advocate with the Father.
2. An advocate speaks _____ us.
3. Jesus is the _____ for our sins, which means He took the punishment.
4. If we abide in Him, we should walk just as He _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

- When you do something wrong, what do you usually do first? How could you remember that Jesus is your Advocate?

- Name one way Jesus walked that you want to copy this week.

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: What do you think it means that Jesus is your Advocate when you sin?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing Jesus speaks up for you and has already paid the price for your sins?

DO: What is one way Jesus walked that you will try to follow this week?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, when you catch yourself doing something wrong, stop and say, “Jesus, thank You for being my Advocate.” Then do the right thing next.

MEMORY VERSE

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” — 1 John 2:6

SESSION 4 OF 13

The Old Command That Is Always New

*1 John 2:7-14***THE BIG IDEA**

Loving one another is the command Jesus gave from the beginning, and it is always fresh. Whoever loves walks in the light, and God's family, young and old, is built on His forgiveness and strength.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." — 1 John 2:10

MEMORY VERSE

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." — 1 John 2:10

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

OLD AND NEW. The command to love goes back to the Law: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), and Jesus said it was the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39). But in the upper room on the night before He was crucified, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34). John was sitting at that table. The new part was the pattern: love "as I have loved you," laying down life. John also says that the "true light is already shining" (v. 8), meaning that the age of Jesus has begun.

"BROTHER." In the early church, "brother" and "sister" referred to fellow believers. Christians met in homes, and people from very different backgrounds, such as slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, sat side by side. That was shocking in a society organized by rank. Love across those lines was a powerful witness (John 13:35).

"HATE." In Jewish usage, "hate" could mean to reject, shun, or treat as an enemy, not only to feel anger. John is not talking about a bad mood but an ongoing attitude of coldness toward fellow believers. It is a spiritual warning sign. Teachers should be careful not to make students feel guilty over normal frustration with siblings or friends; the point is the direction of the heart.

"STUMBLING." The word skandalon refers to a trap or something that causes a person to trip. Walking in the dark without light is exactly how people stumble. Because there were few lights at night, people knew how dangerous dark roads could be.

THREE GROUPS (vv. 12-14). John uses "little children" (teknia, a general affectionate term for all believers in verses 12 and 28) and "children" (paidia, young ones, in verse 13). He then names fathers

and young men. Some scholars think he means three stages of spiritual maturity; others think it is simply the actual ages in the churches. Either way, the message fits all. Notice that John repeats his reasons twice (“I write” in v. 12-13, “I have written” in v. 13-14), which was a way to give emphasis in ancient writing. In the Roman household, fathers were respected for wisdom and young men were valued for strength; John applies those pictures to the church. “The wicked one” is Satan.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the old and new question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 2:7-14 aloud, alternating readers by verse.
10-25	Teaching	Teach: Old and New, Light and Dark, Love Helps Us See, A Place for Everyone.
25-33	Activity	Light the Way.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “What is something old that is still really good, like a favorite blanket, an old song, or a family recipe?” Then ask: “What is something that is brand new and exciting?” Say: “Today John says that a command can be both old and new at the same time.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: An Old Command That Is New

John says in verse 7, “Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning.” Then in verse 8 he says, “Again, a new commandment I write to you.” So which is it, old or new? Both!

It is old because God has always told His people to love. It is new because of Jesus. On the night before He died, Jesus knelt and washed His disciples’ feet and said, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” Now we know what real love looks like: it serves, it forgives, and it gives its life. John was there, and he never forgot it.

Point 2: Light and Darkness

John says that the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Jesus is the true Light. The sun has started to rise, and the night is ending.

Then he says something serious in verse 9: “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.” A person cannot say “I follow Jesus” and also keep a cold, hateful heart toward other believers. Light and hate do not go together. If we keep refusing to love, it shows that we have

not really seen the Light yet.

Point 3: Love Helps Us See

Verse 10 says, “He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.” Think about walking into a dark bedroom and stepping on a toy. Ouch! In the dark we trip. Hate is like walking in a dark room with no flashlight. We do not know where we are going.

Love is like a flashlight. When we love people, we see clearly. We make better choices. We do not hurt people or trip over our own anger. Love is not only good for other people; it keeps us safe too.

Point 4: A Place for Everyone

In verses 12 through 14, John speaks to everyone. To the little children, he says your sins are forgiven. To the fathers, he says you know Him who is from the beginning, which means you have a long friendship with Jesus. To the young men, he says you are strong, the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

No matter how old you are, you matter in God’s family. Even a middle schooler is forgiven and known by God. If you are growing, God’s word is making you strong, and you can say no to the enemy. You do not have to wait until you are grown to be strong in Jesus.

How This Points to Jesus

The “new commandment” belongs to Jesus. He gave it, He lived it, and He gave His life to fulfill it. When we love one another, people see Jesus in us. John 13:35 says, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

ACTIVITY: LIGHT THE WAY

Give each student a small battery tea light or have them hold flashlights in a dim room. Ask them to think of one specific way they can show love to someone this week and say it aloud. As each student shares, they turn their light on and set it in the center. By the end the whole room is filled with light. Debrief: love makes the dark places brighter, one person at a time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think John says the command is both old and new?
2. What does it mean to walk in the light? How is love like a flashlight?
3. Why do you think Jesus washed His disciples’ feet as an example of love?
4. Is there anyone it is hard for you to love? What could you do to start?
5. How can a middle schooler be strong in God’s word? What helps you the most?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says he is not giving us a brand-new rule. The command to love one another is an old command that we have had from the beginning of our faith. But it is also new because Jesus showed us what real love looks like, and in Him the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

John says that someone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. Hate makes us stumble, like walking in a dark room. Love lets us see where we are going.

John then writes to children, fathers, and young men. Everyone has a place in God's family: children are forgiven, fathers know Him who is from the beginning, and young men are strong because God's word lives in them.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says the command to love is both old and new?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about Jesus washing His friends' feet as an example of love?

DO: What is one specific act of love you will do this week for someone who is hard to love?

Handout answer key: 1. new, 2. light, 3. stumble, 4. word.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session04.mp3).

The Old Command That Is Always New

1 John 2:7-14

THE BIG IDEA

Loving one another is the command Jesus gave from the beginning, and it is always fresh. Whoever loves walks in the light, and God's family, young and old, is built on His forgiveness and strength.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." — 1 John 2:10

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: stumble • new • word • light

1. The command to love is both old and _____.
2. He who loves his brother abides in the _____.
3. Hate is like walking in the dark; we _____.
4. Young men are strong because the _____ of God abides in them.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Who is one person you find hard to love? What is one small way you could show love to them?

- What is one thing you could do this week to let God's word make you stronger?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says the command to love is both old and new?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about Jesus washing His friends' feet as an example of love?

DO: What is one specific act of love you will do this week for someone who is hard to love?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Do one unexpected act of love for someone this week (a note, a kind word, helping with a chore) and do it "as Jesus has loved us."

MEMORY VERSE

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." — 1 John 2:10

SESSION 5 OF 13

Love the Father, Not the World

*1 John 2:15-17***THE BIG IDEA**

The world's way of living passes away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever. Loving the Father keeps our hearts from being pulled by what is empty.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” — 1 John 2:17

MEMORY VERSE

“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.” — 1 John 2:15

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

THREE MEANINGS OF “WORLD.” The Greek word *kosmos* is used in three ways in John's writings. (1) The created world, which is good (John 1:3). (2) The people of the world, whom God loves (John 3:16). (3) The world system organized apart from God, with its values, pride, and pleasures. In 2:15-17 John means the third. Students sometimes hear “Do not love the world” and conclude that God dislikes people, nature, or fun. Be clear: God made the world and loves its people. We resist the system that rejects Him.

EPHESUS AND ASIA MINOR. The churches John served were in some of the richest and most religious cities of the Roman Empire. Ephesus was home to the Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, a major shrine with a huge economy of silversmiths and trade (see Acts 19). There were theaters, athletic games, public feasts held in honor of idols, and guilds that required members to take part in pagan celebrations. For Christians, refusing could mean losing jobs and friends. Emperor worship also grew. So “do not love the world” was costly and very practical.

THE THREE PULLS AND GENESIS 3. The three things John names match Genesis 3:6, where Eve saw that the tree was “good for food” (flesh), “pleasant to the eyes” (eyes), and “desirable to make one wise” (pride). They also match the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4): turn stones to bread (flesh), see all the kingdoms of the world (eyes), and throw Yourself down to be admired (pride of life). Adam and Eve failed; Jesus succeeded. This is a wonderful way to show students that Jesus has already won the battle they face.

“LUST.” The Greek word *epithumia* means a strong desire. It is not always evil (Jesus used the verb in Luke 22:15 when He said He had “desired” to eat the Passover). It becomes sinful when it wants

something God has not given or wants it more than God. “Pride of life” (alazoneia) is boasting about possessions or status, a swaggering show-off attitude.

“PASSING AWAY.” The verb is present tense: the world is already in the process of fading. Roman buildings and empires seemed permanent, yet they would fall. John says that only the one who does God’s will “abides forever,” the same Greek word, meno, used elsewhere for abiding.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “wanted so badly” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 2:15-17 aloud. Ask: “What are the three things John lists?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach: What World?, Three Pulls, Jesus Won, It All Passes Away.
25-33	Activity	Ice Cream Cone Challenge (or melting ice cubes).
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “What is something you wanted so badly that you could not stop thinking about it, and then when you got it, how long did it stay exciting?” Let a few share. Say: “Today John tells us why some things never satisfy.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: Which World?

John writes, “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” Wait. Doesn’t God love the world? John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world.” So what is going on?

The word “world” can mean different things. It can mean the beautiful creation God made, which is good. It can mean the people God loves. But here, John means the way of living that leaves God out, where people live for themselves, for stuff, and for what looks good. We love people and God’s creation, but we refuse to love the world’s selfish system.

Point 2: Three Pulls

John names three things in verse 16. First, “the lust of the flesh,” which is wanting whatever feels good right now, like laziness, junk, or getting even. Second, “the lust of the eyes,” which is wanting everything we see: the newest phone, the cool shoes, whatever everyone else has. Third, “the pride of life,” which is showing off and wanting to look better than other people.

Do those sound familiar? We feel them every day, especially on screens and social media.

Advertisements are made to make us want things. John says these are not from the Father. They come from a world that is moving away from God.

Point 3: Jesus Already Won

These three pulls are as old as the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:6, Eve saw the fruit was good to eat (flesh), pleasant to look at (eyes), and would make her wise (pride). She gave in. Later, Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness with the same three things: bread when He was hungry, all the kingdoms of the world, and a chance to show off by jumping from the temple.

Jesus said no each time, and He answered with God's word. He won! That is good news for us. When we feel pulled, we can run to Jesus, who knows exactly what it feels like and who can help us say no.

Point 4: The World Is Passing Away

Verse 17 gives the reason we should not cling to the world: "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." Everything that the world offers fades. The newest phone becomes old. The popular kid at school grows up. Fame disappears.

But what lasts? Doing the will of God lasts forever. When you love the Father and follow Him, you are building something that will never melt away. Think of it as trading something that melts for something that never melts. And the more we love the Father, the less space we have for the empty things.

How This Points to Jesus

Jesus faced every temptation we face, and He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). He showed us how to say no with God's word (Matthew 4). He is the example and the One who helps us. And when we fail, remember 1 John 1:9 and 2:1: we have an Advocate.

ACTIVITY: ICE CREAM CONE CHALLENGE

Give each student a scoop of ice cream (or a frozen treat) in a cup. Ask them to hold it for a minute without eating it, then ask what happens. It melts! Debrief: the things of the world look great, but they melt away. God's love and will last forever. For a no-food option, use ice cubes in a bowl and watch them melt while you teach the lesson.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think John says not to love "the world" when God loves the world?
2. Which of the three pulls (flesh, eyes, pride) is hardest for you or for kids your age?
3. How do advertisements or social media try to make us want things?
4. How did Jesus answer the temptations in the wilderness? What can we learn from that?
5. What is something you can do this week that will last forever?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John gives a clear instruction: do not love the world or the things in the world. He does not mean that creation is bad (God made it and called it good), or that we should not care about people. He means the world's system that leaves God out and lives for self.

John names three pulls: the lust of the flesh (wanting what feels good right now), the lust of the eyes (wanting everything we see), and the pride of life (showing off and wanting to be seen as better). These are not from the Father.

The good news is that the world and its desires are passing away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. When our hearts are full of love for the Father, there is less room for everything else.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says that the world and its desires are passing away?

FEEL: Which of the three pulls (flesh, eyes, or pride) do you feel most, and how does it feel to know that Jesus faced the same pulls and won?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week that lasts forever instead of fading away?

Handout answer key: 1. eyes, 2. passing, 3. will, 4. word.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session05.mp3).

Love the Father, Not the World

1 John 2:15-17

THE BIG IDEA

The world's way of living passes away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever. Loving the Father keeps our hearts from being pulled by what is empty.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”
— 1 John 2:17

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: eyes • passing • word • will

1. The three pulls are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the _____, and the pride of life.
2. The world is _____ away.
3. He who does the _____ of God abides forever.
4. Jesus answered every temptation with God's _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is something you want right now? Is it something that lasts or something that fades?

- What is one thing you could do this week to “do the will of God” in a practical way?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says that the world and its desires are passing away?

FEEL: Which of the three pulls (flesh, eyes, or pride) do you feel most, and how does it feel to know that Jesus faced the same pulls and won?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week that lasts forever instead of fading away?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Take a break from screens for one hour this week. Instead, read a chapter of the Bible or do something kind for your family.

MEMORY VERSE

“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.” — 1 John 2:15

SESSION 6 OF 13

Spotting the Fakes

*1 John 2:18-29***THE BIG IDEA**

Many teachers will try to lead us away from the truth about Jesus. But believers have an anointing from the Holy One, and if we abide in Jesus and in what we heard from the beginning, we will not be fooled.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” — 1 John 2:20

MEMORY VERSE

“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” — 1 John 2:28

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

“THE LAST HOUR.” In the New Testament, the “last days” or “last hour” refers to the whole period between Jesus’ first coming and His return (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2). John is not giving a date; he is saying that this age is serious and the stakes are high. Do not scare students with date-setting. Emphasize that Jesus is coming back, and that we should live ready.

“ANTICHRIST.” The word appears only in John’s letters (1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3; 2 John 7). The prefix anti can mean “against” or “in place of,” and both fit: opposing Christ and posing as a substitute. John says there are “many antichrists” already, referring to false teachers who denied that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh. He also speaks of “the Antichrist” who is coming, which Christians have long understood as a final enemy (see 2 Thessalonians 2). For middle schoolers, focus on John’s main point: anyone who denies the true Jesus is against Christ.

THE DEPARTURE (v. 19). The false teachers had left the congregations. John says that their leaving showed they never truly belonged. This was painful for the church, since friends and leaders were gone. John comforts them: that does not mean you were wrong, and the true believers remain.

HISTORICAL SETTING. Some teachers were denying that Jesus was truly the Messiah and the Son of God come in the flesh. Tradition says Cerinthus taught that the divine “Christ” came upon the man Jesus at His baptism and left before the cross. Some Jewish opponents denied that Jesus was the Christ at all. Roman officials demanded that Christians declare “Caesar is lord,” while Christians confessed “Jesus is Lord.” Confessing Jesus rightly could cost one’s life.

THE ANOINTING. The Greek word *chrisma* refers to anointing with oil. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. The name Christ means “Anointed One.” John says that all believers have an anointing from the Holy One, which most understand to be the Holy Spirit (see John 14:26; 16:13). “You do not need that anyone teach you” (v. 27) does not mean that teachers are useless, but that the Spirit confirms truth inside believers, so they are not at the mercy of every new teacher. Teachers help us understand what the Spirit has already shown.

COUNTERFEIT ILLUSTRATION. Banks train employees to spot counterfeits by handling real currency until fakes stand out. This is an excellent picture of what John asks.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the counterfeit question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 2:18-29. Ask: “What word shows up the most?” (abide).
10-25	Teaching	Teach: The Last Hour, Spotting the Fakes, The Anointing, Abide.
25-33	Activity	Real or Counterfeit?
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “Have you ever seen a fake product, like a counterfeit toy or a knock-off brand? How could you tell it was fake?” Say: “Today John teaches us how to tell the real Jesus from fake ones.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: The Last Hour

John says in verse 18, “Little children, it is the last hour.” He is saying, “Wake up! Jesus is coming back, and until He does, there will be people who try to lead you away.” John says that many antichrists have already come. Anti means against, and Christ means the Anointed One. An antichrist is anyone who opposes the true Jesus or tries to replace Him with a fake.

Notice that these people came from inside. Verse 19 says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” That is sad, but John reminds us that it does not mean our faith was wrong. People who truly belong to Jesus stay with Him.

Point 2: How to Spot a Fake

How do you tell what is true? John gives a simple test in verses 22 and 23: what does a person say about Jesus? “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Son of God does not have the Father. “He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

Today there are teachers who say Jesus was only a good man, only a prophet, or one of many ways to God. The real Jesus is God's own Son who died for our sins and rose again. Fake versions can sound nice, but they leave out who He truly is.

Point 3: The Anointing

How can a kid like you know the difference? John says in verse 20, "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things." The anointing is the Holy Spirit, who lives in every believer. In the Old Testament, kings and priests were anointed with oil to show that God chose them. Now every believer has the Spirit.

"All things" does not mean you know every fact in the world. It means you know what you need to know to stay true to Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps you recognize truth when you hear it, especially when you know God's word.

Point 4: Abide

The word "abide" shows up again and again in this passage. Verse 24 says, "Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." The truth about Jesus that you were taught, stay with it. Verse 28 says, "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Remember the bank workers: they know real money by handling it all the time. If we spend time with Jesus in prayer and in the Bible, we will know Him so well that fakes will stand out. And when Jesus comes back, we can look up with confidence, not shame.

How This Points to Jesus

This passage is a guard around the truth about Jesus: He is the Christ, He is the Son, and through Him we have the Father and eternal life. Verse 25 says, "And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life." The Savior is worth defending, and worth knowing.

ACTIVITY: REAL OR COUNTERFEIT?

Prepare a table with pairs of items, one real and one fake (for example, a real and a play-money bill, a real flower and a plastic one, a name-brand item and a cheap copy). Let students examine each pair. Ask how they know which is real. Then explain: bank workers do not study fake money; they study real money so well that fakes stand out. We spot false teaching by knowing the real Jesus through God's word.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is an antichrist? Why do you think John says there are "many" of them?
2. What are some things people say about Jesus today that do not match what the Bible says?
3. What does it mean that believers have an "anointing from the Holy One"?
4. How can we get to know the real Jesus so well that we can spot the fakes?
5. What does it mean to "abide" in Jesus? What is one way to do that this week?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says, “It is the last hour.” Jesus will return, and until then many antichrists, people who oppose Christ and deny who He truly is, will appear. John’s readers had already seen some who left the church because they never truly belonged to it.

The biggest test is what a person says about Jesus. Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, does not have the Father. But whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father too.

The good news is that believers have an anointing from the Holy One, the Holy Spirit, who teaches us the truth. We abide in what we heard from the beginning, and we abide in Jesus. That gives us confidence now and at His coming.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John gave us a test about what people believe about Jesus?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that the Holy Spirit lives in you and helps you know what is true?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week to get to know the real Jesus better?

Handout answer key: 1. against, 2. acknowledges, 3. anointing, 4. real.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session06.mp3).

Spotting the Fakes

1 John 2:18-29

THE BIG IDEA

Many teachers will try to lead us away from the truth about Jesus. But believers have an anointing from the Holy One, and if we abide in Jesus and in what we heard from the beginning, we will not be fooled.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” — 1 John 2:20

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: real • anointing • acknowledges • against

1. An antichrist is someone who is _____ Christ or tries to replace Him.
2. Whoever _____ the Son has the Father also.
3. Believers have an _____ from the Holy One.
4. Bank workers spot fake money by knowing the _____ money well.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is one thing that you have heard about Jesus that you need to check with the Bible?

- What is one way you can spend more time “abiding” in Jesus this week?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John gave us a test about what people believe about Jesus?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that the Holy Spirit lives in you and helps you know what is true?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week to get to know the real Jesus better?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Read one chapter of a Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) this week and write down one thing it teaches you about who Jesus is.

MEMORY VERSE

“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” — 1 John 2:28

SESSION 7 OF 13

Children of God

*1 John 3:1-10***THE BIG IDEA**

God's love makes us His children, and Jesus came to take away our sins and destroy the devil's works. Children of God do not make a practice of sin, but live in righteousness and love.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" — 1 John 3:1

MEMORY VERSE

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" — 1 John 3:1

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

ADOPTION AND SONSHIP. In the Roman world, adoption was common and powerful. A wealthy family without a son might adopt a young man, who would receive the family name and the full inheritance, as if he were born into the family. Paul uses this picture in Romans 8:15-17 and Galatians 4:4-7. John uses the word *teknon* (child by birth) to say that believers are truly born of God (John 1:12-13). This was comforting to people who were rejected by family or society for following Jesus.

"THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW US" (v. 1). Christians were misunderstood and sometimes persecuted. They refused to worship idols or the emperor, and neighbors thought they were odd or even dangerous. John says that this should not surprise us: the world did not know Jesus either.

"WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM" (v. 2). John points to the return of Christ. Christians have a hope about the future, which is to see Jesus as He is and be made like Him (see Philippians 3:20-21). This hope shapes present life: those who have it "purify" themselves (v. 3).

THE VERB TENSE OF "SIN." Verses 6 and 9 can sound as if Christians never sin, which would contradict 1:8-10. The Greek verbs are present tense, describing continuing or habitual action. Most translations capture this: "whoever abides in Him does not sin" means he does not keep on sinning as a lifestyle. Teachers should handle this carefully. Some students are anxious about their failings. Emphasize that John himself has said that we have an Advocate when we sin (2:1), and 1:9 promises forgiveness. The difference is direction: a child of God hates sin and turns from it.

"SIN IS LAWLESSNESS" (v. 4). Sin is more than breaking a rule; it is rebellion against God's good authority, living as if we are our own boss.

“THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL” (v. 8). Jesus’ ministry included healing the sick, freeing the oppressed, and forgiving sinners. Colossians 2:15 and Hebrews 2:14 also describe how His death defeated the devil. Genesis 3:15 promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. Younger students may have questions about Satan; keep the focus on Jesus’ victory.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the family trait question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 3:1-10. Ask: “What is the first word of chapter 3?” (Behold).
10-25	Teaching	Teach: Behold!, We Shall Be Like Him, Jesus Came to Destroy, Children Look Like Their Father.
25-33	Activity	Family Resemblance.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions. Be gentle about struggles with sin.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “Does anyone here have a family trait, like the same laugh, smile, or hair as a parent or grandparent?” Let students share. Say: “Today John says that children of God start to look like their Father.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: Behold What Love!

Chapter 3 begins with a word that means “Stop and look!” John says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” He is amazed. The God who made everything chose to make us His children.

In Roman times, adoption was a big deal. A man might choose a young person to be his son and give him his name and everything he owned. God did even more. He sent Jesus to pay for us and then adopted us into His family. You are not a visitor. You are a child of God right now, not someday.

Point 2: We Shall Be Like Him

Verse 2 gives us something to look forward to: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” One day we will see Jesus face to face, and we will be changed to be like Him.

That hope changes us today. Verse 3 says, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Think of how you clean your room when you know a special guest is coming. When we remember that Jesus is coming back, we want to live clean and ready.

Point 3: Jesus Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil

Verse 5 says that Jesus “was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.” And verse 8 adds, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Jesus came on a mission. He took away our sin, and He broke the devil’s power.

Verse 4 explains what sin is: “sin is lawlessness.” Sin is living like we are our own boss and ignoring God. But Jesus came to rescue us from that. The devil is the great liar, but Jesus is the Truth, and the Truth sets us free.

Point 4: Children Look Like Their Father

John says that people show who their father is by how they live. Verse 10 says, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” Notice the word “practice.”

Everyone sins sometimes, and John has already told us what to do when we do: confess, and Jesus is our Advocate. “Practice” means a pattern, a lifestyle. Think of a person who practices piano every day. A child of God does not make sin a way of life but practices doing what is right and loving others. And when we fail, we run back to the Father, not away from Him.

How This Points to Jesus

Without Jesus, we could never be God’s children. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” Jesus makes us family, and Jesus gives us the power to live like family.

ACTIVITY: FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

Put students in small groups. Give each group a sheet listing traits of Jesus (kind, truthful, forgiving, patient, serves others, loves enemies). Have them pick two traits they want to grow in and think of one way to show each this week. Share with the whole group. Debrief: children look like their Father; the more we know Him, the more we become like Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to you that God calls you His child?
2. What do you think John means when he says, “we shall be like Him”?
3. What is the difference between making a mistake and making a practice of sin?
4. How can we show that we are God’s children by the way we treat others?
5. What are some of the devil’s works that Jesus came to destroy?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John begins with wonder: “Behold what manner of love!” God did not have to adopt us, but He loves us so much that He calls us His children. And that is not just a name; it is what we truly are right now.

John says that one day when Jesus appears, we will be like Him. In the meantime, everyone who has this hope purifies himself. Jesus came to take away our sins and destroy the works of the devil.

John teaches that children of God do not make a practice of sin. That does not mean we never fail (see 1:9 and 2:1). It means sin is no longer our way of life. Instead, God's children practice righteousness and love.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think John means when he says that children of God do not practice sin?

FEEL: How do you feel when you hear that God loves you so much that He calls you His child?

DO: What is one way you will act like a child of God this week?

Handout answer key: 1. love, 2. children, 3. works, 4. practice.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session07.mp3).

Children of God

1 John 3:1-10

THE BIG IDEA

God's love makes us His children, and Jesus came to take away our sins and destroy the devil's works. Children of God do not make a practice of sin, but live in righteousness and love.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"
— 1 John 3:1

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: practice • children • love • works

1. Behold what manner of _____ the Father has bestowed on us!
2. We are called _____ of God.
3. Jesus came to destroy the _____ of the devil.
4. Children of God _____ righteousness and love.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is one way you can act like a child of God at home or school this week?

- When you fail, what should you do first? Why?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: What do you think John means when he says that children of God do not practice sin?

FEEL: How do you feel when you hear that God loves you so much that He calls you His child?

DO: What is one way you will act like a child of God this week?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Each morning this week, say, "I am a child of God," before you start your day, and ask Him to help you act like it.

MEMORY VERSE

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"
— 1 John 3:1

SESSION 8 OF 13

Love in Deed and in Truth

*1 John 3:11-24***THE BIG IDEA**

Real love is not just words. Jesus laid down His life for us, and we show we have passed from death to life by loving others with our actions, even when it costs us something.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” — 1 John 3:18

MEMORY VERSE

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” — 1 John 3:18

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

CAIN AND ABEL (Genesis 4). John uses this oldest of stories as a warning. Cain’s offering was not accepted, while Abel’s was. Instead of fixing his heart, Cain grew angry and murdered his brother. John says Cain “was of the wicked one” and that his works were evil while his brother’s were righteous. Jewish teachers often used Cain as a symbol of jealousy and hatred. Jesus also said that anyone angry with a brother is in danger (Matthew 5:21-22), and John says that hate is a form of murder in the heart (v. 15).

“DO NOT MARVEL IF THE WORLD HATES YOU” (v. 13). Followers of Jesus faced real hostility. Jesus had told His disciples this would happen (John 15:18-19). Students may feel pressure or mockery at school for being Christians. The comfort is that we are not alone.

“LAY DOWN OUR LIVES” (v. 16). John heard Jesus say in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” In the Roman world, a few might die for a family member or a ruler; to die for others, including enemies, was unheard of (compare Romans 5:7-8).

SHARING WITH THOSE IN NEED (v. 17). Poverty was widespread in Roman cities, and many people had no safety net. The early church was known for caring for widows, orphans, the sick, and the poor (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). “Shuts up his heart” translates a phrase that literally speaks about the “bowels,” which the Greeks considered the seat of deep emotion, so we might say “closes his compassion.” Even a poor family could share something.

“IF OUR HEART CONDEMNS US” (vv. 19-20). Some believers carry a guilty conscience and wonder whether they really belong to God. John reminds them that God is greater than our feelings

and knows everything, including our sincere love for Him. This is a good place to reassure students who feel guilt or doubt. Yet John is not telling us to ignore real sin; we confess (1:9) and then rest in His forgiveness.

PRAYER AND OBEDIENCE (vv. 21-24). When our hearts are not condemning us and we are doing what pleases Him, we have confidence in prayer. The commandment is twofold: believe in the name of Jesus and love one another (v. 23). The Spirit living in us is the proof that God abides in us (v. 24).

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “anything for you” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 3:11-24 aloud (three readers: vv. 11-15, 16-20, 21-24).
10-25	Teaching	Teach: The Wrong Way (Cain), The Right Way (Jesus), Love in Deed, Our Heart and God.
25-33	Activity	Love in Action Cards.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “If a friend said ‘I would do anything for you’ but never helped you when you needed it, would you believe them? Why or why not?” Say: “Today John says that real love shows up with actions.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: The Wrong Way — Cain

John says in verse 11, “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” And then he gives a warning picture: “not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.” You may remember the story. Cain and Abel both brought gifts to God. God was pleased with Abel’s, but not Cain’s. Instead of changing his heart, Cain became jealous and angry and killed his brother.

It started with anger in the heart. That is why John says, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (v. 15). Hate is a seed. If it keeps growing, it can lead to horrible things. We do not wait until we do harm; we stop the seed early by asking God to help us forgive and love.

Point 2: The Right Way — Jesus

After a dark picture, John points us to a bright one: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (v. 16). Cain took a life. Jesus gave His life. That is the difference between hate and love.

Most of us will never be asked to die for someone. But “laying down our lives” can look like laying down our time, our comfort, our plans, or our stuff to help someone else.

Point 3: Love in Deed and in Truth

Verse 17 gets very practical: “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” If you see a classmate who has no lunch, and you have extra, what should you do? Share it!

Verse 18 is our key verse: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Saying “I love you” is good, but love that never does anything is empty. Think of a friend who says “I would do anything for you” but never shows up. Real love shows up.

Point 4: When Our Hearts Condemn Us

Sometimes we feel guilty or wonder, “Am I really God’s child?” John gives comfort in verses 19 and 20: “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” God sees our sincere love, even when we feel unsure. If we have sinned, we confess it, and He forgives. We do not have to live under a cloud of guilt.

Then verses 21 and 22 promise confidence in prayer. And verse 23 sums up the whole commandment: “that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another.” Believe in Jesus, and love one another. That is it.

How This Points to Jesus

Jesus is the perfect picture of love in deed. He did not just say He loved us; He went to the cross. He is also the One who gives us the power to love, because His Spirit lives in us (v. 24). We love because He loved us first.

ACTIVITY: LOVE IN ACTION CARDS

Give each student an index card. On one side, write someone’s name (a family member, classmate, neighbor, or teacher). On the other side, write one specific action they can do for that person this week (carry groceries, share lunch, write a card, play with a younger sibling). Students put the cards in their pocket or Bible as a reminder. Optional: pair up and pray for each other’s plan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Cain’s hate start? What could he have done differently?
2. What does it mean to “lay down your life” for someone in everyday life?
3. Why is love in words alone not enough? What is an example?
4. What can you do when you feel guilty or unsure whether God loves you?
5. What is one practical way you can love someone in deed this week?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John goes back to the message from the beginning: love one another. He gives a dark example, Cain, who killed his brother Abel. Hate leads to terrible things. But love leads to life.

Then John points to Jesus: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.” Because Jesus did that for us, we ought to be willing to give up what we have for others. If we see someone in need and close our hearts, how does God’s love live in us?

John ends with comfort. When our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts. And when we obey Him and believe in Jesus, we can have confidence in prayer and know that God lives in us by His Spirit.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says that love must be shown in deeds and not only in words?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about Jesus laying down His life for you?

DO: Who is one person you will love in deed this week, and what exactly will you do?

Handout answer key: 1. love, 2. life, 3. deed, 4. greater.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session08.mp3).

Love in Deed and in Truth

1 John 3:11-24

THE BIG IDEA

Real love is not just words. Jesus laid down His life for us, and we show we have passed from death to life by loving others with our actions, even when it costs us something.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” — 1 John 3:18

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: love • deed • greater • life

1. The message from the beginning is that we should _____ one another.
2. By this we know love, because Jesus laid down His _____ for us.
3. Let us not love in word only, but in _____ and in truth.
4. God is _____ than our heart.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Is there someone you could help this week who has a need? What could you do?

- Why is it comforting that God is greater than our heart?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says that love must be shown in deeds and not only in words?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about Jesus laying down His life for you?

DO: Who is one person you will love in deed this week, and what exactly will you do?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Complete the action on your Love in Action Card this week, and tell your leader or a friend how it went.

MEMORY VERSE

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” — 1 John 3:18

SESSION 9 OF 13

Test the Spirits

1 John 4:1-6

THE BIG IDEA

Do not believe every voice. Test everything by what it says about Jesus, because the One who lives in us is greater than the one in the world.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” — 1 John 4:4

MEMORY VERSE

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” — 1 John 4:4

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

TRAVELING PROPHETS AND TEACHERS. In the early church, itinerant prophets and teachers traveled from church to church, because there were no printed Bibles, no seminaries, and no established leadership structure in many places. A document from about this time, the Didache, offers instructions for testing traveling teachers (for example, how long they stay and whether they ask for money). John gives a more important test: what does the teacher say about Jesus?

A WORLD FULL OF SPIRITS. Ephesus and the cities of Asia Minor were filled with oracles, mystery religions, magic (Acts 19:18-19), and claims of divine inspiration. People believed spirits spoke through priests, priestesses, and mediums. So the claim “the Spirit told me” was common, and not all were from God. The Old Testament also gave tests for prophets (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22), with truthfulness and faithfulness to God as the key.

“TEST.” The Greek word dokimazo was used for testing metals and coins to see whether they were genuine. This was a familiar picture in the marketplace. Money changers would weigh and test coins. John is saying to examine claims in the same way, not to be paranoid, but to be wise.

“JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH” (v. 2). This confession directly answers the false teaching described earlier (Docetism, and Cerinthus’s teaching that Christ left Jesus before the cross). The truth is that the eternal Son of God truly became human (John 1:14). He was hungry, tired, wept, bled, and died. If Jesus did not truly become human and die, then there is no real sacrifice for sin.

“HE WHO IS IN YOU IS GREATER” (v. 4). The context is not a boast about our strength but about God’s power in us. The Holy Spirit dwells in believers. Students can be afraid of spiritual darkness,

scary stories, and the occult. Reassure them that Jesus has already won, and they are protected in Him.

“THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR” (v. 6). The standard for the church was the teaching of the apostles, which John represents (“We are of God. He who knows God hears us”). Today, that apostolic teaching is found in the New Testament, which is why we test everything by Scripture. Acts 17:11 praises the Bereans for examining the Scriptures to see whether Paul’s teaching was true.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “fooled by a rumor” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 4:1-6. Ask: “What does John say to do with spirits?” (test them).
10-25	Teaching	Teach: Don’t Believe Everything, The Test, Who Is in You, Hearing the Truth.
25-33	Activity	Two Truths and a Lie, Jesus Edition.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “Have you ever been fooled by something online or a rumor that turned out to be false? What happened?” Say: “Today John tells us how to test what we hear so that we are not fooled.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: Do Not Believe Every Spirit

John says in verse 1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” That is good advice for today. We hear many voices on TV, YouTube, social media, and even from people we know. Not everything that sounds spiritual or nice is true.

Think of a person at the market testing a coin. They would bite it, weigh it, or ring it on a table to see whether it was real gold. John says we should test what we hear in the same way. It does not mean we should be suspicious of everyone. It means we should be wise.

Point 2: The Test Is Jesus

What is the test? Verses 2 and 3 say, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.” The test is what someone says about Jesus.

The true Jesus is God’s Son who became a real man, who lived, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. If a teaching changes that, leaves it out, or says Jesus was only a good man or just another

prophet, it does not pass the test. Always ask: “What does this say about Jesus, and does it match the Bible?”

Point 3: He Who Is in You Is Greater

Now comes the encouragement. Verse 4 says, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Who is in us? The Holy Spirit. Who is in the world? The enemy and his lies. And John says that the One in us is greater.

Some kids are afraid of spooky or dark things. Here is the truth: Jesus has already won. The devil is real, but he is not equal to God. If you belong to Jesus, you do not have to live in fear.

Point 4: Listening for the Truth

Verse 6 says, “We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” John is speaking about the teaching of the apostles, the people who walked with Jesus. Today that teaching is written in the New Testament.

That is why reading the Bible matters. In Acts 17, the people of Berea checked everything Paul taught against the Scriptures, and God called them noble. When we hear something, we can ask a trusted teacher, parent, or pastor, and check the Bible.

How This Points to Jesus

The whole test is about Jesus. He is the center. When we have the true Jesus, we have the Father, eternal life, and the Spirit. And because Jesus has overcome, we are overcomers in Him.

ACTIVITY: TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE, JESUS EDITION

Play Two Truths and a Lie, but with statements about Jesus. A leader reads three statements (for example, “Jesus is the Son of God,” “Jesus died and rose again,” “Jesus was only a good teacher.”). Students vote on which one is false and tell how they know, using a verse or fact. Rotate leaders. Debrief: when we know what the Bible says about Jesus, we can recognize what does not match.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you hear messages about God or spirituality? How can you know which ones are true?
2. What is the test John gives? Why do you think he picked that test?
3. What are some things people say about Jesus that do not match the Bible?
4. What does it mean that “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”?
5. What can you do when you hear something and are not sure whether it is true?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says, “Do not believe every spirit.” Many false prophets are in the world, and not everything that sounds spiritual is from God. We are told to test what we hear.

The test is about Jesus. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Any spirit that does not is not from God. The true Jesus is God’s Son who became a real human being, died, and rose again.

The comfort is that we belong to God and have overcome the false voices, because He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. We do not need to live in fear.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says to test what we hear by what it says about Jesus?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that the One who is in you is greater than anything in the world?

DO: What is one claim you will test with the Bible and a trusted adult this week?

Handout answer key: 1. spirit, 2. flesh, 3. greater, 4. Scriptures.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session09.mp3).

Test the Spirits

1 John 4:1-6

THE BIG IDEA

Do not believe every voice. Test everything by what it says about Jesus, because the One who lives in us is greater than the one in the world.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” — 1 John 4:4

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: spirit • flesh • greater • Scriptures

1. Do not believe every _____, but test them.
2. The test is: Did Jesus Christ come in the _____?
3. He who is in you is _____ than he who is in the world.
4. The Bereans checked everything against the _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is one message you have heard lately that you could test with the Bible?

- Who is a trusted person you can ask when you are unsure?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says to test what we hear by what it says about Jesus?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that the One who is in you is greater than anything in the world?

DO: What is one claim you will test with the Bible and a trusted adult this week?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, when you hear a claim about God or Jesus (online, at school, or anywhere), ask, “What does this say about Jesus?” and check it with a trusted adult and the Bible.

MEMORY VERSE

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” — 1 John 4:4

SESSION 10 OF 13

God Is Love

*1 John 4:7-12***THE BIG IDEA**

God is love, and He showed it by sending His only Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Because He loved us first, we can love one another.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” — 1 John 4:8

MEMORY VERSE

“We love Him because He first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE. The Greeks had several words: *storge* (family affection), *philia* (friendship), *eros* (romantic or passionate love), and *agape*. In everyday Greek, *agape* was a less common word, but the New Testament writers filled it with new meaning: a self-giving love that seeks the good of others, no matter the cost. John uses *agape* throughout this section. Middle schoolers may hear “love” mainly as a feeling; *agape* is a choice and a commitment that acts.

THE GODS OF THE ROMAN WORLD. Greek and Roman gods were often moody, quarrelsome, and demanding. People gave offerings to keep them happy or to avoid their anger. Nobody thought of a god who loved ordinary people so much that he would give himself for them. John’s statement that “God is love” was radical.

“ONLY BEGOTTEN” (v. 9). The Greek word *monogenes* means “one of a kind, unique, only.” It does not mean that the Son was created. It emphasizes that Jesus is the one and only Son in a way that no one else can be. God gave the One He treasured most. Compare John 3:16 and Genesis 22, where Abraham was asked to offer “your only son, whom you love.”

“PROPITIATION” (v. 10). See Session 3. John repeats the idea here to show that the initiative was God’s. We did not earn it or even ask for it. In pagan religions, people tried to appease an angry deity; in Christianity, God Himself gives the sacrifice because He loves us.

“NO ONE HAS SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME” (v. 12). John 1:18 says the same and adds that the only begotten Son has declared Him. Greeks displayed their gods in statues; the Jewish people were forbidden images of God (Exodus 20:4). John says that people can “see” God’s love when believers love each other. This is why love in the church was such a powerful witness (John 13:35).

“BORN OF GOD” and “KNOWS GOD.” John does not say that people who sometimes feel love are saved. He says that love is a mark of God’s life in a person, the fruit of the new birth. See also Galatians 5:22, where love is the first fruit of the Spirit.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “best friend’s love” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 4:7-12. Ask: “How many times does the word ‘love’ appear?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach: Love Comes from God, God Is Love, How God Showed It, Now We Love.
25-33	Activity	Four Loves Word Match.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “If you had to describe your best friend’s love in one word, what would it be? How do you know they love you?” Let students answer. Say: “Today we find out how God showed His love, and it is the biggest proof of love ever.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: Love Comes from God

John says in verse 7, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” Love does not begin with us. It starts with God. Think of a lamp plugged into the wall. The lamp does not make its own electricity; it receives it. We love because we are connected to the God who is love.

Then verse 8 says, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” Notice John does not say that God has love, but that God is love. Love is part of who He is, the way that wet is part of water.

Point 2: How God Showed His Love

If someone says, “I love you,” how can you be sure? You look at what they do. Verse 9 says, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” God gave the One He treasured most.

Verse 10 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” God did not wait for us to be good first. He loved us first, before we ever loved Him. Jesus came, died on the cross, and took the punishment for our sins. That is the greatest proof of love in history.

Point 3: Now It Is Our Turn

Verse 11 says, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” Since God poured out so much love on us, we pass it on. A cup that is filled to overflowing spills onto others.

This kind of love is not just a feeling. It is a decision to care, give, and forgive, even when it is not easy. Think of someone in your life who is hard to love. God loved us when we were hard to love. That is how we learn to love them.

Point 4: Seeing the Invisible God

Verse 12 says, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” No one can see God with their eyes, but people can see His love when His children love each other.

When you are kind to a new student, forgive a friend, or help a sibling, you are making God’s love visible. You are like a window through which people can see what God is like.

How This Points to Jesus

Jesus is the proof of God’s love. In Him, God stepped into our world and showed us His love with His hands and feet. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

ACTIVITY: FOUR LOVES WORD MATCH

Write the four Greek words for love on cards (storge: family love, philia: friendship love, eros: romantic love, agape: self-giving love) along with descriptions on separate cards. Students match them. Then read 1 John 4:9-10 and ask: “Which kind of love did God show?” Discuss how agape gives even when the other person has done nothing to deserve it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that “God is love”? How is that different from saying that God loves?
2. How did God show His love for us? Why is that the strongest proof?
3. Why do you think John says that love begins with God and not with us?
4. Who is someone hard to love in your life? What would it look like to show them God’s love?
5. How can people “see” God through us?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says that love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. Love is not just something God does; it is who He is.

How did God show His love? He sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. John says that real love is not that we loved God, but that He loved us first and sent Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins.

Since God loved us this much, we ought to love one another. No one has seen God, but when we love each other, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says that God is love, not only that God loves?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that God loved you first, before you ever loved Him?

DO: Who is one person you will show God's love to this week, and how?

Handout answer key: 1. love, 2. only begotten, 3. first, 4. abides.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session10.mp3).

God Is Love

1 John 4:7-12

THE BIG IDEA

God is love, and He showed it by sending His only Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Because He loved us first, we can love one another.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” — 1 John 4:8

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: abides • first • only begotten • love

1. God is _____.
2. God sent His _____ Son into the world.
3. We love Him because He _____ loved us.
4. No one has seen God, but when we love one another, God _____ in us.

THINK ABOUT IT

- How would you describe God’s love to a friend who has never heard of it?

- What is one way you can make God’s love visible to someone this week?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says that God is love, not only that God loves?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that God loved you first, before you ever loved Him?

DO: Who is one person you will show God’s love to this week, and how?

THIS WEEK’S CHALLENGE

Look for one person who seems left out this week and show them God’s love by inviting them to sit with you, talking with them, or writing them a kind note.

MEMORY VERSE

“We love Him because He first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19

SESSION 11 OF 13

Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

*1 John 4:13-21***THE BIG IDEA**

Because God first loved us and gave us His Spirit, we can live without fear of judgment. His love in us grows, and it shows up as love for the people around us.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” — 1 John 4:18

MEMORY VERSE

“We love Him because He first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

THE SPIRIT AS PROOF (v. 13). John says that the Spirit is how we know that God abides in us. In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit came on certain people for certain tasks. Now every believer is indwelt (John 14:17; Romans 8:9-16). Students may wonder, “How do I know that I am a Christian?” John gives several signs in this letter: faith in Jesus, obedience, love for others, and the Spirit’s presence.

“SAVIOR OF THE WORLD” (v. 14). The title “Savior” (soter) was used in the Roman Empire for emperors and rulers. Inscriptions from the Mediterranean world, including Asia Minor, honored Roman rulers as “savior” and “benefactor.” John says the true Savior of the world is Jesus, sent by the Father. The Samaritans called Jesus “the Savior of the world” in John 4:42. This also gives a title for the overall theme of this curriculum series: Jesus Christ, Savior of the World.

FEAR OF JUDGMENT (vv. 17-18). The ancient world was full of fear: fear of angry gods, fate, curses, and death. Greek and Roman religion offered no assurance of forgiveness. John says that for believers, the “day of judgment” holds no terror because Jesus has paid for our sins. In the Greek, “fear involves torment” describes the dread of punishment, not respect or reverence for God. Healthy awe of God is good (Proverbs 9:10). The fear John means is the dread of being condemned.

“PERFECT” (teleios). It means complete, mature, or fully developed. John does not say that we must love perfectly before God accepts us. He says that as God’s love matures in us, it pushes out fear. Students who struggle with anxiety should hear that God’s love is the answer, and that sometimes God also uses parents, counselors, and doctors to help. (If a student shares serious anxiety, refer them to their parents or a counselor.)

“WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US” (v. 19). This is the core of the whole chapter. Our love is a response, not an achievement. We do not generate love by trying harder; we receive it and pass it on.

HATING A BROTHER WHILE CLAIMING TO LOVE GOD (vv. 20-21). John makes a practical argument: it is easier to love a God we cannot see than a person who annoys us. If we cannot love the person next to us, our claim to love God is hollow. This ties back to 2:9-11 and 3:14-18, and echoes Jesus in Matthew 22:37-40 and Mark 12:29-31.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “used to be scared” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 4:13-21 aloud. Ask: “What does perfect love do?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach: The Spirit Proves It, Savior of the World, Love Over Fear, Love God and People.
25-33	Activity	Fear and Love Flip.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions. Be sensitive with students who struggle with anxiety.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “What is something that scared you when you were little, but does not scare you now? What changed?” Say: “Today John tells us about a love that is strong enough to take away fear.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: God Has Given Us His Spirit

Verse 13 says, “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” How do you know that someone lives in your house? You see signs: shoes by the door, lights on, someone moving around. How do we know that God lives in us? He has given us His Spirit. The Spirit changes us, helps us love, and helps us believe.

Verse 14 says, “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.” John is an eyewitness again. He saw it. Jesus is not just the Savior for one group or one country. He is the Savior of the whole world, and that includes you.

Point 2: Abiding in Love

Verse 15 says, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” Then verse 16 says, “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” Abiding means living at home. When we believe in Jesus, God’s love becomes our home, a safe place to live.

Imagine coming home on a stormy night and finding the lights on, warm food on the table, and your family waiting for you. That is what living in God’s love is like. We are safe, and we belong.

Point 3: Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

Now we come to our key verse, verse 18: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.” This is not about being afraid of the dark or of tests. It is about the fear of being punished by God. Some people think that God is just waiting for them to mess up so He can punish them. John says that is not true for those in Christ. Jesus took the punishment on the cross, so there is nothing left to fear.

Think of a child who is afraid of being scolded. The more the child learns that their parents love them, the less afraid they become. As we learn how much God loves us, fear fades. It does not mean that we never feel afraid. It means that we know where to run: into His love.

Point 4: Love God, Love People

Verse 19 is a short, beautiful sentence: “We love Him because He first loved us.” We did not start it. God did. His love comes first and ours is the response.

Then John says something direct in verses 20 and 21: “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” It is easier to say we love God than to love the person who annoys us. But John says the two go together. We cannot love one and ignore the other.

How This Points to Jesus

Jesus is the reason that fear is gone. He took our judgment, rose again, and sent His Spirit. He is also the One who said the two greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). In Jesus, love and fearlessness meet.

ACTIVITY: FEAR AND LOVE FLIP

On one side of the board, list common fears of middle schoolers (being left out, failing a test, being embarrassed, the dark, losing someone). Then, as a group, write one “love truth” from the lesson that answers each fear (for example, “God has not left me, He abides in me,” or “God is on my side; I am not under judgment”). Students choose one fear and one truth to write on a card to carry in their pocket.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some signs that someone lives in a house? What are some signs that God lives in us?

2. What does it mean that Jesus is the Savior of the world?
3. What kinds of fears do kids your age face? How can God's love help with them?
4. Why do you think John says we cannot love God and hate our brother?
5. Is there someone you find hard to love? What first step could you take?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says we know that we live in God and He lives in us because He has given us His Spirit. The apostles saw and testify that the Father sent the Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God has God living in them.

God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in God. When we know how much God loves us, fear of punishment fades away, because Jesus already took our punishment. Perfect love casts out fear.

John ends with a clear statement: we love Him because He first loved us. And if someone says, "I love God" but hates a brother or sister, he is not telling the truth. Anyone who loves God must love others too.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Why do you think John says that perfect love casts out fear?

FEEL: What fear are you carrying right now, and how does it feel to know that God's love is stronger?

DO: What will you do this week when you feel afraid, and who will you talk to?

Handout answer key: 1. Spirit, 2. Savior, 3. fear, 4. first.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session11.mp3).

Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

1 John 4:13-21

THE BIG IDEA

Because God first loved us and gave us His Spirit, we can live without fear of judgment. His love in us grows, and it shows up as love for the people around us.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” — 1 John 4:18

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: Spirit • Savior • fear • first

1. God has given us His _____.
2. The Father sent the Son as the _____ of the world.
3. Perfect love casts out _____.
4. We love Him because He _____ loved us.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is one fear that you could hand over to God this week?

- Who is one person you need to show love to because you love God?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: Why do you think John says that perfect love casts out fear?

FEEL: What fear are you carrying right now, and how does it feel to know that God’s love is stronger?

DO: What will you do this week when you feel afraid, and who will you talk to?

THIS WEEK’S CHALLENGE

When you feel afraid this week, whisper, “God loves me and He is with me,” and then tell a trusted adult what is bothering you.

MEMORY VERSE

“We love Him because He first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19

SESSION 12 OF 13

Victory Through Faith

*1 John 5:1-12***THE BIG IDEA**

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Faith in Jesus overcomes the world, and God has given us eternal life, which is in His Son.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.” — 1 John 5:4

MEMORY VERSE

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” — 1 John 5:12

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

“BORN OF GOD” (vv. 1, 4). John uses the picture of new birth (John 3:3-8). Belief in Jesus is both the sign and the result of being born of God. Notice the connection in verse 1: believing in Jesus and loving other believers go together. If you love the Father, you will love His family.

“NOT BURDENSOME” (v. 3). Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30), in contrast to the religious leaders who “bind heavy burdens” (Matthew 23:4). God’s commands are not meant to crush us; He gives the desire and power to obey (Philippians 2:13). Teachers should be careful here: obedience is a response to love, not a way to earn it.

“OVERCOME” (nikao). The word is the verb form of nike, “victory,” which is also the name of the Greek goddess of victory. Ephesus had athletic games and statues of Nike. John says that the true victory is not in sport or in battle but in faith in Jesus. In Jesus’ words, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“WATER AND BLOOD” (vv. 6-8). The meaning is debated, but the most common explanation is that “water” refers to Jesus’ baptism, where the Father and Spirit testified to Him, and “blood” refers to His death on the cross. This answers the false teaching (Cerinthus) that the divine Christ came upon Jesus at baptism and left before He died. John insists that the same Jesus Christ came through both. John also saw water and blood come from Jesus’ pierced side (John 19:34-35).

THREE WITNESSES. The Old Testament law required two or three witnesses to establish a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15). John names the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and they agree. **TEACHER NOTE:** The NKJV includes extra words in verse 7 about “three that bear witness in heaven: the

Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.” Most scholars agree that these words are not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts and were added later. The doctrine of the Trinity does not depend on this verse, since it is taught elsewhere (for example, Matthew 28:19). It is fine to read the verse as printed and simply focus on the clear teaching in verses 6-12; if students ask, be honest about it.

“THE TESTIMONY OF GOD” (vv. 9-12). If we accept human testimony in court, God’s testimony is greater. His testimony is that life is in His Son. This sets up the central claim of the letter: life is not found in knowledge, religion, or good works, but in a Person.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “best victory” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 5:1-12 aloud. Ask: “What does John say overcomes the world?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach: Born of God, Commands Not Heavy, Faith Overcomes, Life in the Son.
25-33	Activity	Victory Relay.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “What is the best victory you have ever had, in a game, a contest, or something you worked hard on? How did it feel?” Say: “Today John tells us about a victory that is already ours through Jesus.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: Born of God

John begins chapter 5 with a clear statement: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.” Believing in Jesus is like a second birth. Just as you were born into your family, you are born into God’s family when you trust in Jesus.

And notice what John adds: if you love the Father, you will love His other children. You cannot love someone and then be mean to their family. When we love God, we love His people.

Point 2: God’s Commands Are Not Heavy

Verse 3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Burdensome means heavy. Think about carrying a backpack filled with rocks. That would wear you out. But a good coach’s training plan, even though it asks for effort, is meant to make you stronger.

God's commands are like that. They are good for us. They are meant to keep us safe and show us how to live well. And God does not leave us to do it alone. He gives us His Spirit to help.

Point 3: Faith Wins

Now comes the victory: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith" (v. 4). In verse 5: "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Remember what we learned about the world's pull? The lust of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life? John says that we can win. Not by being stronger or smarter, but by believing in Jesus, who already won. Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When we trust Him, His victory becomes ours. Faith is like holding a winning ticket; the prize is already paid for.

Point 4: Life Is in the Son

Verses 6 through 8 say that Jesus came "by water and blood." Water points to His baptism, where God the Father said, "This is My beloved Son." Blood points to the cross, where Jesus gave His life for us. Some people were teaching that Jesus was only God's Son at His baptism but not at His death. John says that Jesus Christ came through both. He is truly the Son of God from start to finish.

Then comes the big statement, verses 11 and 12: "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Eternal life is not something you earn or find in religion. It is a gift, and it is found in a Person, Jesus. Do you have the Son? If so, you have life.

How This Points to Jesus

Everything in this passage is about Jesus: He is the Christ, the Son of God, the One who overcame the world, the One who came by water and blood, and the One in whom is life. John 3:16 says, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

ACTIVITY: VICTORY RELAY

Run a simple relay (beanbag toss or ball pass) with two teams. Before the race, give one team a slight advantage that is hidden from the other (for example, the other team starts one step back). After, reveal it and discuss: sometimes it feels like we start behind. But in Christ, we are on the winning team. Jesus already won the victory, and we share it by faith. End by reading 1 John 5:4-5 together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be "born of God"? How is that like being born into a family?
2. Why do you think John says God's commands are "not burdensome"?
3. What are some things that make us feel like we are losing against the world? How does faith help us?
4. What does it mean that life is "in His Son"?
5. How would you explain to a friend what it means to "have the Son"?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John says that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Those who love the Father also love His children. And we show our love for God by keeping His commandments, which are not burdensome.

Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world, and the victory is our faith. Who overcomes the world? He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus came by water and blood, which means that His baptism and His death on the cross are both true and part of His saving work.

God has given us a testimony: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think John means when he says that our faith is the victory that has overcome the world?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that eternal life is a gift found in Jesus and not something you have to earn?

DO: Who will you tell this week about what it means to have the Son, and what will you say?

Handout answer key: 1. born, 2. burdensome, 3. faith, 4. Son.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session12.mp3).

Victory Through Faith

1 John 5:1-12

THE BIG IDEA

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Faith in Jesus overcomes the world, and God has given us eternal life, which is in His Son.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.” — 1 John 5:4

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: born • faith • burdensome • Son

1. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is _____ of God.
2. His commandments are not _____.
3. This is the victory that has overcome the world: our _____.
4. He who has the _____ has life.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is a “heavy” thing in your life right now that you could give to Jesus?

- How can your faith in Jesus help you overcome something this week?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: What do you think John means when he says that our faith is the victory that has overcome the world?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that eternal life is a gift found in Jesus and not something you have to earn?

DO: Who will you tell this week about what it means to have the Son, and what will you say?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Memorize 1 John 5:12 this week. Say it to a family member or friend and explain what it means to you.

MEMORY VERSE

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” — 1 John 5:12

SESSION 13 OF 13

That You May Know

1 John 5:13-21 and Whole-Book Review

THE BIG IDEA

God wants us to know, not just hope, that we have eternal life in Jesus. We can pray with confidence, help one another, and keep ourselves from anything that takes His place. Walk in the light, love one another, and trust Jesus.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” — 1 John 5:13

MEMORY VERSE

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” — 1 John 5:14

FOR THE TEACHER: BACKGROUND NOTES

Historical, cultural, and language notes to help you prepare. You do not need to teach all of this; use what serves your students.

THE PURPOSE STATEMENT (v. 13). John says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” This parallels John 20:31, the purpose statement of his Gospel (“that you may believe”). The Gospel was written to lead people to faith, and the letter was written to assure believers. Notice how often John uses the word “know” in this letter (over thirty times). In an age when false teachers claimed to have secret knowledge, John says that every believer can know the most important things.

PRAYER AND GOD’S WILL (vv. 14-15). In the ancient world, people often tried to manipulate their gods through rituals or magic spells (Acts 19:19). John says that prayer is not manipulation; it is confident asking in line with the good will of our Father. This echoes Jesus’ teaching in John 14:13-14 and 15:7. Be careful not to turn this into “God gives me whatever I want.” Praying “according to His will” means that we trust His wisdom and care.

“SIN LEADING TO DEATH” (vv. 16-17). This passage is difficult, and faithful teachers have understood it in different ways. Many suggest it refers to persistent, deliberate rejection of Christ, such as that of the false teachers who left, rather than ordinary sins. Others point to cases in the Old Testament and New Testament where sin brought physical death (for example, Acts 5:1-11). For middle schoolers, keep the focus on the encouragement: pray for fellow believers who are struggling, and God can bring life. If students ask about the difficult details, you can say, “Good Bible teachers have different views; let’s focus on what is clear.”

“WE KNOW” (vv. 18-20). John makes three “We know” statements: (1) that whoever is born of God does not keep on sinning, and the Son of God keeps him safe, so the wicked one does not touch him; (2) that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one; (3) that the Son of God has come and given us understanding that we may know Him who is true. These are meant to be confidence-builders.

“IDOLS” (v. 21). Ephesus was full of idols, especially the great temple and statue of Artemis, and trade guilds that demanded loyalty to a patron god. Christians were tempted to “just add Jesus” to other religions. John’s warning is short and sharp, and it applies to anything we trust or love more than God. For modern students, idols include popularity, achievements, devices, sports, and money, not carved statues.

THE LETTER’S ABRUPT END. There is no farewell or greeting. The letter ends with “Amen.” As noted in Session 1, the letter has no opening greeting either. It reads like a pastor’s sermon.

REVIEW: THREE TESTS OF LIFE. Many Bible teachers see three recurring tests in the letter: (1) the truth test: believing rightly about Jesus (2:22; 4:2; 5:1); (2) the obedience test: walking in the light and keeping His commands (1:6-7; 2:3-6; 5:3); and (3) the love test: loving one another (2:9-11; 3:14-18; 4:7-12). These are not three ways to earn salvation, but three evidences that we have life in Christ. John cycles through them repeatedly, like a spiral staircase, going deeper each time.

SESSION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

MIN	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0-5	Welcome and Icebreaker	Use the “something you know for sure” question.
5-10	Open in Prayer and Read	Pray. Read 1 John 5:13-21. Ask: “How many times do you hear ‘we know’?”
10-25	Teaching	Teach: That You May Know, Confident Prayer, Three Knows, Keep Yourselves from Idols, then Review.
25-33	Activity	1 John Review Relay.
33-40	Discussion	Pick two or three questions, including one review question.
40-45	Apply and Close	Worksheet, memory verse, closing prayer, celebrate finishing the series.

ICEBREAKER

Ask: “What is something you know for sure, like your birthday, your address, or your favorite food? How do you know it?” Say: “John wrote his whole letter so that we could know something even more important for sure.”

THE TEACHING

Point 1: That You May Know

Verse 13 tells us why John wrote this whole letter: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” John wants us to be sure, not guessing. Imagine a pilot who says, “I hope this plane has fuel.” You would not feel safe. God does not want us to just hope. He wants us to know.

How can we know? Because of the promises of God. Jesus said in John 6:47 that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life. God’s Word is our proof, not our feelings. Feelings come and go, but God’s promise stays.

Point 2: Confidence in Prayer

Verses 14 and 15 say, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Prayer is not like rubbing a magic lamp. It is like a child asking a loving father who knows what is best.

What does “according to His will” mean? It means asking for things that fit with who God is and what He has said in His word. And it means trusting His wisdom when the answer is different from what we expected. We can be sure that He listens to us every time.

Point 3: We Know

John ends with three “we know” statements in verses 18 through 20. First, we know that those who are born of God do not make a practice of sin; Jesus keeps them safe, and the wicked one cannot snatch them. Second, we know that we are of God, even though the world around us is under the wicked one’s influence. Third, we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true God. Verse 20 says, “This is the true God and eternal life.”

These are like three strong pillars. When we feel unsure, we can lean on them: Jesus keeps us. We belong to God. We know the true God through His Son.

Point 4: Keep Yourself from Idols

The very last verse is short and surprising: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” An idol is anything we love, trust, or serve more than God. Back in Ephesus there were statues everywhere. Today our idols are not usually statues. They might be popularity, grades, sports, social media, or our phones.

John says this to children he loves because he knows idols are empty. They promise happiness but never deliver. Only the true God gives life. The way to keep from idols is to fill our hearts with the true God.

Review: The Three Tests

Let us look back over all thirteen sessions. John gave us three questions to ask about our faith. First, do I believe the truth about Jesus? That He is the Christ, the Son of God, who came in the flesh, died, and rose again. Second, am I walking in the light? That means honest confession, obedience, and staying close to Jesus. Third, do I love others in deed and in truth?

These are not three ways to earn life. They are three signs that life is in us. Think of them like a doctor's checkup: pulse, temperature, and blood pressure. They show that something is alive. And remember, when we fall short, we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous.

How This Points to Jesus

The whole letter is about Jesus. He is the Word of life we have heard, seen, and touched. He is the light, the Advocate, the propitiation, the Savior of the world, the Son whom God sent, and the true God and eternal life. When we have the Son, we have life.

ACTIVITY: 1 JOHN REVIEW RELAY

Divide students into two teams. Post twelve index cards around the room, each with a key idea from sessions 1-12 (Eyewitness, Light, Advocate, New Commandment, The World, Fakes, Children of God, Love in Deed, Test the Spirits, God Is Love, Perfect Love, Victory). Call out clues (for example, "Jesus is the one who speaks up for us when we sin") and let teams race to touch the correct card. Afterward, read 1 John 5:13 together and celebrate what they have learned.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between hoping we have eternal life and knowing it? How do we know?
2. What does it mean to pray "according to His will"? How can we learn what His will is?
3. What are some idols that kids your age might struggle with?
4. Looking back over 1 John, which lesson meant the most to you? Why?
5. What is one thing you want to remember from this series for the rest of your life?

WHAT WE LEARNED

John tells us why he wrote this letter: so that we may know that we have eternal life. Faith in Jesus does not have to be a guess. We can know it. And that knowledge gives us confidence to come to God in prayer, knowing that He hears us when we ask according to His will.

John also encourages us to pray for each other when we see a fellow believer stumbling. He reminds us that we belong to God, that the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one, but that the Son of God has come and given us understanding so we can know the true God. Jesus is the true God and eternal life.

John ends with a simple, loving warning: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Anything that takes the place of God in our hearts is an idol. The whole letter can be summed up in three words: Walk in light, love one another, trust Jesus.

AFTER THE SESSION: THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think is the most important thing that John wanted us to know from his letter?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that you can be sure that you have eternal life through Jesus?

DO: What is one thing from 1 John that you will put into practice for the rest of your life?

Handout answer key: 1. know, 2. will, 3. life, 4. idols.

Podcast: Listen to the Lesson, a companion audio episode for this session, is included in the web app (file: session13.mp3).

That You May Know

1 John 5:13-21 and Whole-Book Review

THE BIG IDEA

God wants us to know, not just hope, that we have eternal life in Jesus. We can pray with confidence, help one another, and keep ourselves from anything that takes His place. Walk in the light, love one another, and trust Jesus.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” — 1 John 5:13

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Word Bank: idols • know • will • life

1. John wrote so that we may _____ that we have eternal life.
2. If we ask anything according to His _____, He hears us.
3. This is the true God and eternal _____.
4. Little children, keep yourselves from _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Which one of the three tests (truth, light, love) do you most want to grow in? What is your next step?

- What is one “idol” that you need to put back in its place this week?

THINK • FEEL • DO (answer in the app or on the back)

THINK: What do you think is the most important thing that John wanted us to know from his letter?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that you can be sure that you have eternal life through Jesus?

DO: What is one thing from 1 John that you will put into practice for the rest of your life?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Write a short thank-you note to God summarizing what you learned in 1 John, and share one thing with a friend or family member.

MEMORY VERSE

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” — 1 John 5:14

About This Curriculum

The Letter of 1st John is a project of Quantum Reality Programming LLC, written and developed by Ron Whittam, who has served for over 40 years in youth ministry alongside his wife Sharon, as a youth leader, lay pastor, helper, and Sunday school teacher.

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