

**1 john**

# background: read this stuff before you begin

## WELCOME TO ROOTWORKS

This guide is my gift to you to help you study the Bible. This may not seem like an expensive gift, but the treasures you will learn from studying God's Word will be priceless. I'm thrilled that you want to study the Bible! One of my greatest joys is to see students reading and learning from God's Word. Thank you for bringing me joy!

### What does RootWorks mean?

The name RootWorks comes from Colossians 2:6-7 (NLT) which reads:

*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to him. **Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him**, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done.*

As you can read from the passage, maturity in one's relationship with God requires nourishment. The imagery in this passage suggests that our spiritual roots must grow deep so that we'll continue in our vital relationship with God. This type of growth requires putting our ROOTS to WORK. Get it?

### Why do RootWorks? Why not just attend another Bible Study?

The reason I've put this notebook together is because I want you to learn how to study the Bible through reading and asking questions. It would be easy for you to find a weekly Bible study where you become comfortable attending and digging into God's Word. Chances are, you would go to Bible study, sit, and listen to someone else teach. While this is good, it's definitely not best for long-term maturity. You need to learn to study the Bible on your own. I want you to develop the habit of studying God's Word.

### How long will RootWorks take to finish?

The answer to this question depends on how much thought you give to answering the questions. The questions are not intended to be "raced through." Your goal shouldn't be speed; it should be comprehension and personal application. As a general rule, each lesson should take thirty to forty-five minutes.

**How often should I complete a lesson?**

This depends upon you . . . upon how often you decide to sit down and work through this material. The idea would be to keep consistent. You don't want to do too much too fast and get burned out or tired. At the same time, you don't want to answer one question a month—this will break up the continuity and the cohesiveness of the lesson, and you'll be 35 years old by the time you finish.

**What do I do when I finish all five lessons?**

Celebrate! You will have worked hard to reach this goal. Chances are you'll have some questions. If you're not in a small group I'd love to meet with you for a few minutes to hear those questions as well as what you learned as a result of your study (if you're in a small group, get together with your leader). When you're ready for the next RootWorks notebook simply print it from the youth website.

**What if I don't know an answer for a specific question?**

Keep going. Don't let it discourage you. I would be surprised if you didn't have some questions that "stump" you. Give it some good thought and then skip it if you don't know the answer.

**What Bible translation should I use?**

You can use just about any translation Bible and still be able to figure out the questions. The questions were written using the NIV translation, but they're worded so you can use almost any Bible and make it through. (I prefer the New Living Translation, but I realize most people have the NIV).

If this translation talk is confusing, don't worry about it. Basically, when the Bible was written 2,000 plus years ago, it was written in (mostly) Hebrew. The Bible you own has been translated from its original language into English so you can read and understand it. (If you think economics is tough, you should try Hebrew.) Have you ever noticed that you use some words differently than the ways your parents use those same words? After a time, words simply change their meaning; therefore, we have different translations of the Greek and Hebrew. Imagine the change that would happen over 400 years! That was when the King James Version was written—and that is why some of the language sounds so weird.

**Should I also write in my own Bible during this study?**

Yes! I hope you will write notes in the margin of your Bible, underline key verses, and watch your Bible become a friend that is waiting to tell you more about God and His desires for your life.

### **The Author: John**

Just in case the title didn't give it away, the author of this letter is John. You might remember John from the Gospels—he was one of Jesus' disciples. He and his brother James were very close to Jesus, along with Simon Peter. John and James were fishermen by trade, and worked for their father, Zebedee, when Jesus called them to follow him (Luke 5:1-11). John and his brother left everything to follow Jesus. Of all the disciples, John was the one closest to Jesus—kind of like his “best friend” (John 21:20). This means that 1 John is written by someone who didn't just know about Jesus, but knew Him like a brother; walking with Him and witnessing everything He did! That is exciting! Although John was probably a large and gruff man (his nickname was “son of thunder”), by the end of Christ's ministry on earth, John knew, understood, and embodied the tenderness of God's love. John's emphasis on love is very strong in his writing. It seems that John had a passion for communicating this love to people who didn't know Christ. John became a leader in the early church, and ultimately was exiled (or imprisoned) on the isle of Patmos (off the coast of modern-day Turkey) for exhibiting his faith. There he received a great vision, or revelation, from the Lord, which he wrote down in the book of Revelation. That vision tells of Christ's victory over Satan at the end of the world. Other books John wrote are The Gospel According to John, 2 and 3 John, and the book of Revelation.

### **The Audience: Christians Everywhere**

John wrote this letter to Christians everywhere. It was not uncommon for leaders in the Christian faith to write letters that were copied and circulated to churches to be read aloud. One of the major problems John addressed in this letter was that of false teachers. Since Christianity was only 50-60 years old, some people had returned to beliefs and practices that were not from God. John spends a lot of time in this book speaking against false teachers who did not believe that Jesus actually lived, or that Jesus was God's Son. These teachers were spreading false beliefs that were leading some believers astray. Today, we can learn a lot from this book—from cults to new age beliefs to psychics, we are bombarded by teachings and beliefs that are not from God. In this book, John admonishes us as Christians to test the spirits (or teachings) to see if they are from God.

Another important theme in this book is love. John teaches that we should love one another because God loves us. He also teaches that God is love . . . the Creator and the Source of all love. As you read this book, try to notice all the contrasts that John uses to illustrate truth: light and dark; the ways of the world and the ways of God; love and hate; and others. See how many you can find as you study this book (check out 1:5; 2:7-8; 2:15-16; 2:18; 2:20-21; 3:1-10; 3:14-16; 4:1-3; 4:18-19; and 5:11-12). Finally, as you read, I hope you will see that John is a gentle, loving pastor in his heart. He constantly uses phrases like “my dear children,” or “dear friends,” when addressing his readers. His love for all Christians is clear as he gently encourages us to stay true to what we know, to love one another, and reminds us that Jesus Christ—whom he knew personally—is the Son of God who came to save us from our sins.

# lesson 1: 1 john 1:1-10

## Questions for 1 John 1:1-4

1. There seems to be some doubt (among John's original readers) that Jesus lived in the flesh. Make a list below of all the words and phrases that John uses to describe his experience with Jesus (for example, "we have heard," and "we have seen," etc.).

2. Do you think first-hand knowledge is important for someone to believe in Jesus? Why or why not?

3. Jesus was always surrounded by doubt. People seemed to want to see miracles to prove that He was who He said He was. Even Thomas, one of Jesus' closest followers, doubted his authenticity (John 20:19-31).

- Do you or someone you know have doubts about Jesus?

- What are some of the reasons you or your friend has doubts?

*There are a lot of other sources besides the Bible that prove the existence of Jesus. Actually, most skeptics don't deny the existence of Jesus. They deny Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.*

4. According to verse 4, why did John write this letter?

- Why do you think John's joy was "made complete" by writing this letter?
- Why do you think John is so excited for his audience to know about Jesus?
- Have you ever had the privilege of leading a friend to Christ? If so, describe how it felt.

*If not, there is great joy in introducing someone to life-changing truths through a relationship with Jesus Christ!*

**Questions for I John 1:5-10**

1. Here John uses the contrast between “light” and “dark” to illustrate his point. Take some time to think about why John would describe God as light. On the list below, write down five qualities of light. Next to each of those qualities, write how God might be like that quality:

**Quality of light:**

e.g. Light allows us to see

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

e.g. God allows us to see how to live life

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**God might be like this because:**

- Since God is light, what do you think “walking in the light” or “living in the light” means (verse 1:7)?
  
- What do you think “walking in darkness” looks like?
  
- What areas of your life might be different if you consistently walked in the light?

2. According to verse 1:9, what are the two results of confessing our sins?

3. Verses 1:8 and 1:10 describe the opposite of confessing our sins. What is the result?

4. What does it mean that God “purifies us” or “cleanses us” (verse 1:9)?

- How much sin is covered under God’s forgiveness?
- Why should this be good news to you?
- What do you have to do for God to purge (or clear away) your sin?
- Is confession a part of your daily prayer life?

### **Wrapping It Up**

1. What verse did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?

2. List some questions you have from this lesson:

3. Make sure you pause and thank God for His forgiveness (verse 9) and the freedom to walk in the light of God’s presence.

## lesson 2: 1 john 2:1-14

### Questions for 1 John 2:1-6

1. John gives us another reason for writing this letter (the first being found in 1:4). What is the other reason (verse 2:1)?

2. John is gently reminding Christians, or his "dear children," not to sin even though forgiveness is available.

- What type of person would care enough to guide you from sin?
- Is there someone in your life who guides you out of sin? If so, who is it? If you don't have this type of person in your life, how can you find this type of person?

*John tells us that Jesus Christ is a Priest-friend who goes before God, as our friend, and aids in our forgiveness.*

3. According to John, if we do sin (do something that separates us from God), what saves us from that separation?

4. What is the evidence that proves someone knows Jesus (2:3) or lives in Him (2:6)?

- If someone were to judge your life, would there be enough evidence to "convict" you as guilty of knowing Jesus? What are some specific ways you "obey His commands?"

5. In verse 2:6, John tells us to live like Jesus did. In following Jesus' example, what are three things He did that you struggle to do? For example: Jesus always told the truth . . . I struggle with the truth.

6. According to verse 2:4, what makes someone a liar?

- Why do you feel it is important for your life to match your words (or your claim to be a Christian)?
- What do you think the non-Christian world thinks about Christians who don't live like Christians? What effect do you think this has on the Kingdom of God?

#### **Questions for 1 John 2:7-14**

1. John writes in verse 2:7: "I'm not writing you a new command but an old one." Why do you think he chose to write something they already knew?

- Can you think of something you already know but need to be continually reminded of?

2. Reread verses 2:9-11 and replace the word "light" (or "the light") with "God's way" and replace "darkness" (or "the darkness") with "the World's way." How do you feel about this passage when you read it like that?

- What are some practical ways you can "love others"?

3. What specific ways does John mention in this passage?

- Who are some "others" you need to show that type of love to?

4. After reading this section of scripture, how would you define the connection between loving God and loving others?

- Which is more difficult for you: loving God or loving others? Why?

5. John has some encouraging words about the Christians he was writing to. Make a list of the words that described the dear children, fathers, and young men (verses 12-14):

Dear Children

Fathers

Young Men

e.g. sins were forgiven

6. In the New Living translation, verse 2:14 reads, *I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you who are mature because you know Christ, the One who is from the beginning. I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won the battle with Satan.* What do you think would happen to you if God's Word was living in your heart?

### **Wrapping It Up**

1. What verse did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?
2. List some questions you have from this lesson:
3. Ask God to give you wisdom so you can show love to others.

# lesson 3 - 1 john 2:15-3:10

## Questions for 1 John 2:15-17

1. What does John mean when he says "do not love the world"? What do you think are some things in the world that we shouldn't love?

2. How can our love of the world squeeze out our love for God? According to verse 2:16, what isolates you from God?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- List examples of how you might struggle with each of these.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. Once again, John contrasts two opposites to get his point across. According to verse 2:17, what will happen to the world and its desires (and consequently, anyone who loves the world or gives in to its desires)?

- What is the opposite of giving in to the world's desires? What will happen to the person who does this?

- What desires do you need for God to change in your life? How will you let Him do that?

## Questions for 1 John 2:18-27

1. John didn't use the phrase "last hour" with its literal meaning in mind; instead, he was attempting to convey a sense of urgency to his readers. What do you think he was trying to warn his readers about in verses 2:18-27?

2. What does John mean when he talks about an “anointing” in verse 20?

3. How do you think the Holy Spirit helps us stay true to Christ?

4. Write your own definition of “antichrist” in words that you would use to explain to a non-Christian.

*The Bible dictionary definition of antichrist is: “An antichrist is one who opposes Christ . . . a person who is opposed to the authority of Christ as head of the church and creation.” (From New Unger’s Bible Dictionary) The “antichrist” that John talks about will be a person who epitomizes all that is evil. He is described as “one who will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God, or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”  
Read more in Revelation 13*

5. Reread verse 2:23. A lot of people believe in God, but this verse teaches us that the Father and the Son go together. Other religions and cults believe in God, but they deny that the Son (Jesus) and the Father (God) go together. Do you know of any religions that believe in God but don’t believe that Jesus was God’s Son?

6. In The Message paraphrase, 1 John 2:22 reads: *Stay with what you heard in the beginning, the original message. Let it sink into your life.* What is it you think John’s readers “heard in the beginning”?

- What would a person look like if they let God’s Word “sink deep into their life”? (Look up Psalm 119:11.)

- John urges his readers to see to it that the gospel “remains” in them. What are some practical ways you can follow this instruction? (Read John 15.)

7. Reread verse 2:25. How can the promise of a future, eternal life with God, impact your present daily life?

8. John is really trying to combat the false teachings these people were receiving because he was worried some would be “led astray.” He wants them to know the truth of God’s teaching. He encourages them to follow the teaching so they’ll have a faith that is pure and true. What are some areas in your life that keep you from following “God’s Way” in your life?

9. In verse 2:27, John writes about the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life. How does the Holy Spirit work in your life?

*Depending on your translation, you might see the word “anoint.” This is the act of pouring oil upon a person’s head—a symbol of God’s special selection for a special purpose. When used figuratively, it means “the gift of the Holy Spirit as an efficient aid in getting a knowledge of the truth. Not that the work of Jesus was imperfect, but the Spirit helps us to understand the truth He taught and thus to glorify Him (John 16:14) in whom the full revelation of God had been given (v. 15).” (from New Unger’s Bible Dictionary)*

#### **Questions for 1 John 2:28-3:10**

1. According to 2:28, how should Christians be ready for Jesus when He appears?

2. Is there anything in your life that’s keeping you from knowing, without any doubt or fear, that God is who the Bible says He is?

- If yes, write down your doubts.
- If no, what will it take to become “sold out” for God so you will live deeply in Him, walk with Him, and be excited to share Him with others?

3. What does it mean to be a “child of God?” What are some possible advantages to being His child?

- What is the difference between God’s creation and God’s children?

4. What do you think John meant when he said the world does not know us because the world does not know Him (3:1)?

5. Verse 3:6 says: *“no one who lives in Him keeps on sinning.”* This means that even though Christians will commit sins from time to time, we will no longer live under the continual power of sin. What are some things in your life that are different because you are no longer under the power of sin?

6. Verses 7-10 are a fairly intense description of those who belong to God and those who belong to Satan. Write your own paraphrase of these three verses so that you could explain them to a friend.

## **Wrapping It Up**

1. What verse did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?

2. List some questions you have from this lesson:

3. Pause and thank God for your inheritance into His family and that, as a believer, you are one of His children.

# lesson 4 - 1 john 3:11-4:21

## Questions for 1 John 3:11-18

1. There are so many different types of love. Love for your parents, love of certain activities, love for friends, even love for a certain food. John is clear when he writes of the importance of "loving one another." What are three examples of how you can show love for others?

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2. How does John use the example of Cain and Abel to help you understand this scripture? (You may want to read the story in Genesis 4:1-12.)

3. In verse 14, John writes about "passing from death to eternal life." What do you think that means?

4. Real love is seen through actions, not only words. Real love produces selfless sacrificial giving. How can you sacrificially "give your life" to others? (This could mean stretching yourself to leave behind some comfortable places in your life.)

5. How clearly do your actions say that you really love others?

- How can you love with your money?

- How can you love with your possessions?
  
- How can you love with your time?
  
- What changes need to be made right now in order for others to see the love of God in you through those areas?

### **Questions for 1 John 3:19-24**

1. "God knows everything." Does this phrase raise a guilty feeling or a joyful feeling for you? Explain your answer.

2. John makes it very clear that our motives for showing love must be genuine. As God's children, He loves it when we do things that are pleasing to Him. What are some things in your life that you are doing to please God?

3. Do you feel confident making your requests known to Him because you are obeying Him? Why or why not?

4. Reread verses 23-24. Is there more to believing in Christ? What does John say is vital for a strong relationship with God?

5. The way that we act and how we present ourselves to others verifies the fact that Christ lives in us. Who has been a role model to you in showing that Christ lives in them?

- How have they shown love to you or to others?

### **Questions for 1 John 4:1-6**

1. What test do we use in order to know the words we hear are from the Holy Spirit?

- 1 John 3:23-24

- 1 John 4:6

2. Some people believe everything they read or hear. Not every idea that is posted online or in print is true. How can we verify that a message we hear is truly from God?

*False teachers are popular with the world because they tell people what they want to hear. Some examples of this may even be psychics or tarot card readers (fortune tellers). God warns us strongly about staying away from people like that because they are not of Him.*

3. We can easily be frightened by the wickedness and evil that consumes the world. Such evil is much stronger than we are. What "things of the world" cause the emotion of fear to rise inside you?

4. What promise do we have from God in verse 4 that squelches our fears?

- Rewrite verse 4 in your own words

5. What other facts do you know about God and who He is that help you put your fears at rest?

### **Questions for 1 John 4:7-13**

1. John says "God is love" not "love is God." The world has turned these words around and has contaminated our understanding of love. The world thinks that love is what fulfills a person and makes a person feel good regardless of any moral principles that may be compromised. What are some ways the world defines love?

2. How did God show His love for us (verse 9)?

3. How would you define love after reading verse 9?

4. In verse 12, John states that "no one has ever seen God." What examples do we have or what have we seen that confirms the fact that God is real? (You might read Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1.)

5. How can God's love be seen through you?

### **Questions for 1 John 4:14-21**

1. What do you think is "the day of judgment" that John talks about in verse 17?

2. In verse 18, John says that God's love is perfect. What does it say that perfect love gets rid of?

- How can perfect love get rid of fear?

3. If a Christian is to grow in the likeness of Jesus, and our love is to grow (verses 17-18), what areas of your life are going to require the most change?

4. The real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us (family, friends, relatives, leaders). What actions need to be changed in order for you to reveal your love for God to those closest to you?

<b>Name</b>	<b>How I treat them</b>	<b>How they should be treated</b>
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### **Wrapping It Up**

1. What verse did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?

2. List some questions you have from this lesson:

3. Thank God that He is love and for loving you in a way that no one could ever love you.

## lesson 5 - 1 john 5:1-21

### Questions for 1 John 5:1-12

1. As Christians, we are part of God's family, along with other Christians, who are children of God. We are called to love them and accept them. Who is someone in God's family that you need to love?

2. Read verse 5 and complete the following sentence: We can overcome the world by . . .

3. In verse 5:6, John writes that Jesus came "by water and blood." What did he mean by water? What about blood?

*Some believed that Jesus was the "Christ" only between His baptism and His death. In other words, the "Christ" left before His death on the cross. If Jesus died only as a simple man, He could not have taken all of our sins upon Himself. Therefore, Christianity would be an empty religion.*

4. The ONLY way that we can be sure that we have eternal life is by doing what (verses 11- 12)?

- How does this command differ from what other religions or cults believe?

### Questions for 1 John 5:13-21

1. It is important that we don't demand what we want from God. We should discuss with Him what He wants for us since He knows what is best. How would you describe your talking relationship with God?

2. When we pray we can be confident in knowing what (verses 5:14 & 15)?

- In the New Living Translation verse 5:14 reads: *And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with His will.*

What do you think this means?

3. What is the only way for sin to lead to death? (also read Hebrews 6:4-6)

4. According to verse 20, what is one result of Jesus' coming to earth?

### **Wrapping It Up**

1. What phrase or verse do you find most meaningful? Why?

2. What are some things from this lesson you don't understand?