

## *Intro. To 1 John*

*“Fellowship is one of God’s greatest gifts; the believer delights to be in intimate relationship with fellow Christians. At the same time, he longs to enter into an increasingly intimate relationship with the Father and the Savior. We were created with a need for fellowship, and we are restless and insecure until this becomes our living experience.*

*While there is much discussion about fellowship, little is understood of the bases, prerequisites, fruits, and the responsibilities of fellowship. John develops these truths in his first epistle; he wanted his spiritual children to enter into that life of intimate fellowship with the Father and Son that he had seen the Son live with His Father and into which the apostle himself had entered.”*  
Dwight Pentecost

- Jesus picked John to be one of the twelve Apostles, apostles meaning “sent ones.”

*Iōannēs ee-o-an'-nace, John = “Jehovah is a gracious giver”*

**Mark 3:13-19** *Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons. 16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

*“James and John were two of Jesus’ closest friends, being two of the “inner three” disciples (see Matthew 17:1). As the church age began, James was the first apostle to be killed (Acts 12:2), while John was the last to die, although of old age. John’s epistles, written late in his life, hint that he still possessed a fervency of spirit, especially in his denunciations of apostates and deceivers (1 John 2:22; 2 John 7; 3 John 10). However, it is a fervency tempered by love. In fact, in 1 John the word “love” and its relatives occur over 40 times. When he first met Jesus, John was one of the “Boanerges.” But after walking with Jesus for a lifetime, the “Son of Thunder” earned a new nickname: the ‘Apostle of Love.’”*

*gotquestions.org*

**Luke 9:53-55** *but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them.*

- His special relationship with Jesus is noted in John 13:23; 19:25-27; 20:2

**John 13:23** *One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.*

**John 19:25-27** *Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

- By the end of the first century, just 50-60 years after the church was established, the truth of God's Word was under massive assault.

**2 Tim. 3:16-17** *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

- There were **two major assaults** against the truth.

**1st.** The first dealt with **legalism**.

- Paul's writings dealt with this as seen in the book of Romans and in the book of Galatians. We know from his inspired writings that **legalism undermines** the finished work of Christ on the cross.
- **It undermines** the thoroughness of grace, the thoroughness of mercy, and the extent of our freedom in Christ. **It undermines** the truth of Justification (being declared righteous). **It cheapens grace** by requiring that man must earn favor in God's eyes through works.
- Simply believing and trusting from the heart in what Jesus Christ did as a sacrifice for our sins wasn't good enough. Repentance is an important part of that too. this assault had to be addressed, and it was.

**Eph. 2:8-9** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**2<sup>nd</sup>,** the **second great assault** against the truth undermined the fact that the Holy Spirit gives all believers the intellectual and spiritual capacity to understand what they've been given in Christ.

**1 Cor. 2:12** *"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."*

- This assault undermined the infallibility of God's word saying that it fell short in providing Christians with an understanding of what true spirituality is.
- 1 John was written as an argument against (a polemic) those who thought they could **improve upon** Christianity. The problem came from within the church, those who professed to be believers. Some of the more talented and intellectual members of the church had withdrawn from the fellowship to start a new church. They claimed that they were given a deeper insight by God than the others, new insights better than those old, outdated notions.

**1 John 2:19** *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed none of them belonged to us.*

- The heresy was known as *Gnosticism (early form of it)*.

**Gnostics** put themselves forward as being **the knowing ones**.

**Gnosis = knowledge** *The deeper wisdom; knowledge of spiritual truth, such as was claimed by the Gnostics.*

- Insisted that **salvation** is primarily **by knowledge**.
- It comes by an initiation into the mystical and allegedly superior knowledge they possessed.

**What Gnostics believed:** (N.I.V. intro to 1 Jn.)

1. The human body, which is matter, is evil.
  2. Salvation is an escape from the body.
  3. Christ's true humanity was denied. (1) He seemed to have a body (Docetism from the grk. dokeo, to seem). (2) The divine Christ joined the man Jesus at baptism and left him before he died (This view is the background of much of 1 John).
  4. Since the body is considered evil, it was to be treated harshly (ascetism/book of Colossians addresses this heresy)
  5. Paradoxically, this dualism also led to licentiousness. The reasoning was that , since matter—and not the breaking of God's law (1 Jn 3:4)—was considered evil, breaking his law was of no moral consequence.
- The result was people within the church questioning what they had come to believe.
    - Were the teachers, right?
    - Was the old teaching to be abandoned?
    - Where did the truth lie?
    - Had they been Christians all along, or where their former beliefs only a preparation for this higher and "only authentic form" of Christianity?
  - In short, how could one know when he or she was truly a child of God? How could a believer know when he or she was born again?
  - 1<sup>st</sup> John was written because **professed believers** from within the church were causing people to doubt what the Scriptures were saying about Jesus and what it meant to be his disciple.
  - **The purpose** of 1 John is twofold, it was meant to give a believer an assurance of their faith, and it was written as a rebuke toward professing believers who said that they were given a much deeper understanding than the others over spiritual matters.
  - John tells us that a true believer, one who has come to a Spirit led understanding of their need for Savior and has put their trust in Christ for salvation, is marked by **three very important characteristics**.

**3 tests that indicate if someone is truly born again:**

1. The **moral test** -- Are believers growing in their obedience to God's moral commands.

**1 Jn. 5:3** *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

2. The **social test** – Are believers growing in their understanding of what it means to love God’s way and are they putting it into practice.

*1 Jn. 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*

*Heb. 10:24-25 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

3. The **theological test** -- Do believers truly know who Jesus is, and are they willing to accept everything the Bible says about Jesus Christ, his deity, his humanity, his purpose, **his lordship** over their lives.

*1 Jn. 1:6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*

*1 John 1:1\_ John’s first epistle begins with, That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”*

- This epistle was not written to present the person of Christ; John had already done that in the Gospel he wrote.

*John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

- John affirms Christ’s deity, eternity, and distinctiveness as the second person of the trinity.
- He introduces him as the Creator and Revealer.

*John 1:2 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

- In 1<sup>st</sup> John, John writes of what it meant to experience Christ. He writes about the abundant life, about what Jesus shared with him when they were together.
- John doesn’t start out with a customary introduction, instead he immediately addresses the **Gnostic heresy** about Christ’s humanity.
- You say he didn’t come in the flesh and I’m testifying that he did, because I interacted with him, I heard, saw, and touched him. Because of that, his writings could not be refuted by those who never knew Jesus.

*It is Jesus and not a system of thought who is the essential core of the Christian proclamation. The Gnostics had a system, just as many professional religionists have a system today. But a system is not life, nor does it transform a life. A system in and of itself is nothing. What Christianity has and others do not have is life, in fact, the life of Jesus himself, the one who is the creator and sustainer of all life and who as the life is also the light of men (John 1:4). It is Christ, then, who is proclaimed in Christianity. Boice*