

THE
REAL DEAL



Homegroup studies

Summer 2021

1 John 3-5

Introduction

Dear all,

Here are the studies based on the book of 1 John, following on from our time in this letter last year. You should be able to get straight into it, but some notes from the *ESV Study Bible* are included again at the end if you would like a bit more background first.

An idea for further Bible studies is included at the end, should your group finish early!

As always, please do get in touch with me if something doesn't sense, or you just want to check something.

Every blessing,

James

p.s. The *Bible Project* video on 1-3 John is well worth watching!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3QkE6nKyIM>

(or go to www.youtube.com and type in the search box)

p.p.s. I've found David Jackman's book *The Message of John's Letter's* (from the Bible Speaks Today series) very helpful. You may like to get a copy, especially if you're leading studies, although I can't see them online for much under £10. Our bookstall manager, Yvonne Bevis, would be delighted to order you a copy or, if you're quick, you're welcome to borrow mine.

List of studies

April	Study 1 – 1 John 1-2 (recap)	<i>Welcomed & included</i>
May	Study 2 – 1 John 3:1-10	<i>Sweet child of mine</i>
	Study 3 – 1 John 3:11-24	<i>More than words</i>
June	Study 4 – 1 John 4:1-6	<i>Fake news</i>
	Study 5 – 1 John 4:7-21	<i>Let there be love</i>
July	Study 6 – 1 John 5:1-12	<i>I'm a believer</i>
	Study 7 – 1 John 5:13-21	<i>Knowing me, knowing you</i>
Bonus		<i>Favourite Psalms</i>

Study 1 – 1 John 1-2 (Recap) Welcomed & included

Intro Q. This study is all about inclusion.

What groups or associations are you part of?

Read 1 John 1:1-2:29

It won't take that long! Look out for any repeated words...

Q1. What words or phrases stood out to you?

Q2. Why is John writing this letter? Make a list of all the different reasons that come out of these opening two chapters.

Q3. What seems to be the particular reason why John's put ink to scroll?

Q4. When might we feel left out or unwanted? What can we remember from 1 John 1-2 at such times?

Q5. How might we accidentally give the impression to others that we don't really care whether or not they're part of St Matthew's? How could we help them feel more valued and included?

Summary:

Study 2 – 1 John 3:1-10 *Sweet child of mine*

Intro Q. This study is about family traits.

In what ways do you resemble your parents?

Read 1 John 3:1-10 (or start from 2:28)

Q1. What's the massive encouragement shared in 3:1?

Q2. The community John was writing to were considered to be rather weird. What explanation does John give for this in v1-3?

Q3. What does John go on to talk about in verses 4-10?

Q4. The group of people who had left the church community (2:19) were claiming to be the real deal. They seemed to have believed that salvation came from knowledge (2:20) rather than from repentance & faith. Their beliefs freed them to engage in questionable behaviour (hence the inclusion of 2:15-17). Looking back at 3:4-10, how can John's readers know who's on the right path?

Q5. Think for a moment about your own life. What is there in it that you know isn't right? Are you going to let it slide or take action?

Q6. We're told in 2:2-3 that thinking about the Lord's return is transformational. How could you make sure to remember it in the week ahead?

Summary:

Study 3 – 1 John 3:11-24 *More than words*

Intro Q. This study's entitled 'More than Words.' What things might we sometimes say that we don't back up with actions?

Read 1 John 3:11-24

Q1. What struck you from those verses as they were read?

Q2. What's the 'h' word mentioned in verses 11-15, and what are its causes? Answer with reference to the text.

Q3. What is the main mark of being a true believer according to John (as stated in v14)? Can you explain why this is so?

Q4. Look at verses 16-18. If we're part of God's family, how will we treat those who are also part of it?

Q5. Despite our best efforts we may still feel like a failure. What's the reassurance given in verses 19-20?

Q6. What do you make of verses 21-24? How can we be sure that we're really God's people?

Q7. Look through your copy of the church directory (a new version will be on the way soon!). Put a mark by all the people you don't really know. What could you do to show them that they matter to you?

Summary:

Study 4 – 1 John 4:1-6 *Fake News*

Intro Q. This study is about fake news. Prepare two truths and a lie about yourself to share with your group. Can they tell which is which?

Read 1 John 4:1-6

Q1. Who can remind us of the situation in the church that John was writing to?

Q2. What instruction does John give at the start of this chapter?

Q3. What does the fact that John has to give this instruction say about the people he doesn't want his readers to trust?

Q4. What is the test by which John's readers could determine whether or not someone was worth listening to? (a) they've combed their hair nicely (b) they quote from Isaiah (c) they have a title before their name (d) something else...

Q5. Despite the persuasive power of many false teachers, why can true believers be confident they won't be taken in? (v4)

Q6. Look onto verses 5-6. Suppose there are two widely-held views within the church on a moral issue. One of these views is popular with society, the other is unpopular. Which is the more likely to be true, and why?

Q7. Currently the Church of England is involved in a process called *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF), through which the church's stance on human sexuality and relationships is being reviewed. The material officially produced for LLF calls into question a number of straightforward teachings of Scripture, such as that God disapproves of homosexual activity. In the light of 1 John 4:1-6, what would be wise / unwise ways of engaging with this process?

Summary:

Study 5 – 1 John 4:7-21 *Let there be love*

Intro Q. The theme of today's passage can be ascertained by just a quick glance at it. What pop songs can you think of with 'love' in the title?

Read 1 John 4:7-21

Q1. How many times is the 'I' word mentioned in these verses?

Q2. Haven't we thought about this enough already in 1 John? Why do you think we get another big dose of it here?

Q3. Look at verses 7-12. Who do we read about in these verses, and what's the connection between him and love?

Q4. Look on to verses 13-16. What does abiding (i) mean, (ii) have to do with love?

Q5. Verses 17-18 are about having confidence in God's love. Suppose a number of bad things were to happen in our lives – how sure should we be that God still cares about us?

Q6. According to verses 19-21, why is it impossible to love God if we don't love his people?

Q7. Suppose someone else at church has been rude and unkind to you. How does our subsequent treatment (/ignoring) of them reveal what we believe?

Summary:

Study 6 – 1 John 5:1-12 *I'm a believer*

Intro Q. This study is all about witnesses.

Have you ever witnessed anything significant?

Read 1 John 5:1-12

Q1. What words did you notice as that passage was read?

Q2. According to verses 1-3, which of the following shows that you're really part of God's family? (a) Having lots of friends at church (b) Leaving a large legacy to St Matthew's (c) Giving model answers at homegroup (d) Trying your best to live in line with God's Word.

Q3. Look at the end of verse 3-5. Which of God's commands might we think of as a chore rather than as a privilege? How might we start wanting to do these things?

Q4. Verses 6-8 talk about three things that testify to the truth. These are generally thought to be the death of Jesus, the inspired word of God (2 Peter 1:21), and the baptism/ministry of Jesus. Which is which? How can John's readers be sure that the Christian faith really is true?

Q5. Look on to verses 9-12. Why is it impossible to be neutral towards God?

Q6. One of the Bible's hard teachings is that not everyone ends up in heaven, and that actually that most people have a lost eternity awaiting them (Matthew 7:13-14). How do verses 6-12 make this slightly easier to rationalise?

Q7. Who would you like to pray for in the light of today's passage?

Summary:

Study 7 – 1 John 5:13-21 *Knowing me, knowing you*

Intro Q. The theme of this study is certainty.

What different things are you sure of?

Intro Q2. How sure are you that (i) you have a home in heaven?

(ii) God hears you when you pray?

Read 1 John 5:13-21

Q1. What did you make of that reading?

Q2. Look back to verses 13-15. How sure does John want his readers to be about both their future and current relationship with God?

Q3. What, though, if we realise we've drifted away from God?

Is there any hope for us then? Answer with reference to verses 16-17.

(The unforgivable sin is to unceasingly refuse to turn to Christ)

Q4. How does John summarise the themes of his letter in verses 18-20?

Q5. An idol is anything or anyone that we love more than the one true God. How, then, is verse 21 a fitting finale to John's letter?

Q6. What one thing are you going to take away from our studies this term in 1 John? What practical difference will it have on your life?

Summary:

Study 8 onwards *Favourite Psalms*

Your group will probably finish these studies in 1 John long before we start a new series in September. In between, if you would like to do so more Bible studying together, I suggest you take it in turns to share some thoughts on your favourite Psalms (for about 15-20mins each) .

Your group leader might ask you the following questions – so you may like to spend some good time in your chosen Psalm first and jot down some thoughts.

Q1. What's your favourite Psalm?

Q2. How did you first come across it?

Q3. What do you particularly like about this Psalm?

Q4. What do the tricky bits mean?!

Q5. How does it help you in day-to-day life?

Q6. In what practical situations might this Psalm affect the decisions we make?

If you don't yet have a favourite Psalm, you could read through one each day over the next month or so, and pick one that particularly resonates / is especially striking.

Notes on 1 John

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Early post-apostolic figures like Polycarp and Papias (c. A.D. 100) presuppose or cite 1 John in their writings. This suggests a date of composition no later than the 90s A.D. This dovetails with the testimony of church fathers that, shortly before A.D. 67, John joined other Christians in departing from Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the city by Rome. John reportedly resumed his apostolic ministry in the vicinity of the great but highly idolatrous city of Ephesus (in modern western Turkey). He likely wrote 1 John as an elder statesman of the faith in the last third of the first century, perhaps to churches in the surrounding region. This might have included towns like those mentioned alongside Ephesus in the opening chapters of Revelation: Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (**Rev. 2:8–3:22**).

It is customary to understand 1 John as a response to the rise of an early form of Gnosticism. This was a religious mysticism that pirated Christian motifs to propagate an understanding of salvation based on... “knowledge” (Greek: *gnōsis*). According to this view, redemption is through affirming the divine light already in the human soul, not through repentance of sin and faith in Christ’s death to bring about spiritual rebirth. Writings widely publicized in recent years, like the Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Judas, for example, were products of Gnostic writers...

John wrote to Christians who had witnessed an exodus from their ranks (2:19). This does not mean that all John wrote should be interpreted as a response to schism—John is neither anti-Gnostic nor anti-schismatic. John’s focus is positive, not polemical. His aim is redemptive, not reactionary. He urges readers to refine their theological understanding, sharpen their ethical rigor, and heighten their devotional intensity. That is, they must grow in faith, obedience, and love. Yet the letter is not a list of dos and don’ts. It is rather a manifesto of “Done!”—Jesus’ words “It is finished” (John 19:30) come to mind. First John highlights what God the Father has “done” in sending Christ the Son, offering him up as a sacrifice for sins, and sending forth “the word of life” (1 John 1:1) that is causing this world’s darkness to pass away and the true light of the coming age to shine (2:8).

God’s action becomes the mandate of those who believe in his Son. “Whoever does the will of God abides forever” (2:17). God’s will is for readers to receive the saving message of Christ’s coming, rejoice in the commands of Christ’s teaching, and revel in the love of the Father as it continually translates into Christian love for one another and ministry to the world. This is “not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (3:18).