

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

## Dig Deeper Study Tools

- Author's Purpose
- Context
- Structure
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- Vocabulary
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- Tone and Feel
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- Bible Timeline
- "Who am I"
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## 1 John—Assured in Christ

### Sermon Series

23 March 2025    1 John 5:1-12    Believe Jesus Is the Son

30 March 2025    1 John 5: 13-21    Know Him Who Is True

## **Background**

- 1 John is likely a circulated sermon from the Apostle John, the beloved disciple, an eyewitness of Christ
- Written in late AD 80s to 90s to combat false teachings such as
  - Gnosticism: Belief that the material world is evil, and attaining certain secret knowledge (*gnosis*) will awaken a divine spark and enable one to escape the material world to unite with the divine.
  - Docetism: A sub-set of Gnosticism. Believe Jesus didn't have a true but a phantom body. His crucifixion was thus an illusion.
- Written with an end-time perspective echoing the book of Revelation: antichrists are active throughout, though the ruler of this world has already been judged.
- It's a call to godly and right living undergirded by Christ's atoning work.

## **Key Message: Life Comes from God through Jesus**

### ***John's subject is Christ Jesus***

- Through Jesus, God is revealed, and eternal life comes to us in the flesh.
- Eternal life is the life with the Father, and in the Son—manifested in Jesus, now bestowed on believers.
- This eternal life is the fellowship and communion we now have with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit who makes us God's children
- The evidence of this new life that proceeds from God, shows up in God's character in a believer
- Because to believe is to walk in God's light and love
- The alternative is to lie—to practise not the truth but walk in darkness and sin.

## Broad Outline of the Epistle of 1 John:

Outline Aligned to the Pulpit Series		
2 Feb	Walk in the light (1:1-10)	} BFA FEB Studies 1 & 2
9 Feb	Keep His Commandment (2:1-14)	
16 Feb	Abide in Christ (2:15-29)	
23 Feb	Keep Away from Sin (3:1-10)	
2 Mar	Love in Deeds and Truth (3:11-24)	} BFA MAR Studies 3 & 4
9 Mar	Test the Spirits (4:1-6)	
16 Mar	Love One Another (4:7-19 )	
23 Mar	Believe Jesus Is the Son (5: 1-12)	
30 Mar	Know Him Who Is True (5:13-21)	

### Discipleship Themes: Assured in Christ

- Assurance of Walking in God's Light
- Assurance of Forgiveness
- Assurance of Abiding in Christ
- Assurance of Discerning the Truth from Lies
- Assurance of God's Love
- Assurance of Victory over Sin
- Assurance of Answered Prayer
- Assurance of Eternal Life in the Son

## Summary of Key Truths in 1 John 3-4

- **1 John 3:1-10 Keep away from Sin**
- **1 John 3:11-24 Love in Deeds and Truth**
- **1 John 4: 1-6 Test the Spirits**
- **1 John 4:7-19 Love One Another**
- **Leading to 1 John 5:1-12 Believe Jesus Is the Son**

### **1 John 3:1-10 Keep away from Sin**

This segment begins with the good news that we are now the children of God. When Christ appears, we will become as He is. To have Jesus is to have His life in us. He is the source of this life, God Himself manifested in and among us.

We haven't yet become pure as He is, but we shall be, at His appearing. He becomes our measure of true purity, because we now partake of His nature, and share in the same relationship He has with God the Father. This is the eternal life we now possess as the children of God. And the full glory of this eternal life is yet to be unveiled, while we await Christ's return.

This hope strengthens believers to overcome sin as God's beloved children.

The alternative is to practise a life of sin, breaking God's law, following the deception of the evil one whose work Christ has come to destroy. Cain is such an example cited in the next segment.

### **1 John 3:11-24 Love in Deeds and Truth**

This segment shows us what sets the children of God apart. Cain in Gen 4, is the antithesis of what God has created humans to be, and of what believers should be. He loved neither God nor his brother. He murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy and hatred. He was evil and showed he belonged to the evil one.

In contrast, for God's children, v.23 says it is "to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." Since Jesus laid down his life for us (v.16), to know Him is to practise this same love that is incarnational and sacrificial. This is the result of the Holy Spirit in us, given by Christ (v.24).

### **1 John 4:1-6 Test the Spirit**

This segment further elaborates on how we can identify the true works of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, v. 2 says it is to believe that Jesus came from God and came to us as a human being. He is fully God and fully man. This is believing in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. This echoes Jn 16:14, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you (ESV)." The Holy Spirit always points to Christ and His work on the cross. Christ must occupy the centre of our universe, just as He, the Lamb that was slain, sits with God on the centre of heaven's throne in Rev 5. Hence, whoever points us away from the centrality of Christ and the sufficiency of His

work on the cross, is not from the Holy Spirit. This is how we discern what is from God and what is not.

Secondly, v. 5-6 says believers are children of God who overcome the world by listening not to the world, but to the Scripture through which God's appointed spokesperson like John, to bear apostolic witness to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Consequently, God's children see life from the perspective of God rather than the world (v.5). The "world" appears 5 times in these 6 verses, reinforcing the call to God's children not to love this world (See 2:15-17), which is a major theme in 1 John on the assurance of victory over sin as an outcome of possessing eternal life.

So true believers 1) believe God has sent us His Son, the Lord Jesus. 2) They listen not to the world, but to His word in the Scripture as the ultimate authority for their lives of faith.

### **1 John 4:7-12 Love One Another**

True believers 3) will also love God's people.

This is because v.8 says God is love, just as 1:5 says God is light.

The greatest demonstration of God's love is sending His Son to die for our sins so that we may live a new life through His Son (v. 8, 9).

Though we cannot see God, we can love Him by loving those made in His image. When we live out His love among us, we become aware and assured that He lives among us and that His Holy Spirit is at work within us (v. 11-16).

By loving one another,

- 1) His love is made complete/perfected in us because His purpose for saving us to make us like Christ His Son is being accomplished (v.17).
- 2) We are assured that we belong to Him since we reflect Christ's likeness and love. This gives us the confidence to face Him on Judgment Day (v.17).
- 3) This assurance removed the fear that we would be punished for our sins on Judgment Day (v.18).

### **This leads to Study 1 of Mar BFA: 1 John 5:1-12 Believe Jesus Is the Son**

Chapter 5:1-4 supplies another reason believers will keep God's word/command by loving one another.

v.5-12 shows this obedience is the victory of believers over the world. The ground of this victory is our faith in Jesus as the Son of God. John writes to anchor believers to Jesus, so they will hold confidently and hence firmly to Him.

This segment reinforces the truth of where eternal is found. The final segment from v13-21 in Study 2, will conclude on what possessing this eternal means.

**Note:** We have narrowed Mar BFA Studies 1 and 2 to a single text for each study to give more focus to the study.

**23 March 2025**

**Study 1: Believe Jesus Is the Son**

**1 John 5:1-12**

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**PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT**

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

**5** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. <sup>3</sup> In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

<sup>6</sup> This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup> the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. <sup>9</sup> We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. <sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

(NIV 2011)

*Notes and Questions*

**PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK**

What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

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## GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

## GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

## GROUP: STUDY 1

Read 1 John 5:1-12

### OBSERVATION



**What do you notice as you read this passage?**

(The answers for this **observation segment** are usually straightforward, drawn directly from what you can see in the text given.)

1. What results in one being born of (or fathered by) God (v.1)? How does this affect believers' attitude towards God's commandment (v.3)?

### Overcoming the world

The "world" in opposition to God, is a much-repeated theme in 1 John. John uses it to refer to beliefs, values, and practices that are devoid of God, that denies Christ and the need for His atoning work.

The promises the world offers are transient and passing away.

2. Highlight the phrase mentioned thrice in vv.4-5. Who is uniquely positioned to do this (vv.4-5)?
  
3. What must we acknowledge to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? (vv5-9)
  
4. How did John sum up the testimony of God about His Son in v.11-12?

## INTERPRETATION



### **What is the meaning and significance of your observations?**

(This segment requires you to reflect on what you have observed in the earlier segment)

5. What do you think makes God's commandments not burdensome to a believer?
  
6. According to John, what does it mean for a believer to conquer the world?

The ways of the world lead to sin, death and destruction.

They are the lies and works of the evil one which Christ has come to destroy (3:8).

They are opposed to the life of God in the fellowship of the church.

Notice that the emphasis of conquering/overcoming the world is also central to John's message to the 7 churches in Rev 2-3.

Likewise, this warning to avoid embracing the desires and values of world is a constant refrain in 1 John.

Pictorially, the world is pictured as the city of Babylon, the harlot in Rev 17. The consequence of loving the world is illustrated by those who are in love with Babylon. Its fate is shown in Rev 17-19.

John will conclude his letter by reminding us to keep away from the love of the world by keeping away from idols. They are opposed to the eternal life God has called His children to.

### **To Believe in God's Son.**

John is countering false teaching that denies the



7. What is the significance of Jesus coming by water (his baptism) and blood (his crucifixion)? (v.5-9) (Consider the testimonies given in Matt 3:16-17; John 19:30; Matt 27:45-52).

8. According to vv.11-12, what fundamentally assures a person that he or she is saved?

### **BIG IDEA**



What is the main message of the passage?  
(Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas)

### **APPLICATION**



**Why did the Holy Spirit give us this text?**  
(Considering the big idea and the Holy Spirit's intent helps us make applications faithful to the text.)

1. How has this text helped you to delight in God's commandment to love one another? Consider how it shapes your service to God's people.

Lord Jesus was fully human during his earthly life.

*He is writing to ground believers firmly in the Lord Jesus, by knowing who He is and what He has done for us.*

Hence, take time to reflect on the significance of what John is saying in v.5 to 9 regarding how God has testified to us of His Son.

See Rev. 12:11 on how believers can align with God to overcome the evil one.

This study should remind us of the most important foundation for a believer's assurance of his/her salvation.

This assurance will also produce confidence in our communion with God, in the prayer highlighted in the final segment in vv.13-21, which further helps believers to overcome sin and the evil one.

2. If God has so testified to us about His Son, how may you join God in making known this testimony?

3. How can you employ this text to assure a doubting believer of his/her salvation?

### **GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS**

We have come almost to the end of the 1 John studies. This study helps to bridge two gaps left by the DFD book studies.

- i. It provides a systematic way to read the Bible in its context using the observation, interpretation, and application method as opposed to a topical proof-text approach employed in DFD studies.
- ii. In so doing, this study provides an alternative material to follow up and disciples a new believer.
- iii. It can be used to build up the assurance of a new believer in his/her salvation, showing him/her the basis of our assurance.
- iv. It explains the essence of the Christian life as eternal life in fellowship with God and one another, walking in His light and love.

Pray and discuss how God may use some of you to employ this material to disciple new believers by reading 1 John with them.

**30 March 2025**

**Study 2: Know Him Who Is True**

**1 John 5:13-21**

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**PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT**

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

*Notes and Questions*

<sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

<sup>14</sup> This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

<sup>16</sup> If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. <sup>17</sup> All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

<sup>18</sup> We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. <sup>20</sup> We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

<sup>21</sup> Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

(NIV 2011)

**PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK**

How was your walk with God in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

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## GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

## GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

## GROUP: STUDY 2

1 John 5:13-21

### OBSERVATION



**What do you notice as you read this passage?**

(The answers for this **observation segment** are usually straightforward, drawn directly from what you can see in the text given.)

1. What is the most repeated verb from vv13-21?  
How many times did it appear? List and see what the sentences containing the verb say.

### Comments

John concludes his letter with the instruction to keep away from idols. An "idol" is anything that replaces one's love for God. Consider how John equates loving God to keeping His commandments by loving one another. See what John says about where we can look for God's "image" to show our love for God in 4:12, 20; (See also Gen. 1:27).

This gives us another reason to love God by honouring His image through loving one another.

2. Highlight the purpose clause (an example of a purpose clause is “in order to”) in vv13, 20. What did John say is his purpose in writing?
  
3. Knowing that we have eternal life and God hears us as believers, what does John want us to pray for? Vv.15-17
  
4. Since all sin is unrighteousness, what is the reason a believer’s sin will not lead to death as opposed to an unbeliever who denies Christ? (v.17-18, see also 1:9, 2:1-2; contrast with 2:22)
  
5. What was John’s main concern for the believers as revealed in his concluding words in v.21?

### **INTERPRETATION**



#### **What is the meaning and significance of your observations?**

(This segment requires you to reflect on what you have observed in the earlier segment)

6. Why did John conclude by asking believers to keep away from idols? What does that mean? How is keeping from idols a fitting conclusion to the 7 things we’ve come to know as children born of God? (Compare 5:19-20 with 2:15-17)

7. How is our prayer for one another's victory over sin a practical expression of our eternal life—a life of knowing and loving God, loving one another, and overcoming sin and the evil one summed up in vv18-20?



### **BIG IDEA**

**What is the main message of the passage?**

(Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas)



### **APPLICATION**

**Why do you think the Holy Spirit gave us this text?**

(Considering the big idea and the Holy Spirit's intent helps us make applications faithful to the text.)

1. How would you describe what eternal life is and how you can know that you have this life?
2. How may you grow in your prayers for others?
3. How may you keep away idols in your life?

### **GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS**

Share how this discipleship group can be a place for you to experience more deeply the truth you've learned in today's texts.

Pray and revisit your last discussion on how God may use some of you to employ this material to disciple new believers by reading 1 John with them.