

THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup>  
BOOKS  
OF

# JOHN

SESSION 1:  
**1 JOHN 1:1-2:11**

Quick Start



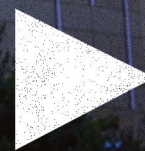
## Read

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



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## Watch

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## OPEN

**Describe your childhood best friend. What made you such good friends? How'd your friendship grow?**

In this series on the letters of John, we're going to look at our relationship with God. Just like our friendships grow and fade with the changes of life, so too does our fellowship with God face challenges. Dr. Tony Evans is going to teach us how we can strengthen our relationship with God, and keep it strong.

## READ

Read 1 John 1:1-2:11.

## VIEW

**Show Session 1:** *John 1:1—2:11* (10:15 minutes)

## DISCUSS

Tony Evans introduced 1 John by acknowledging some of the things you might have already thought to be the focus of the book. **In your experience with 1 John, what have you understood to be its main point? How might Tony's presentation challenge those past perceptions?**

**The Apostle John wrote this first letter with a specific goal. What was it?** (So that all believers might learn how to enjoy their relationship with God through Jesus.)

**In your experience, what does enjoying your relationship with God look like? In your life? In others' lives?**

**What's attractive about a Christian who truly enjoys Jesus?**

**What, if any, obstacles do you perceive in finding that kind of enjoyment with Jesus?** (feelings of obligation, guilt, failure, fatigue)

# SESSION 1

1 JOHN 1:1-2:11

Tony pointed out that John personally experienced a relationship with Jesus while the Savior walked on the earth. The very same joy that John and the disciples had living with Jesus can be ours. **Do you believe it? Why or why not?**

If we're honest with ourselves, it's hard to believe that we can experience a thriving relationship with someone we can't see, touch, or hear. But John believes it's possible.

In order to dig into how we can have a joy-filled and thriving relationship with God through Jesus, Tony looked to verse 5.

Read 1 John 1:5-10.

**What metaphor does John use to describe God and our relationship to Him?** (He is light.)

Tony unpacked what John is trying to get at by describing God as light. **What was the main idea behind God being light according to Tony?** (God is a revealer. He deals in reality and truth.)

The beginning of John's letter sets up a choice for believers: walk in the light where God dwells, or walk in the dark. That can lead us to feel that John's asking us to live perfectly—with not even a shadow in our lives.

But Tony headed off that notion early by clarifying John's point: "That's not what he says. He says when you're walking in the light, the fellowship with God is there, and the blood of Jesus Christ is cleaning you up while you're walking in the light."

**What difference does it make in your perspective of life to know that God doesn't expect you to be perfect?**

**How might that change the way you envision your Christian walk? Why?**

John's expectation for his readers isn't that they live sinlessly. Instead, walking in the light means we're able to see the sin that clutters up our lives.

Read 1 John 1:6-10.

**In the past what has this passage meant to you—what did you think it was asking you to do? What kind of cause-and-effect relationship do the two components have (confession and forgiveness, or lies and darkness)?**

# SESSION 1

1 JOHN 1:1-2:11

It would be easy to read 1 John 1:9 in particular and come away believing that it's saying we can never experience forgiveness if we don't confess our sins. We could very easily end up thinking that John has in mind a confessional booth. But that's not what's going on in the context of the passage.

Tony pointed out that walking in the light means our sin will be regularly revealed. The natural next question that John's audience would ask is, "How do we get rid of that sin? How do we stay in the light?"

**Since the light reveals our sin, what is John promising in this passage?** (That we can be confident of forgiveness when we confess the sins that God's light reveals.)

1 John 1:9 carries a promise rather than a process: we can remain in the light by confessing our sin. God has promised to always forgive and clean us from our sin through the blood of Jesus.

This promise of confession and forgiveness stands in harsh contrast with the statement John makes alongside it:

Read 1 John 1:8-10 again.

**Whom is John addressing?** (believers)

**What difference does it make that he's not talking about unbelieving people who say they don't have sin?** (Because John is concerned about believers' fellowship with God, and sin is the primary disruptor of that fellowship.)

It may be easy to think that John's talking about non-Christians in verses 8 and 10. But he's not. He's addressing people in the church who've found themselves out of fellowship with God. He's pointing out the "why" behind that broken relationship: sin.

**Why is denying that we have sin a lie? Why does it plunge us into darkness?** (We all have sin. Period. We're as blind as walking in darkness to say anything else.)

Think about the daily in-and-out of your life. **How would you describe the sins you're tempted to ignore—to pretend aren't really there? Are they big? Little?**

**If we're to take John at his word, what is true about our hearts if we pretend that even the little sins don't matter?**

# SESSION 1

1 JOHN 1:1–2:11

Verse 10 may seem a little strange—John says that, if we persist in claiming our sins aren't sins, we make God into a liar. **Why do you think he makes that argument?**

## PEEK AT THE GREEK

In verse 9, John uses the term *homologeo*, which most English Bibles translate as “confess.” Broken down, the term literally means, “to speak the same” or “to be of one mind.” We tend to think of confession as merely a verbal admission of our wrongdoing, but this word takes the idea further. As God's light reveals the truth of our lives, our true selves are laid bare. When that happens, do we call sin by its name? To “confess” is to speak the same as God. It's to agree with Him both in word and in action about what is wicked and what is true. When we are of one mind with God's ways, we experience His forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Whether we want it or not, God's light will always reveal the truth about our lives—both internal and external. It's up to us to choose how we'll live as a result. We can either walk in the truth—accept that we sin and confess it—or live in darkness by denying our fallenness.

**In your experience, what's the hardest part of admitting your sinfulness?**

**How have you overcome the fear of confession? What makes it easier? What about harder?**

Read 1 John 2:1–6.

**What does John clarify in this passage?** (We have an advocate in Jesus, who paid for our sin.)

**Does our sin separate us permanently from God?** (No.)

**What does unconfessed sin do, then?** (Causes a rift in our relationship with God, and keeps us from knowing Him.)

In the session, Tony pointed out that, “Many believers are not growing in their experience of God. They may know they're on their way to heaven, but they're not experiencing His reality on earth, because they either don't walk in the light, or if they walk in the light and now have their sin revealed, they do not obey the truth, and now walk in darkness.”

# SESSION 1

1 JOHN 1:1-2:11

**Where would you put yourself on your walk with God? Growing in maturity and your experience of Him, or moving away? Why?**

In chapter 1, John laid out sin and confession as a barometer of our relationship with God. In chapter 2, he provides another perspective on our fellowship with our Savior—love of fellow believers.

Read 1 John 2:7-11.

Just as John cast sin and repentance as a light-and-dark issue, he also presents love-of-other as a matter of light and darkness.

**What is the “old commandment” that John says he’s reiterating for the believer?** (To love one another.)

## GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the importance of loving God’s people in the following passages:*

John 13: 34-35; Phil. 2:1-4; James 2:1-8, 15-17.

**According to the passage in John, what does our love for fellow believers accomplish?** (Proves our faith to the world.)

**What are we sacrificing (or risking) in caring for each other according to these passages?** (Self-satisfaction, or self-advancement.)

**What does our behavior toward our fellow believers say about our faith?**

**Based on these passages, what importance would you say God places on His children loving each other?**

**What would it communicate to the world if we lived in keeping with these verses?**

Tony defined love as “the decision to compassionately and responsibly pursue the well-being of another.” **Does this definition square with your understanding of love? Why or why not?**

**How is love as it’s laid out in 1 John different from the world’s picture of love? Are there any similarities between Tony’s definition and love that the world presents? What are they?**

John sets up love and hate as light-and-darkness issues. **Can a believer hate his or her brother or sister and still be walking in the light?** (No.)

# SESSION 1

1 JOHN 1:1-2:11

**Why does hate for a fellow believer separate us from fellowship with God (what John calls plunging into darkness)?**

While it may make sense that unconfessed sin plunges us into darkness, it's not as obvious on the surface why hating (or not loving) a fellow believer plunges us into darkness. But John makes the point that God Himself is love, and loves His people.

**If we refuse to love those whom God loves unconditionally, what does that communicate about our perspective of God?**

Just like refusing to acknowledge our sin makes us and God out to be liars, so, too, does refusing to love those that God loves. If we cannot bring ourselves to love the people of God, we certainly aren't walking in step with our God.

**How does John's command to love our fellow believers sit with you? What have you found difficult about loving God's people? What has come easy? Why?**

**What kind of impact would it have on your church if everyone did the two things that John highlighted—acknowledge sin and confess it, and love each other unconditionally?**

**What obstacles stand in the way for you, personally? What about for your church institutionally?**

**What one step could you take this week to move toward the light and out of the dark?**

**How could this group help you accomplish that one step?**

## LAST WORD

Relationships are tricky, and family relationships are trickiest of all. We don't get to pick our spiritual family any more than we do our earthly family. God brings in people with all different backgrounds, propensities, and baggage.

The big question of 1 John is whether or not we'll live in healthy fellowship with our spiritual family as well as our spiritual Father. God walks in eternal light—and if we're going to walk with Him, that means confessing our sin and loving those whom He loves.

It's not easy. Each of us faces the temptation to downplay our faults and our failures. We struggle to love our Christian brothers and sisters who rub us the wrong way, or like Coke when we prefer Pepsi. But regardless, we can only find true fellowship with God—and with each other—when we're willing to step into the light.

As you look forward to the next day or week, remember that God isn't asking for perfection. He's asking for honesty. Walk in the light, and love your fellow believer, and you'll find God walking with you.

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Take a few minutes this week and specifically ask God to open your eyes to one way in which you can grow in fellowship with Him. Write it down and pray that God would help you work on it.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week and write out a letter to yourself, describing what you hope to learn about your relationship to God and His people in this study. Challenge yourself to grow in one area we've looked at in this session.

**Connect:** Identify one other believer (at your church, work, in your family) that you haven't really connected with before. Reach out to that person with a handshake and smile, and show them the love that comes through Jesus.

**Memorize:** If you haven't already, commit 1 John 1:9 to memory. Then, three times this week, recite the verse to yourself and spend two minutes confessing the sin that God's light shows in your life.

**Act:** Identify one area in your life where you've been less than loving toward someone else. Confess that lack of love, and then do one thing this week that to begin to show them love again.



THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup>  
BOOKS  
OF

# JOHN

SESSION 2:  
**1 JOHN 2:12-27**

Quick Start



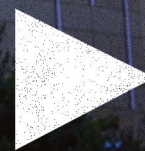
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## OPEN

**What's one of the craziest arguments you've ever gotten into with a family member? How did you feel about that person afterward?**

As the saying goes, you don't get to pick your family. In this session, we're going to look at the family that we have as followers of Jesus. All believers across time and space are our brothers and sisters. John has a lot to say about how we do "family" right.

## READ

Read 1 John 2:12-27.

## WATCH

**Show Session 2:** *1 John 2:12-27* (11:45 minutes)

## DISCUSS

In the last session, Dr. Tony Evans laid out the idea that our lives as Christians are a family affair—we relate to God and to each other much like a family. And just like a family can live side-by-side but never really have fellowship with each other, so too can believers.

**In light of Tony's teaching, has your view of your relationship to God and to other believers changed? If so, how?**

Read 1 John 2:12-14.

As we move into this section of 1 John, Tony picked up on the idea of family relationships. **How did Tony describe what's going on in verses 12-14?** (John describes believers of various maturity levels as parts of a family.)

**In verse 12, whom is John addressing?** (The entire group of believers.)

**Why does he call them "little children"?** (Because they are all the children of God through Jesus.)

**What unifies the believers to whom John writes?** (The fact that they are all forgiven of their sins.)

# SESSION 2

1 JOHN 2:12-27

Before addressing believers of various maturity levels, John initially sets the most basic family relationship of all—we're brothers and sisters. We're the children of a God who, through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Firstborn, has brought people of all kinds together as a big family. If you're a follower of Jesus, you're a child of God.

## GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the family of God in the following passages:*

Matt. 12:46-50; 18:15-35; 25:31-40; 28:1-10.

**According to Jesus in Matthew 12:46-50, who are His brothers and sisters? Who is God's family?**

**How does Jesus want His brothers and sisters to treat each other (Matt. 18:15-35)?**

**A commonly misunderstood passage in Matthew is chapter 25 where Jesus judges the nations based on how they treat the "least of these, my brothers." Why would Jesus judge the nations based on how they treated His family?**

**In light of that, how should we treat His family?**

**Upon His resurrection, how did Jesus refer to His disciples (Matt. 28:1-10)? Why is it important that Jesus sees His followers as family, rather than students?**

**What difference does it make to you and me that we're siblings with Jesus, rather than servants?**

In verses 13-14, John goes on to set up two groups of people: the "young men" and the "fathers." **What did Tony say these groups represented?** (The young men represent growing Christians, and the fathers represent disciple-making, mature believers.)

John doesn't condemn the younger believers as worse than the older believers. Rather, he commends each for the stage of their growing relationship with God.

**What is the primary battle that new believers face and have to overcome?** (Battle with Satan—the one who would pull them away from Christ.)

The principle that John is trying to set up is simply that new believers are to be commended for having "escaped" the trap of the devil. They're safely on the shore of the kingdom of light through Jesus Christ. That's worth celebrating.

**Whether we're a new believer, or a veteran, our perspective of new Christians can often be shaded by their immature relationship with Jesus. In the past, what has your perspective been toward new believers—whether someone else or even yourself?**

# SESSION 2

1 JOHN 2:12-27

**Does John's commendation of "young" believers change the way you might think about a new Christian? How?**

It can be tempting when looking at a new believer (even if we're the new believer) and be critical of their lack of knowledge or stumbling faith. But the fact of the matter is they've overcome the greatest battle through Jesus Christ. Every believer starts off his or her new life in victory over Satan.

**According to Tony, what did the position of "fatherhood" addressed in verses 12-14 indicate?** (That the believer was mature and making disciples.)

**What specifically does John commend the "fathers" for?** (Knowing God, who was from the beginning.)

The reiterated line that the "fathers" receive John's words in writing because they know God points us toward the most important aspect of fellowship with the Father—intimate friendship.

Tony moved us farther into the text by pointing out that verses 15-17 highlight how one can move from being a child to being grown up.

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

**What is the one requirement that John lays out for growing toward maturity?** (Not loving the world.)

**How did Tony define "the world" or "worldliness"?** (It's anything that has to do with excluding God—any sphere where God is not welcome.)

**In your everyday life, what areas would you say "the world" carries influence?**

John says that, if we love the world (the spheres where God is not welcome), the love of the Father isn't in us. It can be easy to read that statement "the love of the Father is not in him" as implying that God no longer loves us if we fall prey to the world.

In reality, John's saying something that should feel fairly obvious: if we love the world—the place or thing that refuses to welcome God—then our love of the Father simply cannot exist.

**How have you seen this either/or choice play out in your life? What about in your relationships? Or your walk with God?**



# SESSION 2

1 JOHN 2:12-27

As we chase the world and place our highest devotion on the very things that hate God, we'll find that our relationship with Him suffers. **Have you experienced a weakened relationship with God thanks to the influence of the world? How? Where?**

## GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the influences of the world in the following passage:*  
Gen. 3:6.

**What similarities do you see between the three tempting aspects of the fruit in this passage and the temptations John highlights in 1 John 2:16?**

It's easy to see that John's associating the temptation of worldliness with the original temptation in the garden. Humanity has always faced the same pull toward self-satisfaction and self-exaltation.

**How do you see these three temptations (lust for satisfaction, greed, and self-exaltation) play out in your life?**

**What does it say to you that humans have faced the same temptations since the beginning of the world?**

**What can you do to head off these self-centered attitudes in your life?**

**If you've experienced a growing distance in your relationship with God because of the world's influence, what helped you turn around? What "woke you up"?**

**What might you say to someone facing a similar temptation to love the things that hate God?**

Think back to Tony's words about spiritual parents. **Why would not loving the world be key to our ability to disciple new believers?** (Discipleship involves forsaking the world, and a discipler would be ineffective if he or she also loved the world.)

If we're going to grow up in our faith and strengthen our fellowship with God, we need to be willing to forsake our love of the things of the world. Tony pointed out that it doesn't mean leaving the world—we don't have to hole up in a monastery somewhere. But it does mean keeping close watch on our affections.

# SESSION 2

1 JOHN 2:12-27

**What does the tension of being in the world but not loving the world look like in your life? Where do you most feel the pull?**

**What has helped you better love God while living in the world? Why?**

It's bad enough that we face the internal temptation to love the world. But John continues in his letter by highlighting yet another threat to our fellowship with God: antichrists.

Read 1 John 2:18-27.

**How did Tony describe these “antichrists”?** (They're deceivers who come from within God's people.)

**What's the goal of antichrists?** (To pull us away from deep relationship with God.)

**How do they accomplish that goal?** (By enticing believers with love for the world.)

Look again at verses 21-23. **What test does John lay out for determining the validity of someone's claims?** (Whether or not they confess Jesus.)

The antichrists that cropped up in the first century when John was writing advocated all kinds of strange behaviors and ideas. One group—the “Nicolaitans”—promoted a kind of hedonism. They taught that, among other things, if God gives us all the grace in the world, we can and should live to satisfy every desire our bodies might have.

**How might that be denying the Son, as John says?** (Jesus's death saves us for holiness, not for more sin.)

Another group—the Gnostics—believed that Jesus never came to the earth in the flesh, but was simply a man indwelt with Christ's spirit. He wasn't God, but He was a good moral example. **How is that philosophy denying Jesus?** (If Jesus wasn't the God-Man, we aren't saved from our sins.)

**Where do you see similar erroneous teaching in the popular Christian culture?**

**What other ideas or philosophies out there ultimately deny Christ and our need for Him to save us from sin?**

In the session, Tony homed in on John's answer to the problem of deceivers in the Church: a special anointing.

**According to Tony, who has this anointing?** (Every Christian.)

**How did Tony describe the anointing?** (That each believer is given the Holy Spirit who acts as a "receiver" to pick up the signals from God.)

Just like a TV receives the input from a satellite or a cable and translates that into a picture, so too does the Holy Spirit enable us to receive from God the truth and translate that into right action and discernment.

**In your experience, how has the Holy Spirit helped you to discern the truth?**

Tony pointed out that John doesn't mean all human teachers are bad. Instead, when the Holy Spirit reminds us of the truth that God has spoken, we are equipped to reject the worldly teachers who would entice us away from God.

**What worldly teachers compete with God's voice in your life?** (For example: life coaches, health-wealth-and-prosperity teachers, self-actualization speakers.)

**How might (or how has) the Holy Spirit combatted the worldly ideas that compete with God's truth in your life?**

Tony said, "When you abide in the anointing, when you are hanging out with God's point of view, you will find Him sliding things off the plate of your existence that don't belong there. You won't have to force a picture from heaven to earth in your life. God will slide it into your being, because you're hanging out with Him."

# SESSION 2

1 JOHN 2:12-27

**How does it change your picture of the Christian life knowing that God will grow you through the presence of His Holy Spirit?**

Read 1 John 2:27.

**What does John challenge his readers to do?** (Abide in Jesus.)

**How did Tony illustrate abiding?** (Soaking in Jesus like a teabag in hot water.)

## PEEK AT THE GREEK

One of the concepts found often throughout Johannine writings is “abiding.” It appears in verses 6 and 10 of 1 John 2 where he uses the word *meno*, meaning “to remain” or “to stay.” Because it’s sometimes translated “remain,” it can cause confusion for some—making it seem like we need to work hard to “stay in” Christianity. Considered in its context, though, John clearly has “abiding” in view for all believers. Abiding with Christ is not an uncertain state, but one that marks every genuine Christ-follower on a permanent and continuous basis—like residing in a new home. Those who do not abide in Christ are not merely less mature in their faith, but lack faith entirely (see 2 John 9).

**What does abiding look like for you? What disciplines have you or could you add to your life to encourage “steeping” in the Spirit?**

## LAST WORD

Our God has not left us unequipped to grow in fellowship with Him. Whether you’re a new Christian or a seasoned veteran of the faith, we all have the Holy Spirit present in our lives. He leads us in pursuit of those things that bring us closer to God, and helps us resist the pull of the world.

There are many competing voices shouting for our attention in the world—voices that have no room for our God or His desires for our lives. Even people from within the Church try to seduce God’s people away from fellowship with Him.

When we rely on the Holy Spirit, however, to communicate to us God’s desires for our lives, we have everything we need to remain in lockstep with our God. There, in the light, we can see the truth.

As you face the world and all its temptations this week, remember that God has called you to something better—fellowship with Him. He’s equipped you with the Holy Spirit, and surrounded you with men and women who love Him. Walk in the light, love God, and love the people of God.



## LIVE IT OUT

**Pause:** Take ten minutes this week to stop what you're doing, find a quiet place, and focus on the God who redeemed you. Practice abiding in His love and compassion for you.

**Connect:** Identify a worldly temptation in your life that you feel pulls you away from God. Connect with a fellow believer and ask him or her to pray with you about that temptation.

**Memorize:** Commit 1 John 2:15 to memory. Write it on a sticky note or a card and keep it where you can see it and reflect on the importance of resisting the self-centered temptations of the world.

**Pray:** Two times this week, pray and ask God to speak loudly to you through His Holy Spirit. Then take a few minutes to just listen.

**Write:** Keep track of the various instances where you felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Write down what you felt He was saying, and how you responded.



# THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> BOOKS OF **JOHN**

## SESSION 3: **1 JOHN 2:28-3:23**

Quick Start



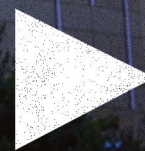
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## OPEN

**Describe an instance where you suffered from unmet expectations.** Maybe you wanted Legos for your birthday and got socks instead. Or perhaps you hoped you'd get a car when you turned sixteen, but ended up having to ride your bike to school.

**How did you feel as a result of those unmet expectations? What would have changed about your attitude if you knew for sure that your expectations would be met?**

In this session, we're going to look at the confident expectation we have in God. Knowing that the future is for-sure fundamentally changes the way we live right now.

## READ

Read 1 John 2:28-3:23.

## WATCH

**Show Session 3:** *1 John 2:28-3:23* (10:45 minutes)

## DISCUSS

Expectations set our behavior. We'll act in keeping with what we anticipate the consequences will be. Whether we're merging onto a busy highway or trying to time dinner correctly, what we expect determines what we do.

In the session, Dr. Tony Evans outlined how expectations can and will also affect our relationship with God. **How did Tony set up this session?** (The story of meeting with the former President.)

**How did Tony's expectation (the President coming over for lunch) affect his behavior?** (He cleaned, found a good cook, organized the house, etc.)

**In a similar vein, how should our expectation of God's return in the future affect our behavior in the present?**

# SESSION 3

## 1 JOHN 2:28-3:23

Read 1 John 3:1-3.

**What does John remind his readers about their status before God?** (We are His children.)

Everything that follows in chapter 3 spins on the truth that God views us as His children. The admonitions in 1 John can often feel harsh: “Be without sin!” or “If you sin, you’re of the devil!” As we read those verses, however, we must maintain perspective. We are God’s children.

**For you personally, how does the truth that God views you as His child affect your perspective of yourself? How should it impact your decisions day-to-day?**

In the session, Tony cast 1 John 3:2-3 as giving us the right expectation: One day, we will see God.

Think about that for a moment—you will see God. **How does that impact you right now, at this moment?**

It’s easy to think of the Christian life as just one of the many things we have to check off our daily to-do list. But our God is very real, and we will one day stand before Him. **What impact could the knowledge that one day you will see God have on your attitude?**

As chapter 3 continues John lays out the impact of expectations. Read 1 John 3:4-10.

**What’s John’s main point in this passage?** (If we continue to sin, we associate ourselves not with God but with the devil.)

Remembering that we’re talking about God’s children here. **Why can John make the statement that persistent sinners relate to the devil, not God?** (Because the expectation of one day seeing God should change how we live today.)

### PEEK AT THE GREEK

In verse 4, John uses the term *anomia*, which is often translated “iniquity” or “lawlessness.” Jewish thought associated the concept of sin (Greek word *hamartia*) with *anomia* because it typically involved disobedience to the Mosaic law. However, John has more in view here. He equates the practice of sin with the condition of lawlessness, which he describes as a characteristic of “the children of the devil” (v. 10). In other words, the practice of lawlessness reveals that someone is “of the devil” (v. 8). With these terms, John distinguishes the Christian ethic from that of the false teachers of his day who believed they could engage in regular sinful activity without losing fellowship with God.



# SESSION 3

1 JOHN 2:28-3:23

Here, John teaches that the practice of sin evidences a condition of lawlessness, which characterizes those who are of the devil. Because of this, followers of Christ must take sin seriously and be diligent about putting it to death by the grace of God.

If we say we believe that one day we'll see God and stand before Him, and yet persist in living in opposition to God's character, we prove that we don't expect to ever actually have to face our God.

That's a very real (and easy) temptation to fall to. **Why is it easy to fall into a lifestyle that doesn't expect to answer to God?** (It feels too far into the future; we don't face God every day face-to-face; etc.)

And yet John makes the point that we most certainly can expect to answer to our God. Tony illustrated it with athletes who know they're going to be tested for performance-enhancing drugs. They expect to be tested, so it changes their behavior.

## GO DEEPER

*Learn more about Jesus's return in the following passages:*

Matt. 24:23-51; 25:1-30.

**What does Jesus expect of His disciples in light of His impending return?**

**What difference should it make in our lives knowing that Jesus isn't staying away forever?**

**What trouble do the irresponsible servants run into? Why do they end up behaving the way they do?**

**What should be our motivating factor for faithful service to Jesus in the here-and-now?**

God's children fall into patterns of sinful behavior because they lose sight of the fact that God isn't staying away forever. Their expectations are wrong. **What can you do today to modify your expectations regarding the return of our God?**

**How would that impact your life today? Tomorrow? This week?**

As Tony highlighted both last session and this session, the key to growing in fellowship with God is constantly abiding in Him. And, as Tony said, "While we never become sinless, we wind up sinning less because we're in such affectionate, intimate relationship with our Savior, and He draws us away from evil."

**In your life, how does abiding in Jesus—focusing on your relationship with Him through prayer, Bible study, and quiet listening to the Holy Spirit—affect you?**

# SESSION 3

1 JOHN 2:28-3:23

**What will happen to your expectations (and, therefore, your actions) if you focus your attention on abiding in Jesus?**

**What do you stand to gain? According to 1 John 3, what do you stand to lose if you don't?**

Tony continued the discussion in 1 John 3 by highlighting yet another way in which we grow in fellowship with God. Read 1 John 3:11-15.

**What does John challenge his readers to do?** (Love other believers.)

**What's the either/or situation in this section?** (We can either love our fellow believers and grow close to God, or hate them and grow farther away from Him.)

Christians are fallen people, too. And, if we're honest, some people are just hard to get along with. But the message John has for us is simple: we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Trace out John's logic here: **Why is it crucial that we love our fellow believers? What does it say about our attitude toward God?**

In previous sessions, we've already looked at the fact that we can't hate something God loves and still be growing in relationship with God. We make Him out to be a liar. But in 1 John 3, the idea's bigger than that.

John makes love more than a positive disposition toward our fellow believers. **According to 1 John 3, what does love do?** (Love is willing to give up our life for a sister or brother. Love cares for fellow believers' needs.)

Tony clarified this for us: "In other words, let's have a love we can see, not just a love we can say. Let's love with our life, not merely with our lips, with our walk, not merely with our talk. He wants us to demonstrate through acts of good will, good works and kindness the love of God."

# SESSION 3

1 JOHN 2:28-3:23

Describe a time when you were on the receiving end of love from a fellow believer. **How did it impact you? What did you learn about God through the experience?**

**What difference did it make in your life to be loved rather than hated?**

**What obstacles might stand in the way for you, personally, to love your fellow believers?**

**How should John's argument that we can't claim to be in fellowship with God and hate His children affect your approach to other believers?**

John concludes chapter 3 by looking at the great kindness of God. Read 1 John 3:19-24.

**What does John admit might end up condemning us?** (Our hearts.)

Here, John doesn't mean that the content of our hearts will be exposed to God, and on account of what we store there, God will condemn us. Rather, John's pointing toward the reality that our hearts often tend shower us with guilt or shame. We look at ourselves in light of the all that John's already laid out, and wonder if we're ever "good enough."

**What's John's answer to those doubts?** (God's greater than our hearts.)

**What kind of hope does it give you to know that God transcends even our guilt and shame?**

**How should that truth affect the way you live?**

**When the day eventually comes when we see God face-to-face, what will you look to for confidence? God's character? Or your own misgivings?**

Tony wrapped the session up by emphasizing once again the wonderful transformation that happens when we concentrate on growing closer to God.

**What can you do this week to continue to build your relationship—your fellowship—with the God who calls you His child?**

## LAST WORD

When we come to the harder-to-hear parts of our faith—that we're still sinners, we still have to make daily choices to choose righteousness over evil—it can be easy to fall into discouragement.

But in this session, we see something very important. We are God's children. That means He loves us first and foremost. And everything else that comes down the line will always come from God's love.

That might mean He reveals our sin, calls us to repent, or challenges our attitudes toward our fellow believers. But through it all, God is calling us to Himself—to grow in our relationship with Him.

And best of all, one day we'll stand before Him face-to-face. Like the child whose father is away on deployment, we're not sure when we will see our heavenly Father. But we do know this—we *will* see Him.

And on that day, we'll be like Him. Pure. Holy. And thoroughly loved.



## LIVE IT OUT

**Write:** Write out the phrase “Live like Jesus is coming today” on a sticky note or a card, and put it somewhere you’ll see it regularly—a mirror, your desk, on your dashboard. Use it as a reminder to live in the expectation of Jesus’s return.

**Connect:** Identify a fellow believer who’s in need—even if it’s something as simple as raking leaves in their yard or visiting them in the hospital. Take the opportunity to act out your love, and serve that believer.

**Pray:** Spend ten minutes in prayer this week asking God to instill in you the deep confidence that comes from knowing that you are His child.

**Memorize:** Write out 1 John 3:16, and work on memorizing it this week. Use the verse to remind you what active love looks like.

**Read:** Spend fifteen minutes this week re-reading the words of Jesus in Matthew 24–25. Take the time to reflect on Jesus’s challenge to His followers to live in light of His return.



# THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> BOOKS OF **JOHN**

## SESSION 4: **1 JOHN 3:24-4:16**

Quick Start



### **Read**

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



### **Print**

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download



### **Watch**

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

***Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.***



## OPEN

**What's the worst (or best) April Fools' joke you've ever fallen for? What about the best one you pulled on someone else?**

**What does it feel like to be deceived? Even as a joke?**

In this session, we're going to look at the danger that creeps around in churches, taking the form of slick deception. We'll see not only what kind of damage deceivers can do to our faith, but what we, in turn, can do to avoid falling for the joke.

## READ

Read 1 John 3:24-4:16.

## WATCH

**Show Session 4:** *1 John 3:24-4:16* (12:30 minutes)

## DISCUSS

We've been looking at John's instructions to believers on how to grow in their relationship with God. His argument is rather simple:

1. Allow God's light to convict you of your sin, acknowledge it, and confess it.
2. Love the things God loves, and reject the world that rejects God.
3. Love the people God loves, and reject the people who reject God.

If it feels like John's getting repetitive, it's because he is. **Why do you think John repeats his points so strongly?**

# SESSION 4

1 JOHN 3:24-4:16

We learn through repetition, and John wants to make extra sure that his readers get the point. **If you had to summarize the message of 1 John so far to someone who'd never read the book, what would you say?**

**Leader:** *It may be worth taking the time with your group to dialogue on this question. The book of 1 John offers one of the most concise answers to the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" Take some time to walk your group through the main ideas, and help them distill a summary.*

In this session, Dr. Tony Evans zeroed in on two main ideas: the role of the Holy Spirit in discerning false teachers, and the important role we have as conduits for God to love the people around us.

**How did Tony introduce the chapter? What did the illustration of the alarm system represent?** (The role of the Holy Spirit in helping us understand the truth in the midst of false teaching.)

**What was the "test" Tony highlighted from 1 John 4:1-6?** (Whether or not someone confesses Jesus as the incarnate God.)

Re-read 1 John 4:1-6.

John has already introduced us to the problem of "antichrists," or deceivers trying to pull God's people away from close fellowship with Him. **Why do you think being able to identify these deceivers is so important to John?** (They threaten believers' fellowship with God.)

**What does John explain as the simple difference between those who come from God and those who don't?** (Those who come from God confess that Jesus came in the flesh from heaven.)

**Why do you think the incarnation is so crucial? What difference does it make if Jesus came as a full human?**

Tony said, "It is absolutely critical that we are clear about the incarnation. The incarnation is God becoming a man. It is God entering into time and space, and entering into a cradle, who was exactly the Creator of the universe. Jesus is the means by which God, who is spirit in His essence, is revealed to mankind. It is in the person of Jesus Christ that God and man come together, 100% God, 100% man, in order to reveal God to man."

# SESSION 4

1 JOHN 3:24–4:16

**How does Jesus reveal God to us in a way we otherwise wouldn't have known?** (He is God-we-can-see, and He shows us how to live as humans the way God intended us to live.)

## GO DEEPER

*Learn more about how Jesus reveals God to us in human flesh in these passages:*

John 1:1–18, 14:8–17, Heb. 1:1–4.

**According to these passages, what is significant about Jesus's incarnation?**

**Why is the incarnation of Jesus important? How did the incarnation change how we're able to understand God? What about ourselves?**

**What's different about Jesus's revelation of God versus the "prophets" as Hebrews points out?**

**What difference does it make to you that we have God-revealed-in-flesh through Jesus?**

**Why is Jesus's incarnation so crucial to our faith?** (If Jesus wasn't 100% human, He couldn't have died in our place. If He wasn't 100% God, we would still be in our sins.)

In our day and age, it's more common in the world at large to deny the deity of Jesus—even staunch atheists will admit that an historical person named Jesus lived two millennia ago. People will agree He's a good moral teacher, and leave it at that.

**Where have you seen (or heard) this idea before—that Jesus was only a good teacher?**

**What impact would it have for you personally if Jesus wasn't truly the God-man?**

**What claim would Jesus have on our lives if He hadn't actually purchased our salvation?**



# SESSION 4

1 JOHN 3:24-4:16

Perhaps the most destructive aspect of the antichrists' teaching that John surfaces is the weakness of Jesus if He wasn't truly the God-man. Since Christianity is built on Christ, without Him, we have no faith.

## PEEK AT THE GREEK

Throughout this letter, "love" is a running theme and reaches its climax here in the fourth chapter with John declaring that God is love (v. 8). As we've seen already, God has made His love visible by sending of Christ as a "propitiation" for our sins (v. 10). The term John uses for "propitiation" is *hilasmos*, which here describes Jesus turning away the divine wrath aimed at sinners through His death. While we walked in disobedience and rebellion, God demonstrated His love for us by sending His Son to satisfy our debt through Christ's death. He spared no cost in His pursuit of us and as recipients of that love we should demonstrate our love for one another in the same way.

Jesus's nature as the God-man that died and rose again means He has the right to make demands on the lives of those He's saved. This is why so many teachers—both in John's day and now—try to diminish Him. **Where have you seen the authority of Jesus diminished in the messaging of the world?**

As John highlights, however, God has not left us on our own. He's given us the Holy Spirit—the "alarm" that Tony described at the beginning of the session. **When and how have you felt the Holy Spirit warn against anti-Christ ideas? How did you respond?**

**What steps do you take to stay connected to the voice of the Spirit? What could you do differently this week to grow in your ability to listen to His warnings?**

It's the Holy Spirit's work in our lives that grows us closer in our fellowship with God. He directs us in truth, preserves us from error, transforms our sinful hearts into holy hearts, and directs our affections toward our fellow believers.

**What does it mean to you to know that you're not alone in the Christian walk? That the Spirit's working inside and around you?**

# SESSION 4

1 JOHN 3:24-4:16

The Holy Spirit works most prominently by transforming our ability to love others. Read 1 John 4:7-16.

**According to John, whose love is manifest in us?** (God's own love.)

**What reason does John give for us loving each other?** (The fact that God loved us first.)

Jesus revealed God in both how He lived and what He said. He was a conduit for God's love toward unbelieving humanity. In verse 12 John points out, however, that we have the same responsibility. That in our love for each other, we show God to each other.

**Describe a time where someone loved you like God. What did it look like? How did it make you feel? What difference did it make in your life?**

**How have you grown in your understanding of God through the love that others have shown you?**

We live in a consumer society. We always run the risk of becoming what Tony called "cul-de-sac" Christians—always taking, never giving. The love and grace of God comes into our lives, and we turn the engine off and set the parking brake.

**Why is the "cul-de-sac" Christian life so dangerous?**

**What do we stand to lose by refusing to allow God's love to flow through us?**

**What obstacles have you encountered that make it difficult to be a conduit for God's love, rather than just a consumer?**

# SESSION 4

1 JOHN 3:24-4:16

As John continues his letter, he keeps circling back to the idea that we must abide in God. That abiding—the slow steeping that Tony talked about in a previous session—means constantly absorbing the love that God has for us. But it doesn't end there.

Like Tony's illustration of the water boiler meter, when our lives fill up with God's love and kindness—often through other people pouring into us—we'll eventually reach "full." We can't keep the valves cranked shut. We have to let the love that God gives us flow into others around us.

Think about one person you could love this week that you might not normally express love and kindness to. **What one thing could you do to go out of your way to share God's love with them?**

**What would your life look like if you focused on giving away the love of God each day, not just receiving it?**

**What risk would you run by living a life that gives love without question? What would you stand to lose? What would you stand to gain?**

Loving people is inherently risky. When we're not looking out for ourselves, but instead looking out for other people, we run the risk of not having our own needs met. We could get trampled, taken advantage of, or abused.

But the God-man who died for our sins has called us to love each other. No questions asked.

## LAST WORD

We live in a world consumed with self-satisfaction. The lies the world spins around us all try to justify a life that focuses only on ourselves. But 1 John 4 challenges us to think carefully and to live purposefully.

Rather than twist the person of Jesus Christ into someone or something less than the God-man to justify our moralizing, we need to see Him as the One who demands our allegiance. God hasn't left us on our own—He's given us the Holy Spirit to guide us in truth. We just need to listen.

And as we listen, we need to allow God to work through us, not only for us. That involves risk. Loving others puts us in a position to be abused or forgotten. But that's the risk that Jesus Himself took when He came as a baby. He was rejected, abused, and killed because He chose to love those who hated Him.

Will we follow Him, and love people?

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Spend ten minutes this week—five minutes each on two days—asking God to open your eyes to any deception that might be sneaking into your mind. As He directs you, confess and work toward truth.

**Connect:** The idea of “pay it forward” has become a cliché in our culture, but that’s very much what’s going on in our session today. This week, look at the ways in which God has blessed you and shown you love, and then do one thing to pass God’s love on to a fellow believer.

**Write:** Take fifteen minutes this week and write out a summary of 1 John so far. According to our study, what does the Christian life look like?

**Memorize:** Commit 1 John 4:4 to memory. Meditate on the verse this week, and remember that God has overcome the world on our behalf.

**Reflect:** Take ten minutes this week and reflect on those instances where God’s love was made apparent to you through other believers. Use this time as a means to grow in your confidence of God’s love for you, but also to build your testimony that God alone is the source of love.



# THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> BOOKS OF JOHN

## SESSION 5: 1 JOHN 4:17-5:12

Quick Start



### Read

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



### Print

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



### Watch

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**Note:** For more detailed information, please see the *How to Use The Leader's Guide document*.



## OPEN

**Have you ever been in a situation where you felt powerless? As if you had no control over your life or what was going to happen to you in the future? How did that feel?**

As we dive into this session, we're going to see that God has a special promise for His children. No matter what we face in this world, He is stronger than it all. And He has given to us the ultimate victory.

## READ

Read 1 John 4:17-5:12.

## WATCH

**Show Session 5:** 1 John 4:17-5:12 (9 minutes)

## DISCUSS

Throughout the book of 1 John, we've heard the author's father-like heart for his readers. Chapter 5 is no different. **What aspects of 1 John so far have encouraged you? Comforted you?**

**What parts have challenged you or left you with questions?**

**Leader:** *It will be worth your time to anticipate some of the responses to the second question above. Your group may highlight things such as the challenge to love all believers, the difference between loving God's people and loving non-believers, the constant if-then statements in the book that can lead us to believe God won't love us if we don't love first. Prepare ahead of time to remind your group of the previous sessions, and keep them grounded in the truth that we are God's children. Period.*

This last chapter of 1 John brings up a concept he introduced earlier in chapter 2: overcoming the world. **What did we point out about the importance of recognizing overcoming?** (It's accomplished through Christ, and is worthy of celebration even for new believers.)



# SESSION 5

1 JOHN 4:17–5:12

Dr. Tony Evans introduced this session by unpacking the significance of John's emphasis on overcoming. **What did Tony point out about the world's power over us?** (The world doesn't have the last say in our lives.)

**Describe a time in your life where you felt (or feel) that you were trapped by the world. How did you feel in the middle of it?**

**Leader:** *This is a great opportunity in smaller groups to invite members to share about their experiences coming to Christ, or coming to terms with their sinfulness and need for God's transforming Spirit. Use good judgment, however, as you don't want to put people on the spot who may not be ready to be vulnerable with the group.*

**How have you seen the power of God at work in your life to help you overcome the world?**

## PEEK AT THE GREEK

In verses 4–5 John uses the verb *nikao* three times, which literally means, “to overcome” or “to conquer.” According to the end of verse 4, the “victory” or “conquering power” that has conquered the world is “our faith.” John places this in the present tense indicating that those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (v. 5) experience victory in the here-and-now. Through faith in Christ, we enter into whatever battles we face—temptation, the flesh, the schemes of the devil—under a banner of victory. As the children of God, we have passed from death to life and belong to a new kingdom with a new standard that we devote our lives to in obedience. That is the power of Christ to those who believe.

Read 1 John 5:4.

**What does John set up as the condition for overcoming the world?** (Being born of God.)

**What's the victory?** (Our faith.)

Throughout the last few chapters, John has been making the argument that we know we are children of God by the radical change that happens in our lives: Our attitudes change about our sinfulness, about our ability to determine truth in the world, and about the object of our love. All of it is made possible through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

# SESSION 5

1 JOHN 4:17-5:12

**Who, then, truly overcomes the world?** (God through the Holy Spirit, made possible by Jesus.)

**What part do you play in overcoming the world, according to everything laid out in 1 John?** (We allow God to change our attitudes, our minds, and our affections.)

Tony used the illustration of a high jumper versus a pole jumper in the Olympics. **What did the two types of athletes represent?** (The high jumper represented us trying to overcome on our own, but the pole jumper represented God's power in overcoming for us.)

**In your experience, what were the results of you trying to overcome the pressures of the world on your own?**

**Can you describe a time where you leaned on God's power to deal with the world (through a temptation, or a trial, or external pressure)?**

**How were those two experiences different?**

Sometimes, simply remembering that we don't face the pressures of the world alone can make a huge difference in our attitudes. Knowing God stands with us and has gifted us with His Spirit means we vault over trials under His power.

But more than that, our love for each other—our brothers and sisters in Christ—means we face this world together.

**Can you describe a time where the love of fellow Christians helped you face a trial, temptation, or persecution in your life? How did those believers' presence in your life affect you?**

**Leader:** *It may be worth taking some time to develop these stories with your group. As the remainder of the session focuses on the concept of bearing a testimony of the power of Jesus, helping your group members recognize that they actually have a story will be enlightening.*

# SESSION 5

## 1 JOHN 4:17–5:12

Read 1 John 5:6–12.

In this section of chapter 5, John anticipates some pushback—does the one who believes in Jesus truly overcome? Can Jesus be the one to catapult us to victory?

The world and all of its lies—including the father of lies, Satan—threaten to break our fellowship with God constantly. God has overcome through Jesus, and given us proof of the victory.

**What did John identify as the three witnesses proving Jesus gives eternal life?** (The water, blood, and Spirit.)

### GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the water and the Spirit in the following passages:*

Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 3:5; Acts 1:4–5.

**In these passages, what particular event is in view?** (The salvation and baptism of the believer.)

**Have you ever been baptized? If so, how did it affect your Christian life? If not, would you consider it?**

Put yourselves in the shoes of John's original audience for a moment. These are people who may never have seen Jesus—they've only ever heard from the apostles about Him. The world that they're supposed to overcome hates them, hates God, and constantly threatens to overwhelm the believers.

In that situation, we'd want proof—strong proof—that the Redeemer we're trusting can come through.

**Look at verse 9 again. What does John say about the testimony we've received?** (The testimony God has given us is even greater than the one we receive through humans.)

**Does that mean the testimony we've received through the Church is weak or pointless? Why or why not?** (No. Instead it means that God has validated what we've received by the water, blood, and Spirit.)

**Where is this testimony ultimately located?** (In the believer.)

# SESSION 5

1 JOHN 4:17–5:12

**Why would disbelieving God mean we're making Him out to be a liar?** (Because God has borne witness to Jesus's power through His blood, and God does not lie.)

Let's put this all together. The testimony that we as believers have received comes through both human and divine sources. We have the history of Jesus, but we also have the divine Word of God bearing witness to Jesus. On top of all of that, we have the presence of the Holy Spirit pointing us to Jesus's strength to overcome. And God does not lie—His testimony (the history, the Word, and the Spirit) can and should be trusted.

**What does this mean, then, for the dependability of Jesus in overcoming the world?**

**Describe a time when you've doubted God's ability to come through for you. What led you to feel like God couldn't deliver on His promise?**

**What did your attitude look like in the midst of that problem?**

**Now think about an instance where God showed Himself utterly dependable. Were you expecting Him to come through? Why or why not?**

**What did your attitude look like in the midst of the trouble? What about after God showed up?**

The truth is, God doesn't always deliver us from suffering or trouble in the way that we'd like. John knows this, but he pushes us toward an eternal perspective. Read 1 John 5:11–12 again.



# SESSION 5

1 JOHN 4:17-5:12

**What is the promise that God has given us through Jesus?** (Eternal life.)

**Given what you know or might guess about John's original audience and their lives, why would the promise be so filled with hope?**

Tony concluded this session by saying, "You are the overcomer. But He's going to let you go through the battle so that when he holds up your hand and declares you to be the victor, you've victoriously gone through the process, which has only confirmed what He said before you ever got in the ring. You're an overcomer, know that, believe that, live that, and then testify. When God holds up your hand and says, victory is yours."

**What are you facing this week that you need the strength of God for?**

**What can your fellow believers help you with? How can they show you love?**

**Whom can you offer the hope of love and eternal life to this week?**

## LAST WORD

No one's life is completely easy. Even those of us living in the wealthiest country in the world with the luxury of choosing a church to attend and friends to spend time with—we'll face hardship, too.

The fact of the matter is God has made us His children through the blood of Jesus, and has promised to deliver us safely to the shores of eternal life. He's given us the witness of His Spirit and His Word. We can trust Him. We will find that no matter what the world tempts us with or puts in our way, God will catapult us to victory.

Cling to that promise this week. And, out of the confidence that God is your deliverance, show loving kindness to a brother or sister in Jesus who needs to know they're loved.

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Take some time this week and talk to God about the things you feel hemming you in. Take the time to present each pressure, obstacle, or temptation to God and ask Him to overcome in your life.

**Confess:** Meet with a fellow believer this week and confess those instances where you've doubted God's strength to carry you through temptation or the pressure of the world. Ask that friend to pray with you.

**Write:** Take fifteen minutes this week and make a list of the times in your life where you've seen God come through for or around you. Use it as a memorial to God's faithfulness, so you can be encouraged in times of need.

**Memorize:** Work on memorizing 1 John 5:13. John wrote his letter to his readers to help them be confident in the eternal life that's theirs through Jesus Christ. Cling to that promise this week.

**Connect:** John admonishes us to pray for our fellow believers. Identify one person you can pray for this week, and do so. Then, if appropriate, tell them that you've prayed for them.



# THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> BOOKS OF JOHN

## SESSION 6: 1 JOHN 5:13–21

Quick Start



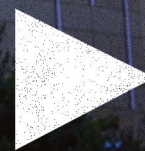
### Read

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.



### Print

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.



### Watch

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**Note:** For more detailed information, please see the *How to Use The Leader's Guide document*.



## OPEN

**Have you ever been in a situation where you found yourself unable to place your confidence in something or someone? Maybe you didn't like the look of a rickety bridge. Maybe you weren't convinced that a roller coaster was 100% safe. Maybe you always looked over your shoulder when your prankster brother was being suspiciously quiet. Describe your situation.**

Our willingness to trust depends entirely on the thing we have to trust. Whether it's a rope bridge or a mean-looking cat, we only trust something as far as we know it and what it's capable of.

The same goes for our God. In this session, we'll look at how—and why—we can trust Him.

## READ

Read 1 John 5:13–21.

## WATCH

**Show Session 6:** *1 John 5:13–21* (10:20 minutes)

## DISCUSS

Dr. Tony Evans began this session by diagnosing a disease among Christians: Assurance Deficit Disorder. **What did Tony describe as the problem?** (We often feel unsure about our salvation or our ability to fellowship with God.)

**The entire book of 1 John finds its point and purpose in 5:13. What is it?** (That we would know that we have eternal life.)

As Tony pointed out, God doesn't want His children guessing about our relationship with Him. God wants to instill in us confidence that we are not only in right standing with Him, but we are also His children and promised eternal life.



# SESSION 6

1 JOHN 5:13-21

**How would you describe your assurance regarding your salvation?**

**In the past, what things have worried you, or threatened your confidence in your relationship to God?**

**What has contributed to building up your assurance that you're God's child?**

**If you could talk directly to God, and He would answer you, what would you like to hear from Him to build your confidence in your eternal destiny?**

Tony told the story of flying on an airplane with his wife. Her faith grew in direct proportion to the thing she was trusting to fly her to their destination. **How does Tony's story reflect the truth of our relationship to God?** (Our faith depends on Him, not on us.)

We have the strongest foundation for our faith in the God who created the universe. As Tony said, "God says He cannot lie. He's given testimony to Jesus Christ. This testimony to His Son brings witness within ourselves. But if you're looking to anything outside of Christ to give you internal verification, you will always ride up and down this rollercoaster of uncertainty because you never whether you're good enough."

Our confidence grows as we come to understand the hugeness of our God.

**How would your confidence in your salvation change if you focused on God's strength, rather than your own feelings of assurance?**

# SESSION 6

## 1 JOHN 5:13–21

Read 1 John 5:13–15.

**What further proof does John give for our confidence in God?** (God answers our prayers.)

John's not advocating that we test God with grandiose prayers. Instead, he's pointing out that our confidence will grow even greater as we see God come through on our earnest prayer.

**When have you seen God answer prayer in your life or the life of someone you care about?**

**What impact did it have on your relationship with God?**

**What impact did that one answered prayer have on your desire to pray? How did it affect how you prayed?**

Again, we have to be careful to not misread John as saying that God will always answer our prayers the way we want so long as we're walking in close fellowship with Him. Rather, John is trying to help us connect three things: our fellowship with God, our confidence in His power to save us, and our prayer life.

**Based on everything we've studied so far in 1 John, how would you connect those three things?**

**Leader:** *This is a good opportunity to review the material covered in previous sessions—particularly the points about walking in God's light and seeing the world and ourselves from His perspective. A robust connection you can lead your group toward is as follows:*

There's a cycle to John's argument here. The more we grow in fellowship with God, the more closely our desires and prayers will line up with His will. As God answers those prayers, we'll grow in our confidence that He hears us, which will ultimately lead us into an even closer relationship with God.

Tony connected it to a football playbook. We learn the plays, pray in keeping with them, and get better at the game.

# SESSION 6

1 JOHN 5:13–21

**Where have you seen prayer—whether just simply praying or an answered prayer—change the way you approached your Christian life?**

**What could you do this week to practice prayer that pulls from God’s playbook?**

Read 1 John 5:16–19.

John didn’t leave us with only prayer. He concludes his letter with a challenge that we keep each other on track in our fellowship with God.

**Rather than police our brothers and sisters, how does John want us to go about helping our fellow believers trapped in sin?** (By praying for them in keeping with God’s will.)

## GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the sin that leads to death in the following passage:*

Matt. 12:24–32.

**In this passage, what does Jesus identify as the one sin that cannot be forgiven?**

Though it may be difficult to parse, Jesus is simply pointing out that the one sin that can’t be forgiven is the sin of refusing to accept forgiveness. Throughout the Bible, God shows that He doesn’t force Himself on people—He always offers the choice.

**How does it change your view of the Christian life to know that you cannot separate yourself from God’s forgiveness?**

# SESSION 6

## 1 JOHN 5:13–21

As we've seen throughout our study of 1 John, one of the fundamental parts of being a Christian is loving our fellow believers. Part of that love takes the form of praying for our brothers and sisters everything that John has laid out for us:

- Pray for the removal of sin in their lives.
- Pray that they'd experience life from God.
- Pray that they'd be equipped to overcome the world and Satan.

If we're all loving each other and praying for each other, we have not only the strength and love of our God, but also the strength and love of our brothers and sisters.

**How could your fellow believers—especially your friends or the people in your small group—pray for you today?**

**Leader:** *Take this time to seriously pray for each other. Make sure to point out that you're not doing it because everyone's sinning, but because it is how we can show love to each other. Depending on the group size and dynamic, you can take more or less time to pray. Really focus on having your members pray for each other along the lines of John's challenges.*

As we look to wrap up the study of 1 John, read 1 John 5:20–21.

**What does John remind us about the character of Jesus?** (He is the True One.)

**What does that mean for us? How do we live differently as a result?** (He's 100% trustworthy, and worthy of being followed.)

**What does Jesus promise?** (Eternal life.)

In case we missed it over the course of the whole book, John concludes by reminding us that living life as a follower of Jesus depends on Jesus Himself. Our life's purpose is to know Him (grow in fellowship), follow Him (forsake the world and embrace God's way of doing things), and live in light of eternity.



And then John lands his letter on one strange sentence: “Little children, keep yourself from idols.”

**What are idols, as Tony described them?** (Any person, thing, or idea that we look to as our source of being.)

**Why does John follow up talking about Jesus being true with a warning about idols?** (Idols entail everything that’s false.)

The constant problem that we’ll face as believers is the temptation to abandon God for something lesser.

When we forsake God’s light, we become liars.

When we forsake God’s people, we become hateful.

When we forsake God’s character, we become faithless.

When we forsake fellowship with God, we become children of the devil.

## PEEK AT THE GREEK

John uses the term “true” (*alethinos*) three times in one sentence in verse 20. He says we have received understanding through Christ to know the One who is true, we are in the One who is true, and the One who is true is God. The term *alethinos* describes something that is genuine, authentic, and real. Interestingly, John uses two different terms for “know” in this verse. The first is *oida*, which refers to a cerebral kind of knowledge. But in the second clause (“so that we may know Him who is true”), he switches to the verb *ginosko*, which refers to knowledge arrived at by way of personal experience. Bearing this in mind, John tells us in verse 20 that Christ has come so that we might know by real-life experience the One who is true—God. Faith in Christ ushers us into a permanent personal relationship with the one true God.

Here at the end of his letter, John is pointing out how crucial it is that we know God intimately. So well, in fact, that we reject every lesser thing that would promise what only God can give.

**What things in your life tempt you away from fellowship with God?**

**Now that we've gone through 1 John, what do you stand to lose if you chase after idols?**

**What do you stand to gain if you refuse to follow the idolatry of our world?**

John's argument is simple: God, through Jesus, has brought us into His family. If we build our relationship with Him, love our brothers and sisters, and chase the things that please Him, we will find true joy.

## LAST WORD

It's one thing to know something in your head—to understand the facts. It's another thing altogether to have complete confidence in that thing as truth.

We've been called into relationship with the God who created the universe. Our present life and our future don't depend on us anymore. They rest entirely in the hands of our kind and gracious heavenly Father.

As we look toward the coming days and weeks, the question that sits before us is simple: Will we take the steps to grow in fellowship with our God? It's not complicated. We confess our sin, love each other, resist the world, and listen to the Holy Spirit.

That's what living in God's family looks like. That's what it means to be a Christian.

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Spend time in prayer this week for one other believer. Pray for them by name that God would deliver them from evil, bring them close to Him, and pour His love out through them.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week and write out a list of things that worry you. What do you fear? Then, next to each, write out the character trait of God that best corresponds to that worry. Keep that list where you can see it every day this week.

**Connect:** Ask one of your brothers or sisters in Christ how you can encourage, uplift, or pray for them. Then do it. Right there. On the spot.

**Memorize:** This week, work on memorizing 1 John 5:20. Keep always in the front of your mind that God is true.

**Summarize:** How would you summarize the message of 1 John? Write it out or repeat it to yourself until you can explain it to a family member or friend. Then, this week, take two minutes and talk about 1 John.



# THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> BOOKS OF **JOHN**

## SESSION 7: **2 JOHN**

Quick Start



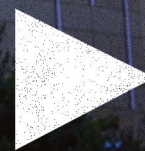
### **Read**

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### **Print**

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### **Watch**

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

***Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader's Guide document.***



## OPEN

**Have you ever believed something to be true that you later found out wasn't actually true? An old wives' tale, maybe? Or a factoid that turned out to be false?**

In this session, we're going to look at the tiny book of 2 John. In it, the writer wants his readers to be concerned with one very important thing: the truth.

## READ

Read 2 John.

## WATCH

**Show Session 7:** *2 John* (12 minutes)

## DISCUSS

Truth matters. But we live in a world where truth is no longer rock-solid. It's become smoke—blowing wherever anyone wants it to, stinging the eyes of everyone else.

In the middle of the chaos of our culture, John's words in his second letter are invaluable.

**According to Dr. Tony Evans, why is truth so crucial to our lives?** (We wouldn't trust someone with our health or lives who didn't know the truth.)

**How did Tony define truth at the beginning of this session?** (Truth is an absolute standard by which reality is measured.)

**Do you see this definition of truth in our world or culture? Why or why not?**

**Why do you think Tony's description of truth is so disliked these days?**



In our day and age, few people like objective standards for reality. It means we'd have to submit to something outside ourselves. We'd have to live in light of something we don't control, or be declared disobedient.

That doesn't mean our world dislikes facts. But facts and truth are different.

**How did Tony outline the difference between truth and facts?** (Facts are statements about reality. Truth determines the "why" and the "so what" behind the facts.)

Read 2 John 1–3.

**What is the source of the love that John (and all people) have for God's people (the elect lady and her children)?** (Truth.)

**Why would truth promote love?**

Throughout the previous sessions covering his first letter, we saw how John spent most of his time highlighting how the truth—knowing God and His commands—is the source of Christian love. Here, in his second letter, John reminds his readers that love for God's people flows out of a true understanding of God.

Tony highlighted the problem with relying on facts versus truth to direct our affections and love. **What's the problem with determining truth based on feeling?** (Feelings change.)

Feelings may be facts—it's a fact that we feel grumpy when our car gets dinged in the parking lot. It's a fact that we feel happy when we find \$20 in our coat pocket. But facts aren't truth, and feelings change.

**In our culture today, would you say "love" comes from feelings or from objective truth? Why?**

**What kind of impact does it have on our ability to love if our love depends on the right combination of feelings?**

**What does the love that John describes look like, if it's based on the truth of God's compassion toward us?**

**Do our feelings change the truth God has revealed to us?**

**Does John's admonition to love each other in verse 5 change if we don't feel loving?**

In verses 6–11, John warns his readers to watch out for deceivers—men and women who advocated against the truth of Jesus's bodily incarnation. By denying the truth, they try to drive people away from God.

**What does this kind of deception look like today?** (Moral relativism, denying biblical teaching on progressive ideas, reshaping God into who we want, etc.)

**Why does having a truth that's independent of our feelings protect us from deceivers?**

In verse 8, John tells us to keep careful watch over ourselves. If we fall prey to false teaching that leads us away from God we risk losing the fellowship we've worked to build.

**What have you implemented in your life to keep watch on what you believe?**

**How could other people help you in keeping watch?**

### GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the encouragement of others to live well in the following passages:*  
Gal. 6:1; Heb. 3:13–15; 11:39–12:4; 13:17.

**In these passages, what's the goal of keeping watch over ourselves and each other?**

**More than just making sure we don't slip up, what else does having others watching us accomplish—particularly according to Hebrews 12:1–2?**

**How might it affect your ability to persevere in following Jesus if you know that others are cheering for you?**

**How could you encourage or challenge a fellow believer today to run a good race?**

The blessing of a church is the people. When we're looking out for each other's interests, praying for the life and fellowship God wants to give to all of His people, we help keep watch. Together, we can stand against deception, and maintain a strong grip on the truth.

**Read verses 10–11. How does John expect a church to respond to false teachers—those who deny Jesus and God's truth?** (By refusing to admit them to the church, and not entertaining them.)

**John's words here can feel harsh. After all, aren't we supposed to love all people?** The answer is yes. But John has set up throughout his two letters the principle that love comes from God's truth. If we allow a deceiver into our churches, it's not loving at all. It's welcoming in lies and denying God.

Tony concluded this session by pointing out that all the truth we need is contained in God's Word. Everything we need to understand reality—to figure out the “why” and the “so what” of life—is in the Bible.

**How's your Bible reading going? How do you regularly engage in the Word of God personally? How about publicly?**

**What one thing could you do this week to get into God's Word a little deeper?**

### LAST WORD

Truth matters. There is objective, unchanging truth out there—it's God's truth and His alone. It doesn't matter how we feel, or whether or not life's working out for us. God's truth tells what reality is and how to live in light of it.

As you go through your week, remember that God has not left us on our own, wandering through life trying to make heads or tails of our experiences. He's given us His Spirit, His Word, and His people. Let's join together, love one another, and cling to the truth.

### LIVE IT OUT

**Read:** Spend five minutes two times this week reading your Bible—the source of God's truth. Consider starting the gospel of John.

**Write:** Consider some of the lies that the world spins around us each day. Write out a list of lies you're tempted to believe. Next to them, write out God's truth.

**Connect:** Take time this week to connect with fellow believers outside of your normal church hours. Enjoy the fellowship with God's people, but also take time to savor the time spent with others who are defined by God's truth—not the world's.

**Memorize:** Commit to memory 2 John 8. Use it to maintain your focus on the truth, and resist the lies of the devil and the world.

**Summarize:** The book of 2 John isn't long. Tony called it a postcard. Take five minutes and summarize in your head or on paper the message of the book. Then share with someone this week what stood out to you in this tiny letter.



# THE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> BOOKS OF **JOHN**

## SESSION 8: **3 JOHN**

Quick Start



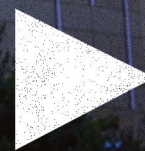
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## OPEN

**Have you ever learned something by watching someone else do it? Maybe ride a bike? Play a sport or a video game?**

**Why was it helpful to have someone show you, rather than tell you, how to accomplish your goal?**

In this session, we're going to look at two men: One will show us how to live out everything that John's talked about in his last two letters. The other will give us a very real example of what happens when a believer refuses to listen to God's Word.

## READ

Read 3 John.

## WATCH

**Show Session 8:** *3 John* (9 minutes)

## DISCUSS

Over the course of this series, we've homed in on John's pastoral heart. We've seen his passion for God's children, for love among the people of God, and his zeal for truth. Here at the end of the series, we tighten the zoom a bit.

Dr. Tony Evans described 3 John as a postcard. Not one written to a church this time, but to one of John's dear friends, Gaius.

**How does John greet Gaius? How would you describe his relationship to this younger brother in Christ?**

**Given everything we've studied in John's letters about how to live as a Christian, what stands out to you about John's attitude here?**

# SESSION 8

## 3 JOHN

One of the beautiful things that 3 John does for us is paint a practical picture of everything John's been admonishing us to do: cling to truth, love the children of God, and encourage others in holiness.

Read verses 5–8.

**What is John commending Gaius for here?** (Caring for the brothers and sisters in Christ who are traveling missionaries.)

**How does John describe the people?** (Strangers.)

**Why is Gaius's behavior so compelling?** (He treated them in a manner worthy of God.)

Gaius is, in every way, carrying out the mission that John set his readers on in his first two letters. He welcomed people who were strangers to him because they were his brothers and sisters in Christ. And he equipped and sent them out with resources to continue to advance God's truth.

**What opportunities have you (or do you) have to care for God's people? At church? In your family? Neighbors?**

**How could you reach out to them this week? What could you do to show them the love of God?**

Just like today, not everything was peaceful in Gaius's world. Read verses 9–10.

**John identifies a potential hitch in his plan to write to the church. What was it?** (Diotrephes resisting John and the Apostles.)

**What charge does John have against Diotrephes?** (He's selfish and advancing only himself.)

In the session, Tony called Diotrephes the first "Tyrant of the Church." He wanted the church to remain firmly under his control, and he went so far as to reject even the authority of Jesus's disciples, including John.

# SESSION 8

## 3 JOHN

**Who else was Diotrephes rejecting?** (The other brothers and sisters who were traveling.)

**What does Diotrephes illustrate for us in light of John's letters?** (Those who refuse to love God's children, and therefore who don't have the love of God at all.)

One of the sobering things about this short letter is how plainly it depicts the behavior that John has been warning against. We may not consider ourselves hateful people, but we certainly struggle with feelings of pride and self-centeredness.

**Have you ever found yourself itching to resist the authority of God's Word, or the leaders God has ordained for the Church? Why or why not?**

**When faced with the temptation to seize power, what do you do?**

### PEEK AT THE GREEK

John devotes the majority of this letter to the contrast between the behaviors of Gaius (vs. 5–8) and Diotrephes (vs. 9–10). The former walks in deep hospitality and love for those around him, whereas the latter illustrates ungodly self-centeredness. By putting himself first, Diotrephes rejected the authority of John (v. 9), which led to Diotrephes “talking wicked nonsense” against John and his disciples. The term *phluareo* refers to the act of indulging in speech that makes no sense or needlessly disparages. In addition, John makes clear that Diotrephes condemns the discipline of hospitality and seeks to dispose of those who offer it to others in the church. His ambition became an arrogant rejection of truth, which led to false speech and rebellious behavior. Diotrephes is a case study of an ambitious individual who wanders from the Lord, an example we would do well to consider in our own lives.

If you've been in the Church for any length of time, chances are you've seen first-hand someone like Diotrephes. Not every “tyrant” is the pastor. Sometimes they're the person talking bad about the elder board or the worship leader. Sometimes they're the person who refuses to shake the hand of the African-American greeter in the lobby.

Or sometimes they're the person who looks at their phone through the whole sermon.

**At the heart of Diotrephes's attitude, who is he most concerned with?** (Himself.)



# SESSION 8

## 3 JOHN

**How do you respond when faced with inconveniences in your church? What about people who inevitably make demands on your time?** (I'm too busy, I don't have the money/skills/talent, it's not my gifting, we have a church program for that, etc.)

**What could you do in those instances to show love to God's people? To welcome them as brothers and sisters?**

As we finish out this little postcard of a book, John reminds Gaius not to follow in Diotrephes's footsteps.

**Why would it be tempting to do what Diotrephes did?**

**When you see people in the church focused on themselves, how do you respond? How do you deal with the temptation to imitate their bad behavior?**

It would be easy to fall into the mindset that says, "Everyone else is out for themselves. If I don't take care of myself, no one else will." But that's precisely what John warns Gaius against.

Imitate the good that comes from God.

John concludes his letter by pointing out that both Gaius and Diotrephes received the exact same testimony from the exact same people. The information they were given was the same. What they did with it, however, is what matters.

**What will you do with what you've learned in this study in the letters of John?**

**How will your life be different—even this week—as a result of the testimony of truth you've heard?**

**What would you like to change in your Christian life to grow closer in fellowship with God?**

**What obstacles will you face in that journey? What can you do to deal with those obstacles?**

**How can your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ help you? How can they pray for you?**

## LAST WORD

This journey through John has taken us into the very heart of our Christian faith. God has called us into close fellowship with Him, and equipped us with all the tools necessary for that relationship to flourish.

However, obstacles stand in our way—threats from the outside, deceivers from within the church, and even our own hearts can pull us far from the God we love.

The question that stands before us today is simple: will we love God and love others, even if it means loss for ourselves? Will we—like Christ—give up our rights, our power, and even our lives to show love to our God and our fellow believers?

If we will, God has promised us eternal life. And He will help us overcome.

## LIVE IT OUT

**Pray:** Ask God this week to open your eyes to those brothers and sisters in Christ that you may be overlooking. Ask Him to give you an opportunity to reach out to them and show them the love of God.

**Write:** Take fifteen minutes this week and write out a description of what you'd like your Christian life to look like. How would you like someone to describe your Christian faith? Select one of those characteristics, and commit yourself to developing in that area.

**Connect:** Ask your pastor (or investigate for yourself) if there are people in your church who are struggling to connect. Make the commitment to show them hospitality in the next two weeks.

**Memorize:** Pick the verse that most stuck out to you in this study of 1, 2 & 3 John, and commit it to memory. Then, this week, share it with someone.

**Share:** Identify the one most important lesson you've taken away from this study. Take five minutes this week and share what you've learned with a friend or coworker. Use that time as an opportunity to talk about the new family that God has given you.