

***THAT YOU MAY KNOW
YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE***

1, 2, 3 JOHN AND JUDE



JANUARY 2019

Day 1

What are 3 things that you would love to stand up and say, "This is true! This is something you all need to know!" Write them down and next to each one write why you would want to share that.

1.

2.

3.

Christians gather in fellowship halls, attend fellowship dinners and participate in activities with other Christians. But what really makes Christian fellowship? Coffee and doughnuts? Youth Group? Perhaps more than any other passage of scripture, these opening verses of 1 John show us the basis of true fellowship that Christians enjoy and experience with God and with one another. Fellowship is not just with like-minded people, but also by being like-minded with God the Father and his Son. Ask God to help you see his truths today and apply them to your life.

Read I John 1:1-7

According to verses 1 to 2, what was John and his companions testifying to?

In verses 3 and 4 what do we see John wanted to do and see happen?

Look at verses 5 to 7, what does John say is true fellowship with God and what is false fellowship?

True -

False –

What are things people do or believe in the church that are wrong and yet they think they are good because they go to church?

Do you have true fellowship with God? How do you know?

PRAYER – Pray to grow in your fellowship with God.

Day 2

Think about your life, what do you do when you sin? Why do you do that?

Yesterday we looked at the true meaning and nature of fellowship. Fellowship means to share life with God in a deep, intimate way. That fellowship is broken by our sin. Many times we claim to have fellowship with God because of our busyness in church activities, yet often times our busyness keeps us from stopping and dealing with sins that God is convicting us of. It's easy to trick ourselves into thinking we have fellowship with God by keeping busy, doing church related things: reading our bible, praying, going to church, going to youth group, going on mission trips, etc. However, until we confess our sins, our fellowship with God will be hindered. It is hard to confess when you are wrong. There is always that awkward moment where you don't know how the other person is going to react. When we deal honestly and confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Jesus already paid the price for all your sins you will ever commit. He stands before God making the case for you to be forgiven because of his work. Why hold onto sin and let it disrupt your fellowship with God? Ask God to help you see your sin and deal with it as you read today.

Read 1 John 1:8-2:2

Look at verses 8 to 10 What does denial of our sin reveal about us & our relationship with God?

What does confession of our sin reveal about us and our relationship with God?

What does it mean to have fellowship with God in these verses?

What has Jesus done for us according to verses 2:1-2? Look up words you may not know what they mean. Next to each thing write why that is so important.

1.

2.

List the sins you need to confess. Be honest.

PRAYER – Confess your sin. Ask God to help you resist sinning.

Day 3

List all that comes to mind: How do people know you are a good

1. Student –
2. Child –
3. Employee –
4. Christian –

“By this we know”. It seems today that everything we know is being called into question. How do you know that the history you are learning in school is not just your teacher’s (or your textbook’s) interpretation? How do you know the Phillies are going to make the playoffs next summer? How do you know that you are a Christian and have eternal life? “By this we know”. Assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ is possible. Even when the world around us tells us nothing is sure, we can know that we have forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ. 1 John gives us many tests to self-diagnose whether we are Christian or not. We get to see one of those tests today. To truly know Jesus involves not religious duty, but a personal relationship that requires practical behavior. We are to be obedient to Christ, even though it means death to our own desires. Ask God to help you examine those desires as you read the word today.

Read 1 John 2:3-6

According to John, how can we tell whether we truly know Christ?

The Pharisees did this, like many Christians say today, what does this really look like?

How did Jesus live an obedient life? Give some examples.

What does it mean then for you to “walk as Jesus did”? Why is this hard?

What does John say about those who say one thing and yet do another?
How does this challenge and encourage you to think about how you live?

What are some changes that you need to make in how you are living your life? List 3 or 4 things.

PRAYER – Ask God to help you make the changes. Ask for his strength.

Day 4

What are ways it is easy for you to love the Christians in your life?

What are ways in which it is challenging to love the Christians in your life?

If you are involved in the church long enough, you know there are people you love to be around. They smile, are encouraging, say all the right things, take time to listen and talk to you, are just an all around example to you in every area of life. Then there are those people, who are Christians, who rub you the wrong way. They seem to complain about life, other people the church. They don't seem to be positive about very many things. When they do speak the truth it feels like they are looking down on you. Yet in both these cases these are fellow Christians. Today we look at another one of these tests of genuine faith in Christ, and that has to do with how we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Ask God to open your eyes to see your faith and struggles as you read His word today.

Read 1 John 2:7-11

How is this command to love each other and forgive each other both an old command and a new command?

What does John say about the person who does not love his brother or sister in Christ? Why do you think God takes this so serious?

What are ways you can show love to other Christians, especially those you don't always get along with?

What are ways in which we show hatred to other Christians?

If Christ held your sins against you and didn't forgive you, where would that leave you? How should that motivate you to forgive and love others?

List 2 Christians you have a hard time loving. Next to their names write how you can pray for them and their faith and also for you in loving them.

1.

2.

PRAYER – For the people you just listed and for strength to love them.

Day 5

What is something you have done, said or believed that someone corrected you about? Why did they correct you? What was their motive?

In a good and perfect world people will correct us because they are thinking about us and our good whether it be parents, teachers or friends. They want to help us see the error of our ways so can be better people living in this world and better Christians serving in this world. They are not thinking about themselves but the person they are correcting. Of course that is in a perfect world. I like to dream of that kind of world as I think of the youth I am blessed to work with and my four children I have the opportunity to parent. I want to see them all learn and grow in their faith. That means there will be times to correct behaviors and attitudes. It also means I need to encourage the things they are doing right too. Both need to happen. Ask God to encourage you in your faith today as you read.

Read 1 John 2:12-14

What does John have to say about the following people:

1. Fathers –

2. Children –

3. Young Men –

How would and do John's words encourage us in our faith?

Why is it significant that John addresses these 3 groups of people? How is that important when you think about the life of the church?

What does the enemy use to tempt you to not spend time in the Word?

In verses 13 and 14, what is the source of our victory over the evil one. Why is that important to know and see?

What are 2 things you can start doing better this week to help you make sure God's word is abiding in you.

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Ask God to help you spend time in his word and prayer.

Day 6

What are 3 things in the world that if you are honest, you love? Next to each one write why you love it.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Think about those things. Are they bad? What makes them bad?

John Bunyan wrote The Pilgrims Progress. Christian escapes from the City of Destruction and is heading toward the Heavenly City. In the Valley of Humiliation Christian battles with Apollyon, his greatest enemy. At the Hill of Difficulty he meets Adam – the – first and his three daughters: Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the eyes, and Pride of life. In the town of Folly he narrowly escapes its greatest attraction, Vanity Fair. These encounters are John Bunyan’s descriptions of the three arenas of conflict in the Christian life – the world, the flesh, and the devil. They are three foes we battle as Christians. There was a T shirt slogan that caught my attention. It said, “He who dies with the most toys still dies.” The desires of this life are powerful, but they are temporary. Today we look at how we love the world. Ask God to open your eyes to see what you love most as you read the Word.

Read 1 John 2:15-17

How do we see there is no middle ground in loving God and the world?

What important thing does John tell us about the world in verses 17 that we often fail to see? Why do we fail to see it?

What are some ways in how you live your life that shows you may love the world more than you love God?

Where do we get the strength to resist the world and all it has to offer?

What are two things you can do this week to love the world less and love God more?

1.

2.

PRAYER – Thank God for your faith. Ask for help to not love the world.

Day 7

When you hear the term “antichrist” what words, pictures or things come to mind? Write down 3 and why that comes to mind for you.

1.

2.

3.

I could not read the left behind books fast enough. Not because I agreed with the view of the end times, I don't, but because it was some good action. You see the rise of the anti-Christ, Nicolae Carpathia, who becomes the rule of the world. He persecutes Christians and deceives so many different people. It was some good action. Over the years there are many people who tried to point to different individuals as the anti-Christ: the Pope and George W. Bush are just two people who were thought to be the anti-Christ. This idea of the Anti-Christ can be found in several books in the New Testament, and we come to one of those passages in our study today. Ask God to give you a heart that understands the Bible and help you to apply it to your life.

Read 1 John 2:18-29

Write down all the things we are told about the anti-Christ in these verses?

Think about all those things. What are 3 ways you see the anti-Christ at work in our world today when you think about those characteristics?

1.

2.

3.

What are all the things we are told about Christians and how we are to live and think in these verses? Write them all down.

Pick 2 from those verses. How do you show those 2 in your life?

1.

2.

Is it easy or hard for you to abide (remain) in Christ? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Pray for the lost and to abide in Christ by abiding in his word.

Day 8

What ways do you look or act like your father?

What ways do you look or act like your mother?

It is amazing how children bear resemblance to their parents. It should not surprise us that much, after all, they do share the same DNA traits. Have your parents ever told you that your actions remind you of them at your age? We don't only share physical characteristics with our parents; we also develop social and emotional characteristics that resemble our parents. As Christians we are called children of God and so we should bear resemblance to our Heavenly Father. How many people in the United States would say they are Christian? Roughly 50 million adult Americans claim to have made a commitment to follow Christ. That is a lot of people. How could we go about verifying this report? Today we look at what the Bible says is the test to know if a person is following Christ. Ask God to show you who you are following as you reads the word today.

Read 1 John 3:1-10

What is the test to determine whether or not a person has been "born again" according to these verses? List all John tell us about the Christian.

We all sin. According to verse 6 how does knowing Christ change our relationship to sin?

Why should our lives as Christians not be characterized by sin?

What word or phrases are we given to characterize Satan and his followers in all these verses?

When you think of all you just read, are you “born again”, a true follower of Jesus Christ? How do you know?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you not love sin, to abide in him and love him.

Day 9

What is easy about loving the Christians God has placed in your life?

What is hard about loving the Christians God has placed in your life?

Jacob De Shazer bombed Tokyo early in World War II. He was captured by the Japanese and put in prison. He hated his Japanese captors and was so violent and vicious that they feared him and kept him in solitary confinement. He started to read the Bible and came to faith in Christ. An amazing change happened, he began to love his captors. They were astonished by what happened to him. He eagerly cooperated with his captors and prayed for them. His story was put into a little story and after the war Mitsuo Fuchida, the man who led the air raid against Pearl Harbor, who was a hero and felt so empty reads Shazer's story. He was puzzled by the story and started to read the New Testament. When he read the Lord's words from the cross, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing, his heart broke and he became a Christian. As Christians we are to love each other. Ask God to help you understand what that looks like as you read the Bible today.

Read 1 John 3:11-15

What do we see about the person who is not following Jesus in these verses?

How are we to be different than non-Christians as followers of Christ?

Look at verses 13, what important truth are we given in this verse? How does this help explain and give us hope in the face of persecution?

It is hard to love those who hate you and want to hurt you. If we love them anyways, what impact do you that will have on them?

As a follower of Jesus, you have passed from death to life. You have hope. How have you showed that hope in the last few weeks?

PRAYER – Ask for help to love your enemies. Pray for a few by name.

Day 10

What are 2 examples, real or fiction, where someone has given up their life to save a loved one? Explain the situation for each.

1.

2.

In the Movie *I Am Legend* Robert Neville, is a scientist who has developed a cure for cancer, which unfortunately turns everyone into zombies but he is immune. He captures and experiments on a zombie and eventually finds a cure. The zombies find him and his 2 companions and so Neville sacrifices himself so that the other companions can get away and take the cure to humanity. His death was not necessary. He could have easily thrown grenades into the room, squeezed into the coal chute with his companions and escaped harm. Unlike Neville, Jesus' death was needed to cover our sin and if we are to love our brothers as Jesus loved us, it is necessary for us to die to our own desires and wants in order to serve the needs of our brothers.

Read I John 3:16-18

How did Christ love us according to verse 16? Why is that so incredible when you think about who he is and who we are?

In verses 16 and 17, what do we need to do for fellow Christians? What are 2 ways you can do this?

What hard truth does John tell us in verse 17 about our faith if we are not helping those in need? Why is that a hard truth to hear?

What is a way you have seen a need in another Christian and you just ignored that need? Why did you ignore it?

What does verse 17 say about how we love others? Who will this be easy or hard for you?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you show love in word and deed.

Day 11

How do we see that as humans we are naturally rebellious?

Why do we not like to follow rules?

I love watching the Star Trek movie series, old and new. If there is one thing you learn about Captain Kirk, it is that he likes to break the rules. He is of the mind that there is always another way, a better way, and the rules can keep us from seeing that way. In many ways it serves him well in that he is able to save lives and discover new worlds and find victory in battle. But in other ways, it hurts him. He gets demoted many times, negatively impacts relationships and causes the people around him to have to choose sides. Rules are in place often for our own protection and to keep us safe. Today we look that God gives us rules and why it is important that we follow them. Ask God to help you search your own heart and see how you are doing in being obedient to him.

Read 1 John 3:19-24

How do verses 19 and 21 talk about doubt when it comes to our faith? Explain a time when you doubted in your heart that you were saved?

How are you in your heart assured that in fact you are a Christian? In other words, what has helped you with those doubts?

What hope are we given in verse 22? Does this mean I can ask for a million dollars and get it? Why or why not?

Verses 23 and 24 talk about obedience. List the important things we are told about obedience in these verses?

What is your biggest struggle with obedience today? What can you do to deal with that struggle?

PRAYER – Pray about what you just wrote in the last question.

Day 12

What are some false things people in our world believe about Jesus?

Why is it tempting for people to believe these things about Jesus, sometimes even Christians?

There is so much noise in the world today. Everybody has a corner on the truth. The Yankees are the best sports team. Our way of educating students is the only model you should use. This kind of math is the best way to learn to add, subtract and all those other functions. Then when it comes to religion, everybody says they have the only way, the only truth, the only life. But everybody cannot be true since all those religions contradict each other. There has to be one that is right and true. Christianity is right and true. Jesus himself said in John 14:6 that he is the way, truth and life and nobody comes to the father (goes to heaven) except through him. John in his epistle wrote to combat false truths that were in the church and the culture. He wanted God's people to be armed with the truth. Ask God to arm you with his truth as you read, think about and pray today.

Read 1 John 4:1-3

What is the command of verse 1?

We are told there are many false prophets. What kinds of things do false prophets do, think and say?

Who is the true prophet and teacher of God according to verses 2 and 3?

Why do a lot of people not take time to discern (think about what is right or wrong) what is true? What are their excuses or reasons?

Who are people you know that believe false things about God and Christ because they are listening to “false” prophets? What are they believing?

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Pray for those people. Pray that you would know the truth.

Day 13

Describe a time when someone gave you some good advice or truth and you totally ignore them? What was the result?

Describe a time when you gave someone good advice or truth and they ignored you? What was the result?

Annakin Skywalker was a troubled child and man. He missed his mother and kept having dreams that she was in trouble. And she was. He goes to find her, against the counsel and advice of other Jedi. When he finds her dying, he proceeds to kill all the sand people – men, women and children – this sending him spiraling downward further towards the dark side. Obi Wan and Mace Windu knew that if he went to find his mother, that he would not be able to control his emotions and actions. They were right. And what happens, he eventually becomes Darth Vader, one of the best bad guys in movie history. God puts people in our lives and puts us, as Christians, in other lives, so we can speak truth that is Biblical to help them and counsel them. Ask God to convince you of his truths today.

Read 1 John 4:4-6

What important truth does John give to the church in verse 4? Why did the people then, and us today, need to hear this truth?

What are ways that you tend to rely on yourself to be strong in your faith and not necessarily rely on Christ?

Look at verse 5. What does God say about false prophets and teachers and those who don't know Christ? Why do we need to see this truth?

Then look at verse 6, what important truths and assurances does God give us as Christians? Why do we need to see these truths?

What will be the consequences for Christians and non-Christians if we reject the truths of God's word?

PRAYER – You would teach God's truths. Pray for those who you know teach the Bible to others, that they would teach boldly.

Day 14

What are the ways in which people see God in this world? List all the ways that come to mind.

We can see God's love in a rainbow, a hurricane, a baby being born, a person reaching out to helping a fellow human being and the list can go on and on. God's love is shown all around us. We just have to look at each other and see how intimately we are all put together. This shows God's love and care for us. A big way in which people see God's love in this world is how we treat each other as Christians. Unfortunately, the way many Christians treat each other is shameful. It does not reflect the God who loves us and sacrificed for us at all. If we understand God's love, then we will see the importance of loving each other even when we are not alike and don't always see eye to eye. Ask God to show you the struggles of your own heart in this area as you read the Bible today.

Read 1 John 4:7-12

Why must we love one another according to these verses?

How does our love for one another make the invisible God visible?

We love because God first loved us. According to these verses how has God loved us?

What does it mean Jesus was a “propitiation” for us? Look it up. Why is that so important to understand so we can love each other?

What does he say to the “Christian” who refuses to love other Christians? Why should this motivate us to think about our actions and attitudes?

Who are 2 Christians in your life you have not loved? List why you have not loved them and also one way you can love them in the coming week.

1.

2.

PRAYER – For your relationship with the 2 people above, to love them.

Day 15

What truths do you believe about Jesus Christ? List them.

Jesus is the Son of God. He is 100% human and 100% God. Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God is not a confession that Jesus is “a son of God” but that Jesus is “THE son of God”. Jesus is divine and shares fully every characteristic of God the Father. Whoever confesses this truth, God comes and lives in him and he is taken to live in God. God has given us his Spirit to live in us. How do you know God’s Holy Spirit is living in you? That is something to think about and wrestle with today as you read the scriptures. Ask God to help you see your heart, to see if you truly have faith in Christ, or if that faith is in men and their ways.

Read 1 John 4:13-16

What 3 tests does John give to determine if “we live in him and he in us”?

Think about these 3 tests, do you pass them? Explain your answer.

What ways (in word or deed) have you denied Christ?

What are ways in which you have testified to God's love for you? In other words, what specific ways have you shared the Gospel with others?

What struggles do you have in abiding (remaining) in Christ? List them.

How have you seen God's Holy Spirit at work in your life recently?

PRAYER – Give thanks for God's work in your life, pray for your struggles & denials of Him, and for opportunities to share His love with others.

Day 16

When it comes to loving others, what are some fears we have?

How do we deal with those fears?

John Bunyan wrote a sequel to Pilgrims Progress and in the sequel, Mr. Great-Heart and father Honest engage in a conversation about an old friend, Mr. Fearing. At one point in the conversation Mr. Fearing is described as, “a man that had the root of the matter in him, but he was one of the most troublesome pilgrims that I ever met within all my days.” That is Bunyan’s way of describing many of us who are on the road to the Heavenly City of God: thoroughly sincere yet so overloaded with doubts and fears that their pilgrimage through this life is “troublesome”. Eternal life or eternal punishment awaits every man, woman, and child who has ever lived. So many think, when I stand before Him like that, will I pass the test? John talks about how experiencing God’s love helps us deal with this fear. Ask God instruct your heart as you read his word today.

Read 1 John 4:16-18

Look at verse 16, what ways have you come to know the love God has for you? Write them down.

How does knowing God loves you in the ways you just listed encourage and challenge you to keep serving him?

Verse 17 says we, as well as God is in this world. He is not distant or somewhere else. How do we see God is very much in this world?

What kinds of fears paralyze people as you think about verse 18? What does this reveal about our trusting the Lord?

When it comes to your life and faith, what are your fears. List them here.

PRAYER – Ask God to drive your fears out, to take comfort in his love and provision for you.

Day 17

How do you respond to the quote, "I have to love my brother (Christian) but I don't have to like them"? What is true and ridiculous about this statement?

The church is a place for messed up people. It is the one place where people can go to find that their only hope is in Jesus Christ. It is a place where we find healing, hope and meaning for our lives. Why? Because it is where we find Christ. It is where we see Christ at work in the lives of others. Yet it is a place where we are all diverse and different in our personalities, backgrounds, baggage and often times in the things we are passionate about. Those differences can cause clashes between people. If we let them, they can divide us. Yet I don't believe God would want us to have a church that was all one kind of person, whether ethnically, socially, economically, school choice, etc. God wanted us to have a church that was diverse. Why? Because people need to see how we love each other, despite our differences, and thus show them Christ. Ask God to reveal the attitudes of your own heart as you think about how you love fellow Christians, especially the ones you might clash with.

Read I John 4:19-21

What important truth does John start with in verse 19? Why start there?

Why is it impossible to love God and hate other Christians according to verse 20? What does John say?

With those “hard” truths in mind, what command does God give us in verse 21?

God never says it will be easy. So how do we love the Christians God puts in our lives that are hard to love? Give 3 ways.

1.

2.

3.

What are the consequences for us and for those around us, Christian and non-Christian when we don't love each other?

PRAYER – For help to love others. Pray for 3 people you struggle to love.

Day 18

What are ways in which you have seen people in your life totally become consumed with the world and all that the world offers? Give examples.

A captain of a ship described what it was like to go through a storm. He described the ship in the midst of the waves mounting on every side, with the wind blowing hard and the rain coming down. The ship seemed a helpless victim of the storm, caught up in the power of these mighty elements that were raging on every side. Its doom seemed sure. But he said, "I stood there on the bridge of the ship and I grasped the railing. I felt the throbbing of the engines deep down inside the hull. The storm, the wind, and the waves seemed to be saying to the ship, 'You cannot come, you cannot come.' But I heard the answering throb of the engines saying, 'Yes, we shall; yes, we shall.' And so we do. That is the way we overcome the world." If we give in, if we reflect the same attitudes and actions as the world, we have given in to the world and to the schemes of the devil. We have lost our power to witness. But if our dependence is on Jesus, His life is in us, and then, and only then do we experience victory. Ask God to help you see the victory we have in Christ as you read John today.

Read 1 John 5:1-5

Re write in your own words what God is telling us we need to believe and do in verse 1.

What other way do we show we love God according to verses 2 and 3?

What are ways people try to say God's commands are burdensome?

How do we live like they are not burdensome? What do we need to do?

Facing the world is overwhelming. How do we overcome the world and all that it throws at us according to verses 4 and 5? How do we do that? Give some practical ways.

What ways are you struggling with the world this week? List those struggles.

PRAYER – Pray about those struggles and your obedience & trust of God.

Day 19

Who is Jesus to you? Don't give a Sunday School answer. What does your life say about who Jesus is to you?

There was a man who had doubts about whether he was a Christian. He got down on his knees and said, "Now, Father, I want to settle this question. Show me whether I have eternal life." Opening his Bible, his eyes fell on 1 John 5:10. He prayed, "Father, I don't want to make You a liar, and it says here that if I don't believe the testimony that You give about the Son, I'm making you a liar. I don't want to do that. What is the testimony?" He read on, "And this is the testimony". He was overwrought and put his thumb over the rest of the verse and said, "Lord, it says here that if I don't believe the testimony that you gave concerning your Son, I'm making you a liar, and I don't want to make you a liar. I believe that I have what that testimony is right under my thumb. I'm going to take my thumb off and read it, and Lord, help me to believe it, because I don't want to make you a liar." He raised his thumb and read, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the Son". It came to him. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. He entered into peace and became a preacher of this great truth. Ask God to convince you of his truths as you read today.

Read 1 John 5:6-12

Who are John's three witnesses, and what do they testify (v.7-8)?

What does their testimony tell you?

Look at verse 10 to 12, how does your own life experience confirm the truth that eternal life is found in Jesus?

What are 3 other truths that the spirit has confirmed to you since coming to faith in Jesus Christ?

1.

2.

3.

Who are 2 people you know that need to hear this truth? What is one truth you can tell them this week?

1.

2.

PRAYER – Pray for the two people you just wrote above

Day 20

Think of the last year, what are 3 big things you prayed for? List them. How did God answer those prayers?

1.

2.

3.

I remember ministering to a student who told me he was giving up praying to God. I asked him why. He said God never gives me anything I pray for. Of course I pursued what he was praying for. There were some simple things like good grades, for a friend to not say dumb things, for money but he also prayed for some things that were more serious like a family member who was sick. When it came down to it, he was praying if not demanding God answer what he was praying for and give it to him. He missed an important part of prayer, praying according to God's will. So many cut that part of their prayers out, a critical part and one if we don't understand can lead to anger and frustration. Ask God to help you evaluate your own prayer life as you read the Bible today.

Read 1 John 5:13-17

According to verse 13, what does John want to help his hearers with? Why is this important for us as followers of Christ?

Look at verses 14 and 15, how can we get to the point where we want what God wants? Why is this hard?

How does the assurance that God hears your prayers in Christ encourage you? So do you pray more as a result? Explain.

What is John's point in verses 16 and 17? What are to be praying for? What does that look like?

About 90% of Christians do not have an active prayer life. What are some of the consequences of this in that person's life?

PRAYER – Give thanks to God for answered prayer. Ask for a right attitude and focus when it comes to your prayer life.

Day 21

What are ways your thoughts and attitudes have changed since coming to faith in Christ or since you started to understand your faith in Christ. List 3 things.

1.

2.

3.

In the Captain America movie franchise, Steve Rogers has a best friend, Bucky. They grew up together, fought together and then Bucky is killed in action. He is brainwashed and becomes an assassin, the Winter Soldier. Steve tries to change his friend, to get him to do good, the good he sees in him, but he keeps slipping back into doing horrible things because of his brainwashing. It is frustrating for Steve to see. He wants him to see the good man he used to be. It is like that with sin. Many people struggle with various idols and cannot break from those idols. They do good for a little while but then slip back into sin patterns of the past. John ends this first letter with some encouragement for the church, to find their hope in Jesus Christ. Ask God to help you apply his words to your life today.

Read 1 John 5:18-21

What assurances does John give in these verses?

What assurance is most encouraging to you? Why?

What does John say about non-Christians in these verses?

Why is this something we need to be reminded of as Christians?

What is something that you may be worshipping without even knowing it?
What steps do you need to take to ensure that doesn't continue?

PRAYER – For idols in your life. Ask God to help you worship him alone.

Day 22

What are 4 things you love about the church? Next to each one write why you love that.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Some Christians might say, "I love the church, but it is the Christians in the church that I don't care for." Why is that? What is it you are looking for? Are you looking for a church full of people who think exactly like you, like the same things as you, want the same exact music as you, etc.? Do you look down on Christians from other denominations because they don't hold to the same view as you when it comes to election, baptism, style of worship, end time views? We need to come to a point of realizing that anybody who genuinely knows Christ, knows and believes the truth about Christ is our brother and sister in Christ. Belief in those truths should unite us and not divide us. We need to love each other, not because it will make us feel better but because through loving each other we are showing our love for Jesus Christ. Ask God to open your eyes to see if you are really loving the church or yourself.

Read 2 John 1-3

Who are the following people in this letters opening?

1. Elder –

2. Elect Lady –

3. Her children –

John then proceeds to say, it is not only I who loves the chosen lady (the church) and her children (the congregation), but who else loves them? Why is that worth writing? What is encouraging about that?

What is the truth or truths that John and other Christians know that makes them want to love the church and its people?

What do we see about how long we are to believe those truths? Why is that important as a follower of Jesus?

What are some truths you say you will believe forever? List 4.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

PRAYER – Give thanks for God’s truths and help to believe them forever.

Day 23

What is easy for you in loving people in your church or youth group?

What is difficult for you in loving people in your church or youth group?

There was a time in our youth group where I thought there would never be unity. Students from this Christian school would only talk to each other. Students from that Christian school could only say negative things about people from the other school. Everybody seemed to dump on those who went to public school. It was incredibly discouraging and deflating to have to walk into youth group and see that divisive dynamic week in and week out. We took a year to talk about community and it was awesome to see students starting to genuinely love and care for one another. Students from public and Christian school, guys and girls, shy and outgoing, all taking time to get to know each other. 10 years after that series it is neat to see how the effects of that study continue to impact our youth group. Do you find yourself walking in love with other Christians or is your walk based on what you want, when you want and how you want it? Ask God to challenge you in how you love other Christians as you read today.

Read 2 John 4-6

How far back is John reminding us to look when it comes to loving one another?

How do we see the command to love one another in the Old Testament?

According to verse 6, what are we doing if we don't love our brothers and sisters in Christ? Why do we need to step back and think about that?

We are commanded to "walk in love". What does that look like in our everyday lives? Give some practical examples.

Who are two brothers or sisters in Christ you need God to help you love?
What is one thing you can do this week to show love to them?

1.

2.

PRAYER – For two people you just listed and opportunities to love them.

Day 24

What are false things that people in our world and culture believe about Jesus that are not right or true?

The early church had battles regarding the person of Jesus Christ. Many people believed Jesus could not have been a man because all matter was evil and so if Jesus had a physical body then he would have been evil. So Jesus only appeared to have a body. God becoming man, that is a thing of fantasy. It is something you would seem to read about in Greek Mythology or see in a movie. Even if I did believe it, why would God, who could do anything, be anywhere, give it all up to be confined to a human body, in one place and experience pain, hunger, thirst and ultimately death. That just doesn't make sense. Many people have a hard time understanding this concept. Yet John says holding to the total humanity of Christ was to be taken so seriously that if a teacher taught something differently you were not to take them into your home or welcome them. They were not to be tolerated. That goes against our culture today. Ask God to open your heart to his truths today.

Read 2 John 7-13

What kinds of things does John call those who don't believe the truths about Christ?

What will be the consequences for them?

What is the warning given to Christians in verse 9? How do we see in this warning that God takes seriously what we believe?

Look at verses 10 to 11, how are we to treat those who talk against the doctrine of Christ? What message are we sending if we take it seriously?

Who is someone you have seen run ahead and not continue in the teaching of Christ? How has that impacted you? What is one thing you can pray for them about?

PRAYER – Pray for the person you wrote about above.

Day 25

What are things we like to be recognized for doing? List them.

What are our reactions when we are not recognized for them?

We all like recognition for our accomplishments. When we are not recognized we are tempted to stop doing those things. It makes us step back and think about why and for who do we do the things that we do. In this 3rd letter John wants to build up Gaius, to affirm his faith and service in the church. Some of my favorite parts on mission's trips and student leadership conferences I have led, are those times when the group goes around and encourages what they have seen the Lord do in each other. What a chance to be affirmed and encouraged in what God is doing in and through us. It is a shame we don't encourage one another more because these are great times to really spur one another on towards love and good deeds as the author of Hebrews says in chapter 10. Let us look at how we can encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ today. Ask God to lay his words on your heart as you read his word.

Read 3 John 1-8

What are the specific ways that John encourages Gaius?

What ways do you think those words encouraged Gaius?

What is John's emotion when he thinks of Gaius? Who is somebody in your life that you feel the same way about? Why?

Look at verses 7 and 8. How do we see that we need to support and encourage each other according to these verses? Who is one person you can support like this and how?

Who is someone that has brought you joy because of how they are living out their faith? Have you encouraged them? If yes, how? If not, why?

PRAYER – Pray for the different people you listed in this devotion.

Day 26

What is a way in which you have seen someone sabotage a work you or a team had been doing, someone that seemed to be with you? Describe that situation and how you or the team dealt with them.

Many years ago there was a show called *The Mole*. A team of people had a mission that they had to execute on each show. They needed to work together figuring out clues, performing challenges, eventually completing the task. The problem is that one of the contestants was a mole. The job of the mole was to try to sabotage the team's efforts without being found out. At the end of each show people voted on who they thought the mole was while at the same time voting off a teammate. Today we look at two different men, one serving the Lord and the other serving himself. The church is full of both of these people. Ask God to help you see your own sin and leadership in the church as well as convict you on how you are praying for and encouraging the leadership of your church.

Read 3 John 9-15

How is Diotrophes described in this passage?

Is he a guy you would want to follow? Why or why not?

How did John want the church to react to Diotrophes in verse 11? Why is it important to act in this way?

How is Demetrius described? How did John and the church support him?

Who are 2 people in your life that are like Demetrius who have encouraged you because of their faithfulness to God. What is the biggest way they have encouraged you?

1.

2.

Now think about your own life. Which of these two men are you most like? Explain your answer?

PRAYER – Give thanks for the 2 people you listed above. Ask God to help you love and serve Him faithfully and love his people.

Day 27

What things that we believe in the church does the world and culture speak against and try to say we are narrow minded and wrong? List as many as you can think about.

There is an attitude that if we go to church, we will be safe, everybody believes what we believe. Yet from the time of the apostles all the way to today, there are people who slip into the church who argue for things that are unscriptural and wrong. Take the PCUSA (Presbyterian Church of the USA) who on May 11, 2011 passed that churches could ordain people to pastors who are living in the gay lifestyle. There are some pastors in the PCUSA denomination that take a stand against that position because they know it is wrong. They are trying to protect the integrity of the church. The problem is that many people have embraced the false truths. The question the “good” pastors have to ask is do we stay, do we fight and for how long? Jude is writing the church who is dealing with their own struggles with false teachers infiltrating into the church and teaching against the Bible. He wanted to warn them. Ask God to give you a love for his word as you study it today.

Read Jude 1-10

Look at verse 3, what does it mean to contend for the faith? Define it.

Contend is a game term – what would it look like in your personal life if you took contending for the faith seriously?

What ways does Jude describe these men who have slipped into the church? Use descriptive words and comparisons.

It would be so easy to put down and slam those who say things that are contrary to scripture. What does Jude say we need to keep in mind for those who speak abusively against our faith according to verse 5? Why?

Why is it so important that Jude uses the examples from the Old Testament that he used?

What is a false teaching that has infiltrated the church? How have you dealt with that false teaching?

PRAYER – Pray for your churches leadership, its teaching and purity.

Day 28

Think of someone who is not a Christian, who hates Christianity. Describe that person's personality, emotions, lifestyle, etc. List it all.

Are you jealous of that person in any way? Which ways? Why?

Do you ever find yourself getting jealous at the successes and prosperity of godless people? They cheat on exams, lie, do not work very hard at their job, cheat on their boyfriend or girlfriend, gossip and the list goes on. Yet they are successful in so many ways. We get so envious of people like that. Have you been there? I know I have. We need to step back and think about where those people are heading - an eternity separate from God. They are dead in their sins. Do we really want what they have - hopelessness and death? We need to be reminded of where their final destination is so we can see what we need to strive for in this world. Jude is reminding the Christians about the consequences of these false teachers if they do not turn to Christ. Ask God to help you apply his truths to your heart and life today.

Read Jude 11-16

If you were to summarize in one or two sentences of what Jude is trying to communicate to us, what would you say?

List everything Jude says about these false teachers in these verses.

Pick 3 of the things he says about false teachers and write how we see that in people around us today in our context.

1.

2.

3.

Think about your own life. Do these things describe you? Explain.

Why do you think churches embrace men like this as pastors and teachers in the church?

PRAYER – For Godly leaders and pastors in the church, that we would hate false teaching and challenge false teachers.

Day 29

In what ways is it hard for Christians to live differently from the world?

Why is it hard for us to live for Christ in all things and all the time?

The news can be pretty depressing: stories of murder, disasters, child abuse, and so many other things. It can leave us feeling hopeless and thinking what kind of world am I living in? Worst yet, what kind of world are my children going to grow up in. Jude in this last section wants to encourage the church to persevere in the face of the trials they are facing in the church. Are you prepared to stand up for your faith? Are you ready to help save people who are self-destructing? There are many people who are telling lies and many more who are following the lies being told. God wants us to tell the truth, share the Gospel with them. The lemming jumps off cliffs to their deaths and they all do it together, with nothing to stop them. People who do not know Jesus are jumping off a cliff with no one stopping them. Are you willing to help stop them by sharing the hope of the Gospel? Ask God to convict you of his truths as you read today.

Read Jude 17-25

What promise were we given by the prophets in verses 17 to 19? How do we see that prophecy fulfilled today?

Look at verses 20-21, what kinds of things do we need to do to make sure we don't become like those people? List what Jude says.

Which ones are you doing well? Which ones need work?

What do verses 22 to 23 say is our responsibility for others? Next to each one write one way you can do that?

1.

2.

3.

We don't save people. Look at the doxology in verses 24 and 25, how do we see God is the one who saves and works in our hearts and lives?

PRAYER – Thanks for your salvation. For 3 people who don't know Christ; boldness to share your faith, God would change their hearts.