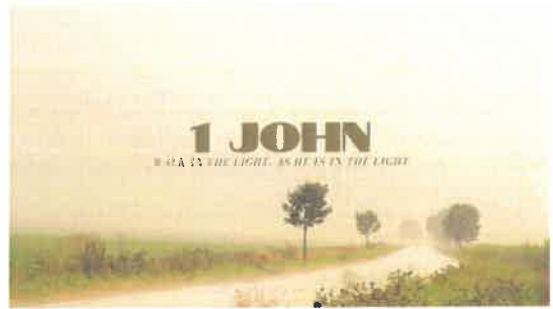


1 John – Winter/Spring 2026

D-Groups

For Wednesday, January 14th

1 John 2:3-17



Knowing God, Loving Others, and Resisting the World

As John continues with his letter, he builds on the foundation he laid in chapter one, the foundation of Jesus as God made flesh, the message of God is the light that cleanses us from sin. He moves from the foundation of Christian faith to describing the **shape of Christian life**. If the opening of 1 John focuses on who Jesus is and how fellowship with God is possible, this next section asks perhaps a more personal and practical question: *What does real faith actually look like when it is lived out?* John is deeply concerned with assurance. Not the kind of assurance that comes from self-confidence or pride, but the kind that is *rooted* in the foundational love of Jesus, the propitiation for our sins, and *grows* from a life increasingly shaped by truth, love, and *obedience*.

This concern was especially pressing in the churches John served. False teachers were not just introducing bad ideas; they were forming distorted patterns of life. Some claimed to know God while disregarding His commands. Others emphasized spiritual enlightenment while dismissing love for fellow believers or downplaying the dangers of moral compromise. **John refuses to separate belief from behavior**. For him, theology always shows up in practice. What we claim to believe about God will inevitably be revealed in how we treat others, how we respond to temptation, and what we ultimately love. What we believe about God always shapes how we live before Him.

John writes with the heart of a spiritual father. He is not trying to unsettle genuine believers, but to *protect* them. His words are meant to *clarify*, not confuse; to help these churches to discern whether their faith is authentic and where their loyalties truly lie. By anchoring assurance in obedience, love, and discernment, John offers a vision of faith that is both deeply comforting and courageously honest. Knowing God, loving others, and resisting the pull of the world are not separate goals, they are interwoven marks of a life rooted in Christ.

2:3-6

John introduces a simple but, perhaps, searching test: *"We know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commands."* This echoes the prayer of David in Psalm 139: *Search me God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* It can be difficult to truly look deeply in our hearts and take an accurate self-assessment. But remember, this isn't a call to perfection or a return to a legalistic mindset. John has already made clear that believers still sin and need grace (1:7-2:2). Instead, obedience functions as **evidence of**, not **entrance into**, relationship with God.

To claim intimacy with God while rejecting His ways is self-deception. Knowing God is relational, not merely informational. It involves aligning our life with the character and example of Jesus. To "walk as Jesus did" means adopting His pattern of obedience, love, and trust in the Father.

2:7-11

John turns to the **command** to love, calling it both *old* and *new*. It is old because it has always been part of God's revealed will; it is new because it has been freshly embodied in Jesus and continually lived out in the life of the church. Love is not just sentimental language; it's the visible marker of a life in the light. Hatred, bitterness, and indifference toward others, similarly, reveal a life still *shaped* by darkness. John emphasizes that love clarifies vision. Those who love well "see clearly," while those who harbor hatred stumble without realizing it. Spiritual blindness often masquerades as confidence.

2:12-14

In a poetic and pastoral interlude, John addresses believers as *little children*, *fathers*, and *young men*. These categories might reflect stages of spiritual maturity rather than age (or gender) alone. Each group receives reassurance: **Children** are assured of their forgiveness; **Fathers** are reminded of their deep, enduring knowledge of God. **Young men** are affirmed for their strength and victory over evil. The repeated phrase, *I am writing to you*, is John emphatically and repeatedly bringing assurance to his readers, and who of us, really, doesn't need *all* of these reminders at one time or another.

2:15-17

John concludes this section with a sharp warning: *Do not love the world or anything in the world*. By *world*, John doesn't mean creation or humanity, but rather the value system organized in opposition to God. He names three expressions of misplaced love: *The desires of the flesh*, *the desires of the eyes*, and *the pride of life*. These represent distorted longings; longings for pleasure, possession, and power. In contrast to the temporary nature of the world's allure, John reminds us that *the one who does the will of God lives forever*. Faith requires discernment. Not everything attractive is good, and not everything popular is true. Loving God inevitably means loosening our grip on what competes for our loyalty.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

What connections do you see between belief and behavior in this passage?

How would you explain the difference between legalism and obedience rooted in love?

Why do you think John emphasizes knowing God rather than merely believing in God?

What does it practically look like to "walk as Jesus did" in everyday life?

Why is love such a reliable indicator of spiritual health?

How can bitterness or unresolved conflict affect our spiritual health?

Which of the three groups—children, fathers, or young men—do you most identify with right now? Why?

How does John's affirmation of different stages of faith encourage the church community?

What does John mean by "the world," and how might we misunderstand that term today?

Which of the three temptations (flesh, eyes, pride) do you see most clearly in modern culture?

How can we discern when good things are becoming ultimate things?

What practices help you resist loving the world while still living faithfully within it?

How does the promise of eternity reshape how we view temporary desires?

In what ways does this passage offer assurance rather than condemnation?

What is one concrete step you can take this week to align your life more closely with Christ?