

1 John – Winter/Spring 2026

D-Groups

For Wednesday, January 21st

1 John 2:18-3:10



Children of God in a World of Deception

As John continues his letter, his tone sharpens. Not because he is angry, but because the stakes are high. The church is facing *real* spiritual danger, and John refuses to speak vaguely or gently where clarity is required. In this section, he confronts the deception, calling out the deceivers as antichrists, and reminding the believers who they truly are.

John frames this moment as "*the last hour*." This isn't meant to inspire panic or speculation about the end of days, but to inspire *urgency*. From the resurrection of Jesus onward, God's people live in the final chapter of redemptive history. Until Christ returns, the church exists in a space where truth and falsehood run side by side. Discernment is isn't optional, it's essential and crucial. Yet John does not want believers to live in fear. Even as he warns them about antichrists, false teaching, and lawlessness, he repeatedly grounds them in assurance. They are not abandoned, confused, or defenseless. They have received the truth. They have been anointed by the Holy One. Most importantly, they are children of God. Identity, not anxiety, is meant to shape how they live in a deceptive world.

2:19-23

John introduces what is one of the most misunderstood terms in Scripture: *antichrist*. Rather than pointing to a single future figure, John speaks here of **many antichrists** that are already present. These are individuals who oppose Christ, not always through hostility, but through *distortion*; redefining who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him. What makes these teachers especially dangerous is that they once belonged to the community. They were part of the family. They used Christian language, shared Christian spaces, and claimed spiritual authority. But their departure revealed their true allegiance. For John, perseverance in truth matters deeply. At the heart of their error was a denial of Jesus' identity. To reject the Son is to reject the Father. There is no true knowledge of God that bypasses Jesus. Any faith that diminishes Christ ultimately dismantles the gospel.

2:24-29

John urges believers to *remain* in what they have heard from the beginning. Growth in our faith does not come from novelty in teaching, but from deepening our roots in the truth of Scripture. Truth is not something believers outgrow. He reassures them that they have an "anointing" from the Holy One—a reference to the Holy Spirit, who enables discernment and guards against deception. This doesn't mean Christians no longer need teachers, but that they are not helpless or dependent on some secret knowledge. God Himself is active in preserving His people and can give insight and direction to *all* believers. Abiding in Christ is both a gift and a responsibility. It means continuing in the truth so that we may stand with confidence instead of shame when Christ returns.

3:3:1-3

John pauses his warnings to marvel at grace: “*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!*” This is not metaphorical language; it is a reality. Believers are not merely forgiven sinners; we are adopted sons and daughters. The world may not recognize this identity because it does not recognize God Himself. John also points forward. What believers are now is real, but incomplete. Full transformation is still coming. The hope of becoming like Christ fuels present holiness. Christian obedience flows not from fear, but from anticipation.

3:4-10

John returns to strong language, contrasting two ways of life. Sin is not just personal failure—it’s rebellion against God’s order. Jesus came not only to forgive sin, but to break its power. John isn’t claiming that Christians never sin (he has already denied that). Instead, he insists that a life characterized by ongoing, unrepentant sin is incompatible with life in Christ. Identity produces behavior. Children of God begin to reflect the character of their Father, just as children of the enemy reflect theirs. Righteousness and love are family traits. A transformed life does not earn salvation, but it does reveal it.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

Why do you think John describes this time as “the last hour”?

How does John define an antichrist, and why is that definition important?

Why is false teaching often more dangerous when it comes from within the church?

What does it mean to “remain” in what you have heard from the beginning?

How does the Holy Spirit help believers discern truth from error?

Why do you think John interrupts his warning with a reminder of our identity as God’s children?

How does being called a child of God reshape how we see ourselves?

What connection does John make between future hope and present holiness?

How can we misunderstand John’s teaching about sin and fall into either fear or denial?

What’s the difference between struggling with sin and living in sin?

How do righteousness and love function as evidence of new life?

Where do you see the tension between identity and behavior most clearly in this passage?

How can this text encourage assurance rather than undermine it?

What might it look like to “practice righteousness” in everyday life?

What is one truth from this passage you need to hold onto this week?