

1 John – Winter/Spring 2026

D-Groups

For Wednesday, January 28th

1 John 3:11-5:21



Living Confidently as God's Children

As John moves toward the conclusion of his letter, his focus becomes increasingly pastoral and reassuring. He's warned the church about deception and he has clarified the marks of genuine faith, and now he returns again and again to what it *looks like* to live as children of God in a broken world. He doesn't really introduce new ideas, but instead he weaves together the major themes of the letter (*love, obedience, belief, and confidence*) into a vision the Christian life.

This section reminds us that being a disciple of Jesus is not merely about avoiding what is false or resisting sin, but is about living out God's love in tangible ways. John insists that faith expresses itself *relationally*. How we love one another, how we respond to guilt or to doubt, and how confidently we approach our Father all reveal that the gospel has taken root in our lives. For John, faith isn't abstract or theoretical. It shows itself in our actions, attitudes, and trust.

At the same time, John is fully aware of the struggles that believers have. He knows that we all wrestle with questions, confidence, unanswered prayer, lingering sin, and confusion. So he writes not to burden them, but to anchor them. Over and over, he returns to what believers *know*; this is what God has done, this is who Jesus is, and this is what it means to belong to Him. Confidence, not fear, is meant to characterize the Christian life.

3:11-18

John begins by returning to the central command: *love one another*. To illustrate the seriousness of this call, he contrasts the way of Christ with the way of Cain. Cain's hatred revealed a heart opposed to God, while love reveals a life born of God. In Christ, love is not defined by words, feelings, or intentions *alone*. John points to Jesus as the ultimate example: love is self-giving, sacrificial, and costly. It moves toward others in practical ways. To withhold compassion when we have the ability to help is to deny the very love we claim to possess. For John, love is not optional, it's family resemblance. Those who belong to God begin to look like Him.

3:19-24

John acknowledges a reality that most of us know very well: our hearts will often condemn us. Feelings of guilt, doubt, and inadequacy can undermine our confidence before God. But John offers a crucial reminder: *God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything*. Confidence does not rest on emotional stability or flawless obedience, but on *God's faithfulness*. As believers trust Jesus and walk in love, we can approach God with confidence, knowing we abide in Him and He in us. The presence of the Spirit serves as ongoing confirmation of this relationship. Obedience and belief work together. Not as requirements to earn God's favor, but as *evidence* that His life is already at work within us.

4:1-6

John again warns against deception and urges believers to test spiritual claims rather than accept them uncritically. Not every spiritual message originates from God, even when it uses religious language. Since John was facing early forms of Gnosticism (which denied the humanity of Jesus), the decisive test is Christological: what does a teaching say about Jesus? This is still a good test to use today. True teaching affirms the full humanity and the full divinity of Jesus. False teaching ultimately shifts trust *away* from Jesus, whether subtly or directly. We are called to be discerning believers, and as such, skepticism of teachings that minimize Jesus is faithfulness *to* Jesus. Thankfully, we are not left defenseless; the Spirit within us is greater than the spirit at work in the world.

5:1-21

John turns again to belief, emphasizing that faith in Jesus as the Son of God produces new life. This faith reshapes our desires and reorients our loyalties. Obedience isn't burdensome, but instead becomes a natural expression of love. John presents God's testimony about His Son as *decisive*. Eternal life is not something we work toward, it is something we *already possess* in Christ. It is all about Jesus. Everything. John explicitly states his purpose in this section: "*I write these things to you... so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.*" Confidence and not confusion is his goal. He encourages believers to pray *boldly*, care for one another, and remain vigilant against anything that competes with trust in the true God. The letter ends where it began: with a call to remain grounded in reality, truth, and life found in Jesus Christ.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

How does John define love in this section? How does that challenge common definitions?

Why do you think John contrasts love with the example of Cain?

What does it mean that "God is greater than our hearts"?

How do feelings of guilt or doubt affect our confidence before God?

Why is discernment necessary even within religious or spiritual environments?

How does John help believers avoid fear-based faith?

What does perfected love look like in everyday life?

How does faith "overcome the world" according to John?

Why is assurance such a central concern throughout this letter?

How does John balance confidence with humility?

What modern "idols" compete for our trust and allegiance?

How does this passage encourage long-term faithfulness?

Where do you most need reassurance in your walk with God right now?

How can this text shape the culture of your group or church?

What is one truth from 1 John you want to carry forward beyond this study?