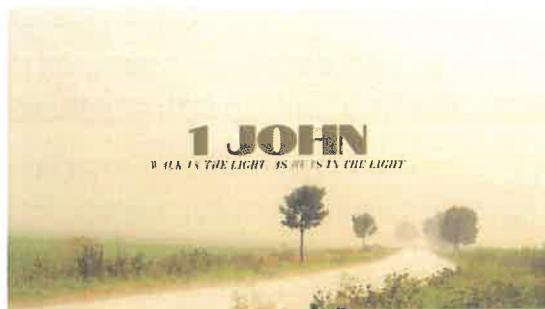


1 John – Winter/Spring 2026

D-Groups

For Wednesday, January 7th

1 John 1:1-2:2



Life, Light, and Fellowship

The letter of 1 John was written near the end of the first century by the apostle John. This is the same John who wrote the *Gospel of John* as well as the book of *Revelation*. All of the other apostles were dead and gone by the time this letter was written, but John remained—the last living intimate friend of Jesus. John probably wrote *1 John* around 90 AD, nearly sixty years after the crucifixion and possibly a quarter century since the deaths of Paul and Peter.

Unlike Paul's letters, *1 John* does not name a specific church or location. Instead, it appears that this is meant to be a circular letter to strengthen multiple churches facing confusion about the nature of Jesus and the meaning of genuine faith. It's likely that as the last remaining apostle, John considered *all* of the churches as his own responsibility. They were his to care for and to nourish. So, when these churches were being unsettled by false teachers who claimed special spiritual knowledge while minimizing sin and denying the full humanity of Jesus (*Some suggested that spiritual experience mattered more than moral obedience. Others implied that sin was irrelevant for those who were truly enlightened*), John took to writing. Sometimes we tend to look at John as kindly old saint preoccupied with love. And, he may have been kind to his own flock, but John had another face as well. Remember, this was one of the “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17) who offered to call down fire from heaven on some Samaritans who snubbed Jesus (Luke 9:51-56). We can since a sanctified version of this zeal in *1 John* (see 1:6; 2:4, 22; 3:9,18; 4:5-6, 20; 5:10). John is writing as a pastoral voice, one of *protection*, not to introduce new ideas, but to **re-anchor and ground believers in what they already know**. His goal is *assurance*—helping his flock to know what real faith looks like and how it expresses itself in everyday life. It's by focusing on what is real and true that we can sense what is false and dangerous.

John opens his letter by *grounding Christian faith in reality*. Christianity is **not** built on secret knowledge, emotional experiences, or abstract philosophy—it is rooted in a *real person*, Jesus Christ, who was physically present in history. John emphasizes that he and the other apostles *saw* Jesus, *heard* Jesus, and *touched* Jesus.

From that foundation, John explains that genuine fellowship with God requires walking in the light. This does not mean living a *sinless* life, but living an *honest* one. Walking in the light involves openness, confession, and trust in God's grace. When believers fail, they are not abandoned—Jesus Himself stands as their advocate before the Father.

1:1-4: When John was writing, heresy was becoming a major threat to the church. Asia Minor was a cultural melting pot. Greek conquerors had brought their language, philosophy, art, and religion from the west. Immigrants from Egypt, Persia, and Syria carried customs from the east and these mixed with whatever ancient ways were still lingering in Asia. Few people thought it necessary to hold any school of thought too tightly—there were many roads to truth, so just take what you like from each and hold on to that. This was *syncretism*; pluralism taken to the extremes. Into this mix, elements of Judaism and Christianity were being added, creating cults that began to hold to “secret knowledge” by which a person could be saved, and this “knowledge” was not available through study, but only through special revelation from a higher plane. These cults, later labeled Gnosticism, believed that matter is evil and spirit is good. Therefore, the world and the human body were also evil. Leading to the denial that Jesus was divine. He couldn't be incarnate *and* be divine.

So, John begins his letter by stressing the *physical reality* of Jesus. This directly counters any teaching that denied Jesus' humanity. Faith is anchored in **truth, not imagination**. Fellowship with God *flows out of* fellowship with Christ. In these verses John reminds us that Jesus is Divine and Jesus is also human.

1:5-10

God is light—morally pure, truthful, and holy. To walk in the light means to live *honestly* before God and others. John directly confronts two lies: *claiming to have fellowship with God while living in darkness* and *claiming to be without sin altogether*. True faith is marked by confession, not denial. Faith allows us to bring the shameful things into the light, to be exposed so that we can be cleansed. Christians do not need to carry the extra baggage of hidden shame *because...*

2:1-2

John reassures believers that **sin does not disqualify them from God's family**. Jesus is both our **Advocate** (the one who speaks on our behalf) and **Atoning sacrifice** (the one who dealt with sin *completely*). The Christian life is not about avoiding failure at all costs, *but about trusting Christ when failure happens*.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

Take time to read through all of John's letter. What attitudes and feelings toward his readers does he show?

How would you describe John's writing style? Does he reason logically from point to point? Is there an obvious outline or flow to his thoughts? How does he differ from Paul in this? From the way he writes, what do you think John is like?

John is especially fond of contrasts. One example is light versus darkness. What other contrasts do you see in his letter?

Why is John qualified to testify to what he proclaims? (compare 1 John 1:1 to John 20:1-9, 19-31)

John is confronting cults that mix Jesus into other philosophies and religions. What modern example do you see of people mixing other philosophies and religions in with Christianity?

Why does John place such emphasis on seeing and touching Jesus?

How could we go astray if we don't affirm both Jesus' humanity and His deity?

John interacted with Jesus and then spent his life proclaiming Jesus. How does an encounter with Jesus fuel missions? How does the truth of Jesus as the light of the world fuel missions?

How is Christian fellowship different than simple friendship?

How would you describe "walking in the light" to someone new to faith?

What's something you used to hide because you were afraid of how others might respond?

Why do you think confession is so central to Christian community?

How does Jesus being our advocate change the way we handle guilt?

What dangers come from denying sin—or from obsessing over it?

How has our culture come to take sin lightly? How do we do this in our own lives?

Why is it important to get our idea of sin from what God says rather than from our culture?