

## Background:

### Title:

The Greek titles of **First, Second, and Third John** are *Ioannou A, B, and G*. The G is gamma, the third letter of the Greek alphabet. These epistles can be found in Old Syriac, Muratorian Fragment, and the Codex Sinaiticus.

### Author:

The author of **First John** never identifies himself in the letter. His identity was so well known to his "children" he knew they would recognize him by what was written. Although the books are anonymous, the similarities of vocabulary, thought, phrasing and style between these letters and the Gospel of John seem to favor a common author. The opening verses of **1 John** indicate that the author was personally acquainted with Christ both before the cross and after the resurrection. John qualifies as this eyewitness (1:1-3; 5:6-10 with Jn 19:34-35). John's authorship was defended by Polycarp, Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Eusebius.

### Date:

If **1, 2, & 3 John** and the Gospel of John come from the same author, then **1, 2, & 3 John** would not have been written very long after John's gospel (See Gospel of John handout). The most probable time would be between A.D. 85 and A.D. 100.

### To Whom Written:

Irenaeus claimed that John lived out his life in Ephesus, serving as one of the elders of the church. John knew that false teachers had developed in the assemblies (2:18, 26; 3:7), and that many false prophets had gone out into the world (4:1). Their heresy centered around the person of Jesus denying that he was the Christ (2:22; 5:1) and that he had become flesh (4:2-3). They boasted of their knowledge (2:4; 4:8), their love (4:20), and their fellowship with God (1:6; 2:6,9). They claimed to have a unique spiritual experience (4:1ff). They stressed that obedience to the commandments of Christ was not a requirement (2:4). They attached no importance to doing righteousness (3:7, 10), to active love of the brethren (2:9, 11; 3:10ff; 4:20), or to helping the poor (3:17). They made concessions to the world instead of separating themselves from it (4:5; 2:15-17). They declared their own moral perfection (1:8-10). The "children" to whom this letter was addressed had already opposed the false leaders, but the dangerous influence had not yet been destroyed. They are encouraged to have confidence in their fellowship with God and to be assured that their salvation and eternal life in Christ are real.

**2 John** is addressed to an "elect lady and her children." Some see in this a personification of an existing congregation. But both the address and the salutation suggest a real woman (1, 5, 13). The same type of false teachers who threatened the believers in Ephesus were at work here.

**3 John** is written to an individual, Gaius. His name is common and it is impossible to identify him with any certainty. Gaius was converted by "the elder" (4) and lived in a congregation which was dominated by a dictatorial member, Diotrephes (9). John writes to commend and encourage Gaius concerning his attitude, and to recommend Demetrius to him.

# 1 2 3 JOHN

## Confident Christians

### Key Text: 1 Jn 5: 11-12

*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

### 2 Jn 9-10

*Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.*

### 3 Jn 11

*Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.*

### Theme:

- 1 John**—You can have confidence as a Christian so long as you live right, believe right, and love right.
- 2 John**—In spite of false teachers, it is vital to continue in the full doctrine of Christ.
- 3 John**—Gaius is encouraged to continue doing good.



**Book**  
Look  
at the

# Sermon Outline

## Back to the Basics

### Introduction:

How much is four times five? Six times eight? Twelve times twelve? How did you come up with the right answers for those equations? Do you carry around a plastic card containing all the answers to the most commonly asked mathematical questions?

Of course not. The answer popped *automatically* into your mind because you, like me, have learned your multiplication table by heart.

But what if I asked you "What is fourteen times thirty seven?" Now we find ourselves in uncertain territory because we are dealing with numbers that lie outside the boundaries of the table that we memorized. The answer does not come automatically to mind.

We can solve harder problems by breaking the equation down into smaller pieces. Four times seven; four times three; ten times seven; ten times three. Suddenly, we are back to dealing with questions to which we know the answers. And, marvel of marvel, when you add it all up you can solve the big question because you know the answers to basic formulae.

Religion is very much the same thing. There are some basic, fundamental issues that give us the answers to Christian living. There is a "Life Table" for Christians that constitute home ground for us - the source of our security and identity. We don't have to carry plastic cards with the answers to the most commonly asked religious questions. We can know most answers automatically if we learn the basics by heart.

Even when the questions become more difficult, when we find ourselves in uncertain territory because we have to work outside the boundaries of our basic understanding, we need to go back to the basics. We can often solve complicated religious questions by breaking them down into smaller pieces. We can start with questions we know the answers to - questions that call us back to basics and to those fundamental principles we learned from the beginning.

In 1 John, we have the multiplication table for Christian living. Confess Jesus as your Lord, keep God's commands, and love each other - those are the equations that John repeats over and over in this book.

### Outline:

#### I. The Importance of Right Believing

- A. Real Christianity is Christ - Read 1Jn 1:1-4
  - 1. The witness of John
  - 2. Christianity begins with Christ.
- B. Don't Settle for Less - Read 1Jn 2:18, 20-25
  - 1. Those who have gotten Jesus wrong.
  - 2. Those who have denied Jesus entirely.
  - 3. The real Christian remains in Christ.

**Transition:** Are we focused on Jesus? Is he the center of our universe, the source of our life, the hope for our future? Do we confess him as Lord and bow to his will for our lives? To be a Christian, you have to know Christ.

#### II. The Importance of Right Living - 1Jn 1:5-2:6

- A. Three Ways of Stating this Principle
  - 1. We must walk in the light (1:5, 7).
  - 2. We must obey Christ's commands (2:3).
  - 3. We must imitate Christ's example (2:6)
- B. The Great Hindrance to this Principle
  - 1. Sin is part of the human experience.
  - 2. Two kinds of sinners in the church

**Transition:** We must obey Christ, live as he did, walk in the light. And when we fail, we must be quick to acknowledge that we are sinners. To be a Christian, you have to keep Christ's commands and accept Christ's forgiveness.

#### III. The Importance of Right Loving - 1Jn 2:7-11

- A. The New Command
  - 1. Shades of John 13:34-35
  - 2. The command was "old" but is new again.
- B. Relationships are Fundamental.
  - 1. John talks about what Christian love entails.
  - 2. If you want to walk in the light, you must love your brother as Christ loves you

**Transition:** Religion is not a solitary business conducted between an individual and his God. It involves our relations with each other as much as our relations with God. To be a Christian, you have to love those who belong to Christ.

#### Conclusion:

When we know our "Life Table" we can find great assurance and peace in our walk with God. We can know we are Christians and are walking in the light. We can have confidence that Christ is honored in our lives, even when those lives are far from perfect.

## *Christ in the Epistles of John*

The Christ portrayed in the Epistles is in harmony with the teaching of the Gospel. So complete is the identification of the Father and the Son in the writings of John, it is difficult to see a clear distinction between them. Jesus' statement to Philip is indicative of the cohesiveness of the two identities, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."

The Prologue of John and 1 John 1:1-4 are parallel. Jesus is presented as the Word which was with God from the beginning. That Word became flesh and was seen, heard, and handled. What is distinctive of the Epistles is the emphatic condemnation of certain active champions of the gnostic heresy. The gnostics sought to detach the Word from the historic Jesus and were teaching another "way" to fellowship with God. To deny that Jesus has come in the flesh (4:2-3), or that He underwent actual death (1:7; 5:6), is to abandon the faith for a lie.

As succinctly as possible, John explains the basics about Jesus. God sent forth His only begotten Son (4:9), who became flesh (4:2; 2Jn 7) and died in order to save the world (3:16; 4:14; 2:2).

1. **He is our Advocate** (2:1). An advocate is one who is called to the side of another to render assistance. This is used of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels. Jesus is the one who pleads our case before the Father when we sin. The foundation of His advocacy is the blood He shed for our sins (1:7).
2. **He is the Propitiation for sin** (2:2; 4:10). He is the one who satisfied the demands of justice. The one who sins deserves to be punished and destroyed. Jesus, by His death, satisfied that demand on our behalf. He stood under judgment bearing the wrath against sin in our place; but not only for us, but for the entire world.
3. **He is the Destroyer of the works of Satan** (3:8; 5:18). The work of Satan in our lives is sin and the disruption of fellowship with God. Christ took away sin and removed its consequence from the believer (1:7; 3:5). And as long as the believer walks in Christ by loving the brethren, keeping the commandments, and living righteously Satan will be unable to touch him.
4. **He is the Giver of Gifts.** Christ Jesus has saved the believer (4:14) and has given the believer imperishable gifts.
  - a. Sonship (5:1)
  - b. The Holy Spirit (3:24; 4:13)
  - c. Fellowship (1:4; 4:15-16)
  - d. Eternal Life (5:12-13)

Therefore, when Christ comes to judge the world, the Christian will rejoice and stand confident before Him (2:28-3:3) and proclaim that "He is the only true God, and eternal life" (5:20).

## *Major Lessons*

1. 1 John builds around several "assurance passages"- passages where John makes certain Christians understand who they are (1:1-4; 2:12-14; 3:1-3; 3:19-24; 5:5-14).
2. 1 John uses the word "confidence" four times. Notice the confidence the Christian can have in these passages.
  - a. Confidence at His coming (2:28).
  - b. Confidence at judgment (3:21).
  - c. Confidence in the day of judgment (4:17).
  - d. Confidence in prayer (5:14).
3. John makes a strong case for our "knowing" we are in Christ. He uses that term some 40 times in 1 John. Following are a sample of those verses (2:3, 5, 29; 3:2, 5, 14, 16, 24; 5:2, 13).
4. Sins are continually forgiven through the blood and sacrifice of Christ (1:7; 2:1-2, 12; 3:5, 16; 4:9-10).
5. A fixed hope in Christ will cause a Christian to live a pure life (3:1-3).
6. The extension of fellowship and hospitality to teachers is limited to those who "abide in the teaching of Christ" and is denied those who do not (3Jn 9-11; 2Jn 9-11).
7. The "antichrist" is not one person, but anyone who would deny the deity of Jesus, or that Christ has come in the flesh (2:18-19, 22; 4:1-6; 2Jn 7).
8. There are two "anointings" mentioned in the epistles:
  - a. The "anointing" of the word which Christians have received (2:24-28).
  - b. The "anointing" of the Holy Spirit which Christians have also received (3:24; 4:13).

## Outline

### First John

#### Introduction (1:1-4)

- I. Confidence Comes from Walking in the Light (1:5-9)
- II. Confidence Comes from Having an Advocate (2:1-2)
- III. Confidence Comes from Keeping the Commandments (2:3-11)
- VI. Confidence Comes from Not Loving the World (2:12-17)
- V. Confidence Comes from Knowing the Truth (2:18-29)
- VI. Confidence Comes from Right Living (3:1-10)
- VII. Confidence Comes from Loving Your Brother (3:11-18)
- VIII. Confidence Comes from Keeping, Knowing, Living, and Loving (3:19-24)
- IX. Confidence Comes from Testing the Spirit (4:1-6)
- X. Confidence Comes from the Love of God (4:7-21)
- XI. Confidence Comes from Believing in Christ (5:1-12)
- XII. Confidence Results in Answered Prayer and Righteous Living (5:13-21)

### Second John

#### Salutation (1-3)

- I. The Elder's Commendation and Request (4-6)
- II. The Elder's Condemnation and Warning (7-11)
- III. The Elder's Coming and Greeting (12-13)

### Third John

#### Salutation (1)

- I. The Elder's Word Concerning Gaius (2-8)
- II. The Elder's Word Concerning Diotrephes (9-11)
- III. The Elder's Word Concerning Demetrius (12)

#### Conclusion (13-14)

B.F. Westcott set out the following list of notable parallels that exist between the first epistle and John's gospel:

1:2-3	with 3:11	3:16	with 10:15
1:4	with 16:24	3:22	with 8:29
2:11	with 12:35	3:23	with 13:34
2:14	with 5:38	4:6	with 8:47
3:5	with 8:46	4:16	with 6:69
3:8	with 8:14	5:9	with 5:32
3:13	with 15:18	5:20	with 17:3
3:14	with 5:24		

## Small Group Study

### Warm-up:

Share an experience in which you felt insecure. How did that make you react toward others (family, friends, enemies)?

### Look at the Book

1 John 5:6-21

1. What do you think is the main point John makes in these verses? What is he saying to the gnostics? What is he saying to the Christians?
2. How would you react if someone called God a liar?
  - a. Run for cover.
  - b. Think they were ignorant.
  - c. Sell them fire-proof clothing.
  - d. Hurt for them.
  - e. Try to teach them.
3. From the statement in verses 11-13, what do you think might have been one of the false teachings the Christians were hearing?
4. Which of the following statements most depicts the way you see yourself?
  - a. "I can know with complete certainty that I am saved and have eternal life."
  - b. "I am not sure that I have eternal life and am saved, although I guess I should be sure."
  - c. "I will not know that I am saved and have eternal life until the day of judgment."
5. How could knowing that we have eternal life affect the Christian's prayer? How does doubting affect prayer?
6. Why should we not pray for the brother we see committing the sin leading to death?

### Looking Closer:

1. How important is a life of righteousness to you? Do you think that some have emphasized the "grace" of God to the exclusion of the "judgment" of God?
2. Have you ever felt that you have committed the sin leading to death? What does it do to your Christian walk if you "think" you might have committed this sin?
3. What can cause a person to be lost? What can cause a person to be saved?
4. Do you believe that Christ can keep you from the evil one (Satan), so that he will not be able to touch you? How does Christ protect you? How does Satan "touch" you?

### Looking Around:

Select a person in the group. Let every member tell that person how they have seen confidence expressed in his/her life.