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**Adult
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**Study
Guide**

WRITER
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**Letters of
James and John**

Real Faith

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English Study Guide

Letters of James and John

Real Faith

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Introduction

Letters of James and John: Real Faith

The letters of James and John ask an interesting question: What is real Christian faith? In his letter, James answers this question with a lot of teaching. He is a leader in the Christian church and an excellent teacher. Reading his letter is like going to a class on Christian living. The lessons he teaches are not easy, but they are important. He tells us what is right and wrong in living a life of faith in Jesus Christ. After the class is over, then comes the test.

The letters from John give us the tests on true Christian faith. He encourages us all to show love and live our faith. John wants us to “know that we know” the truth of the Good News. He gives us a way to test what is said and done to know if it is truly Christian—to know if it is right in God’s eyes.

Acts 11:26 says that “the followers were first called Christians in Antioch.” They were called Christians because they were like Christ or were “little Christs.” Are Christians really like Christ? Is our Christianity real? The verses we are going to study in this series will ask us to think about what real faith is and what real Christians are like. Some people say they are Christians, but their lives do not show it. How can we know what the truth is about ourselves and others? Let us look to the letters of James and John to learn about real faith.

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Overview

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Word List

Unit 1

Lesson 1

doubter: a person who does not believe something or is not sure something is true
encouraged: to give help or hope to others
subject: information to be studied in a class or at school; a course of study

Lesson 2

events: special happenings or activities
skills: things you learn to do
staff: a group of people working together for pay
treated: to act in a way toward other people
volunteers: people who willingly give their time without pay

Lesson 3

compares: to find out how two things are alike or different
control: the power to make something happen or to not let something happen
correct: to fix; to make something right that was wrong; to change the wrong to right
destroy: to ruin, break, or put an end to something or someone; the opposite of “to build up”
discourage: to make someone feel bad or hopeless; the opposite of encourage

Lesson 4

humbly: doing something without pride, putting yourself lower than another
selfishness: thinking about and doing only for yourself with little or no thought or care for others
source: the starting point; a thing, place or person from which something comes

Lesson 5

(It) doesn't matter: a saying that whatever you are talking about is not important to you and does not make any difference in your life, the way you think, the way you act, etc.
warns: to tell of a danger; to tell to be careful

Lesson 6

community: a group of people who have the same interests and/or beliefs
patient: to be able to take pain, trouble, waiting, and being bored without complaining
privilege: a special right, favor, or help given to a person or group
protect: to keep someone from being hurt in some way
purpose: what a person plans to get or do, a goal, a reason, or use for something or for doing something

Word List

Unit 2

Lesson 7

guilt: a very bad feeling a person has after doing something wrong

match: to make the same, like, or equal to; not different from

promise: to say something will happen for sure or without a doubt

Lesson 8

hypocrisy: saying one thing and doing the opposite; behaving badly but pretending to be good

mature: fully grown; to be the best possible; not child-like

mystery: something that is not known or understood; a secret

popular: very well known and liked by many people

Lesson 9

confidence: a strong belief or trust in someone or something

confident: sure or certain, full of confidence

facing the future: a phrase about looking at the events in the future while not knowing what will happen

Lesson 10

accept: to believe to be true

accepted: took what was offered with favor

ignore: to look away and not do anything

member(s): a person or people who are a part of a group like a church or study group

memories: all that one remembers

rejected: would not take, not accepted

Lesson 11

divine: holy, from heaven, from God

fooled: to trick or make to believe something that is not true

relationship: to know someone well or to have a special closeness between two people; relationships can be good, bad, different, etc. (Example: *I have a good relationship with my doctor, and we can talk about anything.*)

Lesson 12

continue: to keep on doing or being; to not stop

plants: (verb) to put something where it can grow

proof: anything that can be used to show that something is true or correct

Trinity: a word used to talk about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as Three in One

Lesson 13

donate: to give to a group that helps others

invest: to give something and hope something good will grow from it; for example, when you pay for college for your children, you *invest* in their future

lonely: being very sad because one is alone

Memory Verses

Unit 1

Lesson 1

“If you do not have wisdom, ask God for it. He is always ready to give it to you and will never say you are wrong for asking.”

(James 1:5)

Lesson 2

“A faith that does not do things is a dead faith.” (James 2:17)

Lesson 3

“Giving thanks and speaking bad words come from the same mouth. ...This is not right!” (James 3:10)

Lesson 4

“Those who plant seeds of peace will gather what is right and good.” (James 3:18)

Lesson 5

“What you should say is, ‘If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.’ ” (James 4:15)

Lesson 6

“My Christian brothers, if any of you should be led away from the truth, let someone turn him back again.” (James 5:19)

Unit 2

Lesson 7

“Christ is the Word of Life. He was from the beginning.” (1 John 1:1a)

Lesson 8

“But whoever obeys His Word has the love of God made perfect in him. This is the way to know if you belong to Christ.” (1 John 2:5)

Lesson 9

“And now, my children, live by the help of Him. Then when He comes again, we will be glad to see Him and not be ashamed.” (1 John 2:28)

Lesson 10

“My children, let us not love with words or in talk only. Let us love by what we do and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)

Lesson 11

“We have come to know and believe the love God has for us. God is love.” (John 4:16a)

Lesson 12

“This is the word He spoke: God gave us life that lasts forever, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11)

Lesson 13

“Dear friend, you are doing a good work by being kind to the Christians, and for sure, to the strangers.” (3 John 5)



*Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English*

UNIT 1

The Letter of James: Real Faith Acts

Lesson 1
Christian Living 101
(James 1)

Lesson 2
If You're Really Christian
(James 2)

Lesson 3
Words that Show Faith
—or Not
(James 3:1-12)

Lesson 4
Want Peace? Start Here
(James 3:13 to 4:12)

Lesson 5
Living as if God
Doesn't Matter
(James 4:13 to 5:6)

Lesson 6
Living Faith
in Christian Community
(James 5:7-20)

THE LETTER OF JAMES

Real Faith Acts

The Book of James is a letter that James wrote. There is more than one man by that name who lived in that time. We know that Jesus had a special follower named James. He was the brother of John. That James was killed by King Herod early in church history (Acts 12:2).

But the man named James who wrote this letter was the brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19) and Jude (Jude 1:1). James was a leader of the Jerusalem church. Most importantly, James was a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (James 1:1).

We do not know where this letter was sent or exactly who received it. James tells us that he is writing to the Jewish people who are now Christians and living in many different places. It must have been taken to different villages and towns and read many times.

The teaching of James is clear. He tells us how real faith acts. Chapter 1 teaches many important lessons in Christian living. Chapters 2 and 3 teach about the importance of love, good words, and knowing God as our source for Christian living. Chapters 4 and 5 teach how God matters and what is needed to live in Christian community. Real faith is seen in how Christians love through their words and in their actions.



Adult Bible Study in
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Bible Text

James 1

Memory Verse

“If you do not have wisdom, ask God for it. He is always ready to give it to you and will never say you are wrong for asking.”
(James 1:5)

Word List

doubter: a person who does not believe something or is not sure something is true
encouraged: to give help or hope to others
subject: information to be studied in a class or at school; a course of study

Christian Living 101

Colleges and graduate schools choose class names that show which class has to be taken first, then second, and so on. This helps students understand which class is first for each **subject**. The class has a name, then a number, such as English 101. The first class of any subject is often called the basic class. It gives you a place to start. What you learn in that class helps you understand future classes in the same subject.

James, chapter 1, is like the first class on Christian living. He tells us the basics we need to live the Christian life. There are many things to learn, but this is a good place to start.

From Doubter to Believer (1:1)

James is a half-brother of Jesus. James is the first brother of Jesus listed in Mark 6:3. James was a doubter. Jesus was teaching and helping others. Mark 3:20-21, 31 tell about a time when Jesus' brothers came to take Him home because they thought He was crazy. Jesus did not go with them.

We don't hear about James again until after Jesus dies and comes alive again. First Corinthians 15:7 tells us that James saw Jesus after He was raised from the dead. Paul, the great missionary, wrote in Galatians 1-2 that James, the brother of Jesus, became a leader of the church. What a great change from doubter to believer and leader!

God has changed many people from doubters to believers. Paul was an enemy of Jesus before he became a believer. This is the first lesson of Christian Living 101. We must start by

Things to Think About

1. Are you living in your home country? If not, what kinds of trials have you had while living in this new country?
2. Are you a Christian? Have you had trials because you are a believer in Jesus? What kinds of trials?
3. How do the words of James give you courage and help in your trials?
4. How do people treat poor people differently than rich people?
5. Why is it easy to hear and learn a lesson but difficult to do it?
6. Which lessons are the most difficult for you to do?

believing in Jesus as the One Who died to pay for our sins and came alive from the dead to give us life that lasts forever.

Stay Strong (1:2-4)

James wrote to Jewish believers living in many different countries. They were not in their home country. They had troubles because they believed in Jesus. These are called tests. James **encouraged** them. He taught them that good can come from tests. The lesson is to learn to be happy and not give up.

In a class, tests prove that students have learned their lessons. Tests in Christian living prove that we have real faith. Tests can hurt us or make us stronger. Waiting makes us stronger.

When You Don't Know (1:5-8)

The next lesson is about wisdom. Wisdom comes from God. He will give it to us if we ask for it. We must believe that He loves us and will give us wisdom. We must not doubt God's Word. The picture here is of a wave in the sea. A believer who doubts is like that wave going back and forth and always changing. There is nothing good about that.

Wisdom is what we need. God knows this and wants to give it to us. Without wisdom, we will not know what to do. When we don't know, we must ask and believe.

Don't Depend on Riches (1:9-11)

Another important lesson is that we should only depend on God. Riches can be lost very quickly. Be happy with whatever God has given you. Riches do not make one person more important than another. Christians should treat all Christian brothers and sisters with love and respect.

Don't Do It (1:12-18)

Don't listen to the bad thoughts that come to your mind. Instead, learn to listen to God. Bad thoughts bring death. Do not listen to them or do what they say.

God gives life. God will never tell us to do wrong. He has given us our new lives. All that is good comes from Him. God's light shows us the right way to go.

The Classes Won't Help

Unless You Do the Work (1:19-27)

Speak little. Listen much. Get angry slowly. Stop unclean and wrong actions in your life. Receive and obey the Word of God. Keep your tongue from speaking bad things. Help others. God's lessons for Christian living were written in this class by James to help us know how to live.

Some college students think they can learn their lessons by going to class. They don't read the books or do the homework. What do they learn? They learn that they must do the work or they will fail the class.

In the same way, we must do more than take the Christian Living 101 class. We must do what it teaches. The class begins with believing in Jesus. Then we learn the important lesson of staying strong

through the tests. This is best done by asking for wisdom and help from God. Depend on God, not riches. Our Christian lives are not lived alone, so treat other Christians with love and respect. We can only live our best lives as we follow God's light. We must not follow the wrong thoughts that tempt us.

Obedying God's Word makes us happy. It makes us free. We are free to care for those who need the most help. We are free to do what is right and good.

These are the basics that get us started on the right path. As we continue to study this letter, remember the basics and do them. There are still more lessons to learn with God's help.

James 1

1 This letter is from James. I am a servant owned by God and the Lord Jesus Christ. I greet the twelve family groups of the Jewish nation living in many parts of the world.

2 My Christian brothers, you should be happy when you have all kinds of tests.

3 You know these prove your faith. It helps you not to give up.

4 Learn well how to wait so you will be strong and complete and in need of nothing.

5 If you do not have wisdom, ask God for it.

He is always ready to give it to you and will never say you are wrong for asking.

6 You must have faith as you ask Him. You must not doubt. Anyone who doubts is like a wave which is pushed around by the sea.

7 Such a man will get nothing from the Lord.

8 The man who has two ways of thinking changes in everything he does.

9 A Christian brother who has few riches of this world should be happy for what he has. He is great in the eyes of God.

10 But a rich man should be happy even if he loses everything. He is like a flower that will die.

11 The sun comes up with burning heat. The grass dries up and the flower falls off. It is no longer beautiful. The rich man will die also and all his riches will be gone.

12 The man who does not give up when tests come is happy. After the test is over, he will receive the crown of life. God has promised this to those who love Him.

13 When you are tempted to do wrong, do not say, "God is tempting me." God cannot be tempted. He will never tempt anyone.

14 A man is tempted to do wrong when he lets himself be led by what his bad thoughts tell him to do.

15 When he does what his bad thoughts tell him to do, he sins. When sin completes its work, it brings death.

16 My Christian brothers, do not be fooled about this.

17 Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God. He is the One Who made all light.

He does not change. No shadow is made by His turning.

18 He gave us our new lives through the truth of His Word only because He wanted to. We are the first children in His family.

19 My Christian brothers, you know everyone should listen much and speak little. He should be slow to become angry.

20 A man's anger does not allow him to be right with God.

21 Put out of your life all that is unclean and wrong. Receive with a gentle spirit the Word that was taught. It has the power to save your souls from the punishment of sin.

22 Obey the Word of God. If you hear only and do not act, you are only fooling yourself.

23 Anyone who hears the Word of God and does not obey is like a man looking at his face in a mirror.

24 After he sees himself and goes away, he forgets what he looks like.

25 But the one who keeps looking into God's perfect Law and does not forget it will do what it says and be happy as he does it. God's Word makes men free.

26 If a person thinks he is religious, but does not keep his tongue from speaking bad things, he is fooling himself. His religion is worth nothing.

27 Religion that is pure and good before God the Father is to help children who have no parents and to care for women whose husbands have died who have troubles. Pure religion is also to keep yourself clean from the sinful things of the world.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

James 2

Memory Verse

“A faith that does not do things is a dead faith.” (James 2:17)

Word List

events: special happenings or activities

skills: things you learn to do

staff: a group of people working together for pay

treated: to act in a way toward other people

volunteers: people who willingly give their time without pay

If You're Really Christian

City Missions is a part of a larger church. This group does the things that James teaches about here. The **staff** and **volunteers** help the poor with food and school supplies. Groups go to apartment areas to help the people who live there. They teach the English language and other **skills** the people need. Other groups go with police to talk to those whose loved one has just been killed. They encourage those who have lost hope. Some groups teach English to people who come from all over the world. Other groups teach Bible studies in Simple English and other languages. One group works with those who are deaf. Others go to prisons to help prisoners. **Events** like the Christmas store help families buy gifts at less than half price.

All these groups tell the poor and needy about Jesus. The people of City Missions are doing what James teaches.

The Sin of Honoring Some Above Others (2:1-7)

Christians learn not to think of a rich person as being more important than a poor person. They understand the basic lesson that God loves everyone. It's important to learn to love people the way God loves people. “A man looks at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Jesus loved the poor and blessed them saying, “Those of you who are poor are happy, because the holy nation of God is yours” (Luke 6:20). We should not honor any person more than another. James teaches us that if we do, it is a sin.

The example James uses is of two men dressed differently.

Things to Think About

1. If a famous couple showed up at church, how would you treat them? Would you treat them differently if you had heard them say bad things about Christ?
2. Do you know any people who do not want to come to church because they don't have much money? What would you say to them?
3. How can you show love to neighbors?
4. According to Jesus, who is your neighbor? (See Luke 10:25-37.)

Matthew 22:36-40

36 "Teacher, which one is the greatest of the Laws?"
 37 Jesus said to him, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
 38 This is the first and greatest of the Laws.
 39 The second is like it, 'You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.'
 40 All the Laws and the writings of the early preachers depend on these two most important Laws."

They both go into a church but one is **treated** with respect and the other is not. The rich man is told to sit in a place of honor. The poor man is told to stand or sit anywhere, with no care or concern for him. James uses Jesus' words to teach that this is wrong. Many poor people loved Christ and followed Him. Other poor people wanted to know more about Christ.

James asks them to think about how the rich treat Christians. How do they talk about Christ, the One we love? Why would they treat someone so well who hurts them and says bad things about Christ? It is an interesting question and a good lesson for all Christians.

The Royal Law (2:8-13)

If you are really a Christian, you will learn to love others the way you love yourself. You will treat others the way you want to be treated. The first is the Royal Law. The second is what we call the Golden Rule.

The word "royal" is used to talk about kings and queens and their families. Some countries have royal families. The Royal Law here refers to God's Law. God is the King above every king. This law has two parts. The first part is: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." James quotes the second part in James 2:8: "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself." This part of the law is found first in the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:18. Jesus says these are the two most important laws and puts them together in Matthew 22:36-40 (see side column). Together, they make up the Royal Law, the Law of our King.

The Golden Rule is “Do to others as you would want them do to you.” This rule is not found in the Bible, but comes from the second part of the Royal Law. If we love our neighbors, we will treat *them* the way *we* want to be treated. We will not treat some as if they are more important than others. We will show loving-kindness to all, and God will show loving-kindness to us.

Faith and Works (2:14-26)

If you are a true Christian, you will show you have faith by what you do. The Law that makes you free is the Royal Law, the Law of love. You are free to love your neighbor and to show your faith. You are free to do good to everyone. You are free to do good to those who hate you.

Jesus said, “But I tell you, love those who hate you. (Respect and give thanks for those who say bad things to you. Do good to those who hate you.) Pray for those who do bad things to you and who make it hard for you” (Matthew 5:44). This is not easy, but it is possible because we are loved by God. God can love others through us.

True faith changes us. We believe in Jesus and we begin to do good. We serve others. We treat people with kindness.

Some Christians think they can believe in God, then do nothing. The demons also believe the truth that there is a God, but does that prove they have faith? James tells us that we prove our faith by doing good things. He gives us the example of Abraham (Genesis 22). When he obeyed God, he proved he trusted God. James includes the story of Rahab, who proved her faith by what she did (Joshua 2). True faith is belief in action.

Faith in Christ makes you a Christian. True faith will show itself in what you do. “A faith that does not do things is a dead faith” (James 2:17).

James 2

1 My Christian brothers, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of shining-greatness. Since your trust is in Him, do not look on one person as more important than another.

2 What if a man comes into your church wearing a gold ring and good clothes? And at the same time a poor man comes wearing old clothes.

3 What if you show respect to the man in good clothes and say, “Come and sit in this good place”? But if you say to the poor man, “Stand up over there,” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,”

4 are you not thinking that one is more important than the other? This kind of thinking is sinful.

5 Listen, my dear Christian brothers, God has chosen those who are poor in the things of this world to be rich in faith. The holy nation of heaven is theirs. That is what God promised to those who love Him.

6 You have not shown respect to the poor man. Is it not the rich men who make it hard for you and take you to court?

7 They speak against the name of Christ. And it was Christ Who called you.

8 You do well when you obey the Holy Writings which say, "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself."

9 But if you look on one man as more important than another, you are sinning. And the Law says you are sinning.

10 If you obey all the Laws but one, you are as guilty as the one who has broken them all.

11 The One Who said, "You must not do any sex sins," also said, "You must not kill another person." If you do no sex sins but kill someone, you are guilty of breaking the Law.

12 Keep on talking and acting as people who will be told they are guilty or not by the Law that makes men free.

13 Anyone who shows no loving-kindness will have no loving-kindness shown to him when he is told he is guilty. But if you show loving-kindness, God will show loving-kindness to you when you are told you are guilty.

14 My Christian brothers, what good does it do if you say you have faith but do not do things that prove you have faith? Can that kind of faith save you from the punishment of sin?

15 What if a Christian does not have clothes or food?

16 And one of you says to him, "Goodbye, keep yourself warm and eat well." But if you do not give him what he needs, how does that help him?

17 A faith that does not do things is a dead faith.

18 Someone may say, "You have faith, and I do things. Prove to me you have faith when you are doing nothing. I will prove to you I have faith by doing things."

19 You believe there is one God. That is good! But even the demons believe that, and because they do, they shake.

20 You foolish man! Do I have to prove to you that faith without doing things is of no use?

21 Was not our early father Abraham right with God by what he did? He obeyed God and put his son Isaac on the altar to die.

22 You see his faith working by what he did and his faith was made perfect by what he did.

23 It happened as the Holy Writings said it would happen. They say, "Abraham put his trust in God and he became right with God." He was called the friend of God.

24 A man becomes right with God by what he does and not by faith only.

25 The same was true with Rahab, the woman who sold the use of her body. She became right with God by what she did in helping the men who had been sent to look through the country and sent them away by another road.

26 The body is dead when there is no spirit in it. It is the same with faith. Faith is dead when nothing is done.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

James 3:1-12

Memory Verse

“Giving thanks and speaking bad words come from the same mouth. ...This is not right!” (James 3:10)

Word List

compares: to find out how two things are alike or different

control: the power to make something happen or to not let something happen
correct: to fix; to make something right that was wrong; to change the wrong to right

destroy: to ruin, break, or put an end to something or someone; the opposite of “to build up”

discourage: to make someone feel bad or hopeless; the opposite of encourage

Words That Show Faith —or Not

Words are important! But some people think words are not very important at all.

I talked to a young man in his 20s who became a Christian at a young age. He tried to make me agree with him that saying bad words does not matter if they do not mean anything. He told me to read something on the Internet that agreed with this idea. The man who wrote it was also young. He said these bad words were simply sounds with no meaning. They were only said to tell anyone who is listening that you are angry or upset.

Of course, I did not agree with the writer or the young man. I told him it was wrong to say bad words. If the words don't have a meaning, why say them at all?

But the bigger question is this: What do words tell others about the speaker? James has a word for us.

The Danger of Teaching (3:1-2)

James again uses the family word “brothers” when talking to those who read this letter. James says “Christian brothers” 13 times in this short letter. But he is not just talking to men. In today's English, we would say “brothers and sisters.” This was a kind way to talk to his readers. These are encouraging words to people in the church and all Christians who read the letter. These words encourage us now, almost 2,000 years after he wrote them.

Words are important for teaching. When talking about words, James starts with teachers. My son had a teacher in fourth

Things to Think About

1. Think about words that were said to you when you were young and how they made you the person you are today. Who said them? What did these words do to you?
2. Is the *way* you say something as important as *what* you say? Why or why not?
3. Are words we say more or less powerful than words we write? How?
4. Who should be a teacher? Why are a teacher's words even more powerful?
5. In what ways do your words show your faith?

grade who really encouraged him in his writing. She would often ask him to read the story he had written to the class. Soon the students in the class were asking to hear what he had written. My son is now in college. He is studying to be a writer. His teacher's encouragement made a big difference in his life. So, what is so dangerous about teaching?

Teachers in the church must be very careful about the words they use. The students (young or old) listen to them and believe what they say about God's Word and life. It is very important that we teach only what is true and right. If we make a mistake, we need to **correct** it quickly. James is talking about himself and other teachers when he says "we all make many mistakes" (v. 2). No teacher is perfect. This may be why he tells us that not many should become teachers.

The Power of the Tongue (3:3-8)

Words are powerful. The lessons continue. James had talked about the tongue in his "Christianity 101" class in the first chapter (1:26). He continues here by telling how much power the tongue has. He **compares** this small part of the body to three small things: A bit for a horse, a rudder for a ship, and a very small fire. The first two have the power to show which way to go. The third one has the power to **destroy**.

James says our tongues are the same. With our words and our teachings, we can help others find the right way to go or lead them in the wrong way. With our words, we can also hurt people very badly or even destroy their lives. The power of the tongue is too strong for people to **control** alone.

Both Sides of the Mouth (3:9-12)

There is a saying: *He is talking out of both sides of his mouth.* This means that he is saying one thing and then saying the opposite. Here is an example: Mr. Smith voted for a new park to be built using the city's money. But once construction began, he spoke out against the city leaders for using the city's money to build the park. He is "talking out of both sides of his mouth." He is not being truthful in all things.

James says this is not right. Jesus also said: "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man will speak good things because of the good in him. A bad man will speak bad things because of the sin in him" (Matthew 12:34-35).

Your words tell about you. James compares words to water in a well. Can the same well have both good and bad water? He also compares words to a tree and a vine. They both grow their own kind of fruit. Jesus was talking about words when He said, "A good tree gives good fruit. A bad tree gives bad fruit. A tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33). This means people will know what kind of person you are by your words and actions.

Words can hurt people. Some children think they are nothing because of their parents' words. Some husbands and wives hurt each other with words. I have trouble writing the number 5 because when I was learning, a teacher told me I would never be able to write it. Every time I write 5, those words come back to me, and I wonder if anyone can read it. Words can **discourage** people.

But words can help people, too. Many stories tell of people who did great things because someone encouraged them with words. My mother always told me how smart I was. She told me I should go to college. Her words helped me believe I could do well in college. I had very little money, but God gave me what I needed to go to college. I had a good feeling about college because my mother encouraged me—with words.

Everyone needs to choose their words carefully. Our words show what is in our hearts. This is a difficult but important lesson to learn. We cannot do it perfectly. We cannot do it alone. So, what *can* we do?

We can start by knowing how

important and powerful words are. We can agree with James—and more importantly, with Jesus—that a Christian is not to praise God, yet speak bad words about the people that God loves. We can ask God to give us wisdom.

James will teach us more about asking in our next lesson.

James 3:1-12

1 My Christian brothers, not many of you should become teachers. If we do wrong, it will be held against us more than other people who are not teachers.

2 We all make many mistakes. If anyone does not make a mistake with his tongue by saying the wrong things, he is a perfect man. It shows he is able to make his body do what he wants it to do.

3 We make a horse go wherever we want it to go by a small bit in its mouth. We turn its whole body by this.

4 Sailing ships are driven by strong winds. But a small rudder turns a large ship whatever way the man at the wheel wants the ship to go.

5 The tongue is also a small part of the body, but it can speak big things. See how a

very small fire can set many trees on fire.

6 The tongue is a fire. It is full of wrong. It poisons the whole body. The tongue sets our whole lives on fire with a fire that comes from hell.

7 Men can make all kinds of animals and birds and fish and snakes do what they want them to do.

8 But no man can make his tongue say what he wants it to say. It is sinful and does not rest. It is full of poison that kills.

9 With our tongue we give thanks to our Father in heaven. And with our tongue we speak bad words against men who are made like God.

10 Giving thanks and speaking bad words come from the same mouth. My Christian brothers, this is not right!

11 Does a well of water give good water and bad water from the same place?

12 Can a fig tree give olives or can a grapevine give figs? A well does not give both good water and bad water.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

James 3:13 to 4:12

Memory Verse

“Those who plant seeds of peace will gather what is right and good.” (James 3:18)

Word List

humbly: doing something without pride, putting yourself lower than another

selfishness: thinking about and doing only for yourself with little or no thought or care for others

source: the starting point; a thing, place or person from which something comes

Want Peace? Start Here

My family and I have been to the **source** of the Mississippi River. It is amazing to see where such a big and powerful river begins. We have pictures that show this small, slow-running creek. Many other rivers run into the Mississippi on its way south. This is what makes it so big and powerful. When we see it down in the southern part of the United States, we smile because we remember the small quiet place where it begins. We remember how we can walk across it and only get our feet wet.

Finding the source of something can be exciting and interesting. Knowing the source of feelings or events in our lives can be important to understanding who we are. Knowing the source of wisdom, the source of fighting, and the source of peace is helpful in learning the lessons that James is teaching.

The Source of Wisdom (3:13-18)

James begins to explain the answers to how we can control our tongues and who can be a teacher. He is looking for those who are wise, gentle, and have understanding. We can know these people by how they live their lives. We can know them by what they do not do. They are not jealous. They do not fight to get many things. They are not proud. They do not lie by teaching things that are not true.

God is not the source of jealousy, fighting, pride, or lying. These come from the world, people without Christ, and the devil. Trouble and wrong-doing of all kinds happen because of these.

God is the source of true wisdom. This wisdom is pure.

**Things to
Think About**

1. What is wisdom?
2. What kind of selfishness have you seen? How did it hurt others?
3. What kind of loving actions have you seen? How did it help others?
4. What kind of wisdom leads to peace? What kind of “wisdom” leads to fighting?
5. How can each person have peace? How can the church have peace?

This wisdom gives peace. The person who has this wisdom from God is gentle. This person obeys. This person is full of love and kindness. This person does good. This person is sure and real.

This teacher teaches the truth. The truth taught well is like planting seeds of peace. Those seeds grow. They grow into doing right and good. A teacher or anyone who wants true wisdom will find it in God. This is the answer to who our teachers should be.

The next question to answer is how to find God’s wisdom. James has another source to find first.

The Source of Fighting (4:1-6)

Now it is time to find the source of some of the bad actions. There is fighting in the church. Where does that come from? The church in many ways is like a family. Sometimes brothers and sisters fight. I have heard of some big troubles and fights between brothers and sisters. My children did not fight much. I have often asked myself why it happened so much in some families and not in others. James has the answer.

The answer is **selfishness** and pride. People want things for themselves. They do all kinds of bad things and think they are wise. They fight for what they want. They don’t care about what others want. Their pride causes them to not love others as much as they love themselves. They are too proud to ask for what they want. If they do ask, they ask with selfish pride and get nothing.

James tells us how to ask. Remember he taught that we should ask for wisdom (1:5-8)? Here, the lesson is that we must look at our reasons for asking for something. If we only want it for selfish reasons, we know that God will not give it to us. We

also need to look at how we feel about the sinful things of the world. Do we love those things or do we love God? We must choose. We cannot love both.

The Holy Spirit helps us to be faithful to God. This is the power we need to choose well. This is the power we need to control our tongues. This is the power we need to ask for and get from the One True God Who loves to give us good gifts (Matthew 7:11). As we **humbly** ask, God will give us His loving-favor and wisdom.

The Source of Peace (4:7-12)

As we humbly give ourselves to God, we will have the power to stand against the devil. As we go closer to God, He will come closer to us. When we are sorry, sad and humble about our sin, He will help us. This is the source of peace for each person, to be clean and close to our Father, God.

The source of peace for Christians as a church is to follow God's Law of Love, the Royal Law (James 2:8). The family of God must not use the power of words against each other. Love must win over words that are against anyone in God's family. We must not think we know more about right and wrong than God. We need

to think of our church family as a team. When one wins, we all win. When one loses, we all lose. When one hurts, we all hurt. When one is happy, we can all be happy. When you are encouraging your brother or sister, you will not be saying bad things about them. When you are praying for them in their time of trouble, you will not be talking against them. Being a loving family, a team, will bring peace to the church.

This was the answer for my family. We saw ourselves as a team. When one had a sports game, we all went to watch. When one had a concert, we all went to hear. We encouraged each other. We prayed for each other. When I talked to other moms who had so much trouble between their children, it seemed strange to me. Now I think the trouble was like the trouble James talks about—selfishness and pride. If each Christian will turn away from selfishness and pride and humbly turn to God and show love to others, there will be peace.

God is the source of wisdom. God is the source of peace. God is the source of all good things. God is our source. God is love (1 John 4:8,16).

James 3:13-18

3:13 Who among you is wise and understands?

Let that one show from a good life by the things he does that he is wise and gentle.

14 If you have jealousy in your heart and fight to have many things, do not be proud of it. Do not lie against the truth.

15 This is not the kind of wisdom that comes from God. But this wisdom comes from the world and from that which is not Christian and from the devil.

16 Wherever you find jealousy and fighting, there will be trouble and every other kind of wrong-doing.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. Then it gives peace. It is gentle and willing to obey. It is full of loving-kindness and of doing good. It has no doubts and does not pretend to be something it is not.

18 Those who plant seeds of peace will gather what is right and good.

James 4

4:1 What starts wars and fights among you? Is it not because you want many things and are fighting to have them?

2 You want something you do not have, so you kill. You want something but cannot get it, so you fight for it. You do not get things because you do not ask for them.

3 Or if you do ask, you do not receive because your reasons for asking are wrong. You want these things only to please yourselves.

4 You are as wives and husbands who are not faithful in marriage and do sex sins. Do you not know that to love the sinful things of the world

and to be a friend to them is to be against God? Yes, I say it again, if you are a friend of the world, you are against God.

5 Do you think the Holy Writings mean nothing when they said, “The Holy Spirit Whom God has given to live in us has a strong desire for us to be faithful to Him”?

6 But He gives us more loving-favor. For the Holy Writings say, “God works against the proud but gives loving-favor to those who have no pride.” (Proverbs 3:34)

7 So give yourselves to God. Stand against the devil and he will run away from you.

8 Come close to God and He will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Clean up your hearts, you who want to follow the sinful ways of the world and God at the same time.

9 Be sorry for your sins and cry because of them. Be sad and do not laugh. Let your joy be turned to sorrow.

10 Let yourself be brought low before the Lord. Then He will lift you up and help you.

11 Christian brothers, do not talk against anyone or speak bad things about each other. If a person says bad things about his brother, he is speaking against him. And he will be speaking against God’s Law. If you say the Law is wrong, and do not obey it, you are saying you are better than the Law.

12 Only God can say what is right or wrong. He made the Law. He can save or put to death. How can we say if our brother is right or wrong?



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

James 4:13 to 5:6

Memory Verse

“What you should say is, ‘If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.’”

(James 4:15)

Word List

(It) doesn't matter:

a saying that whatever you are talking about is not important to you and does not make any difference in your life, the way you think, the way you act, etc.

warns: to tell of a danger; to tell to be careful

Living as if God Doesn't Matter

I have done missionary work in a country in Asia. I talked with many college students there who are not Christians. They have trouble believing God is real. They know about Christians and have met many that they like. One of them asked me an interesting question. She wanted to know if she could live like a Christian without believing in God. She was living as if God doesn't matter. She wanted to continue to live that way, but do good works, too. She wanted to act like a good person without the power of God in her life.

Is that possible? What does living as if God doesn't matter look like? James has the answers.

Making Plans as if God Doesn't Matter (4:13-14)

It is important to make plans. We have to plan at work. We have to plan for vacations. We have to plan how to spend our money. Jesus taught how important it is to make plans.

Jesus talked about planning your life in Luke 6:47-49. He told His followers a story about building a house. The house is like a life. He said the house must be built on rock, not on sand, or when there is bad weather, it will fall. This means we must plan how to build our life so it is strong in troubles. Jesus is the rock that is strong enough to build our lives on.

Luke 14:28-30 is another place where Jesus talks about making a plan. This time He is teaching about counting the cost. Again He talks about building a house. He says it is important to

Things to Think About

1. Do you make plans and then later ask God to bless them? How will you make plans in the future?
2. How often do you think about God and what He wants? How does that make a difference in your life?
3. Do you buy things just to have them? How could you use what you have to serve God?
4. True story: Ten families from Korea were asked to work without pay because their boss said the company had no money. But the truth was that he was keeping all the money for himself. He said he was a Christian, then he ran away. True Christians helped those families, and they became Christians because of the love they saw in the actions of the true Christians. How would you feel about someone who treats others this way?

know how much money you will have to spend to build the house you want. This story helped His followers think about their lives. They needed to count up what it was going to cost for them to follow Jesus. We should do the same. Some followers have had to pay a high price, even their lives.

Making plans is good, but we need to think and pray about what plan God would want us to make. What would Jesus want me to do? Sometimes we make a plan without talking to God. Then we ask God to bless the plan when it may not be something He wants for us. God wants what is best for us. He knows what is best for us. We don't know what is best for us. We need to ask God first and then follow His plan.

James **warns** Christians to be careful not to make plans without talking to God first. The plan in verse 13 seems right and good for those who work. But there are some things missing. The plans did not show that the person was thinking about God. This person was only thinking about making money. There was no plan for helping others or serving God. There was no thought given to what God would have him/her to do. This is what it looks like to make a plan as if God doesn't matter.

James gives a better way. We are to always remember that we do not know what will happen tomorrow. We are to always remember that our lives are in God's hands. Like a fog that is here and gone, we may not be here tomorrow. When we make a plan, we need to know that we will do it only if God wants us to do it. We should make our plans as if God matters, because He does.

Thinking as if

God Doesn't Matter (4:15-17)

My college-age friend in Asia thought that God didn't matter. I hope someday she will love God and serve Him. I pray for her and her friends to know the truth of God's love. When they do, their way of thinking will change.

James says we should have a new way of thinking. We should want to do only what God wants us to do. We don't have to say, "If God wants me to do this, I will" at every decision, but we need to think about it. We need to learn what God wants for us and then do it. We should think about what God wants because God matters.

It's a sin to go through life thinking and acting as if you or another person were in control. It is pride and selfishness that says that God does not matter. James helps us think a new way. Sin is not only what you think, say, or do. Sin is also not doing the right things that you know God wants you to do.

Keeping Things

as if God Doesn't Matter (5:1-3)

The Bible says a lot about riches. Riches are not bad. But many bad things

can happen because of the love of riches. Paul said, "The love of money is the beginning of all kinds of sin" (1 Timothy 6:10a). Riches and things do not last.

James warns that saving riches for ourselves can cause much trouble. It shows what we think is important. It also shows what is not important to us if we do not share and help others. We see again that selfish pride is the problem. We must not be selfish with the things that God has given us. God sees and knows.

Treating Others

as if God Doesn't Matter (5:4-6)

The lesson that James is teaching here started in Christianity 101. The Royal Law must be used for our money and all our things, too. How we treat others will show our faith to them—or not. God hears the cries of those who are not treated right. If we see people the way God sees them, we will treat them right. We will show God's love by doing the right thing.

Real faith in action is living every minute as if God matters. Being a follower of Jesus means that how we plan, how we think, what we do, what we have, what we share, and how we treat others matters to

God. Think about your life. How will you live differently knowing that God matters?

James 4:13-17

13 Listen! You who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this city and stay a year and make money.”

14 You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? It is like fog. You see it and soon it is gone.

15 What you should say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.”

16 But instead you are proud. You talk loud and big about yourselves. All such pride is sin.

17 If you know what is right to do but you do not do it, you sin.

James 5:1-6

5:1 Listen, you rich men! Cry about the troubles that will come to you.

2 Your riches are worth nothing. Your fine clothes are full of moth holes.

3 Your gold and silver have rusted. Their rust will speak against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have saved riches for yourselves for the last days.

4 See! The men working in your fields are crying against you because you have kept back part of their pay. Their cries have been heard by the Lord Who hears His people.

5 You have had everything while you lived on the earth and have enjoyed its fun. You have made your hearts fat and are ready to be killed as an animal is killed.

6 You have killed men who are right with God who were not making it hard for you.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

James 5:7-20

Memory Verse

“My Christian brothers, if any of you should be led away from the truth, let someone turn him back again.”
(James 5:19)

Word List

community: a group of people who have the same interests and/or beliefs

patient: to be able to take pain, trouble, waiting, and being bored without complaining

privilege: a special right, favor, or help given to a person or group

protect: to keep someone from being hurt in some way

purpose: what a person plans to get or do, a goal, a reason, or use for something or for doing something

Living Faith in Christian Community

The Apostle Paul compared the Christian **community** to a body with many parts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Each part is different, and each part does something different. All the parts are needed to make the body work. When one part is happy, the whole body is happy. When one part suffers, everyone suffers. This is a great way to understand community. Christians working together as one body—the body of Christ.

James teaches four things about the Christian community. It has a living faith by learning to be **patient**. It has a living faith by being a place of honor. It has an excellent prayer life. Finally, the Christian community **protects** one another.

A Patient Community (5:7-11)

We live in a world that is not patient. We have microwaves to cook food quickly. We complain about wasting time in traffic. Learning to be patient is one of the good things about living with faith in a Christian community. James gives four ways we can learn and grow in being patient.

First, being patient within a community of living faith does not mean waiting and doing nothing. It is having hope that something great is coming and living like you know it.

James gives two examples: Jesus’ return and a farmer waiting for rain. When Jesus left this earth after His death and being raised back to life, the angels told His followers that He would come back again (see Acts 1:9-11). James compares

**Things to
Think About**

1. Are you a part of a Christian community? Why or why not?
2. What makes you not patient? Do you know a Christian community that is patient? What makes you think so?
3. Does your *yes* always mean *yes*? Are you honest with people in your life? What do you try to hide from others, from God, or even from yourself?
4. Do you pray? Does anyone pray with you? Do you want to have a better prayer life? What could you do to make it better?
5. Have you seen a Christian community that cares enough to protect each other? What could you do to help and protect others who need Jesus?

waiting for Jesus to a farmer waiting for rain. For both, there is the hope of something great coming. Christians have to believe and trust God. We learn to be patient as we wait with **purpose**.

We are told to wait and be strong in our hearts. Living in faith means being strong against this world, which is weak and full of sin. We know for sure that Jesus is coming. This fact encourages us in our faith and helps us be strong. Together in Christian community, we can encourage each other to stay strong. Over time, our strong faith shows we are patient.

James tells us to be patient with each other by not complaining. Often, it is most difficult to be patient with our family and close friends. We need to learn to be patient with everyone in our Christian community. James warns that our Judge (Jesus) is very close, and He told us to love each other. Be kind to one another and show you are patient by your love.

Finally, suffering is also a part of being patient. The early preachers in the Old Testament suffered and waited on God. Daniel suffered while living in an enemy nation (Daniel 6). Jeremiah suffered because the people of his day hated the message God gave him (Jeremiah 27, 37-38). There are many more. Having faith does not mean we will not have problems in this world. Jesus said, “In the world you will have much trouble. But take hope! I have power over the world!” (John 16:33).

Having faith gives us hope in suffering. We show we are patient by the way we suffer and do not give up hope.

A Community of Honor (5:12)

A community of honor must have trust. People must be

honest with each other. Jesus taught this in Matthew 5:33-37. Christians must say what they mean and mean what they say. Do not swear that you are telling the truth because people should already know they can trust your words. A Christian community should be a place where we all can trust each other.

A Community of Prayer (5:13-18)

Christians must pray. The church is a community of prayer. We are to pray for one another, whether suffering and sick or happy and praising God. Prayer is a great **privilege**. Praying for each other by name is encouraging. We can tell our sins, and this makes us closer to each other. Honesty helps to heal us in many ways.

Other times, healing can come through prayer. James teaches the new Christians to put a little oil on a sick friend and pray. Even today, the Christian community may gather around a sick person and pray as an act of faith and love.

A Community that Protects (5:19-20)

Telling the truth is important. If someone in our family of faith goes away from the truth, we need to turn them back to the truth. It is our privilege to be God's tool

to help them. In this way, we can protect them from going farther away from God.

God saves sinners. The Christian community can be God's tool to show the truth to those who are far away from God. This could be one who has never believed or one who believes and has gone away and is living in sin. It is part of our work as a Christian community to help these people.

We can tell them about Jesus and show them the way to go. We can invite them to church or to a home Bible study. We can pray for them. In this way, we can turn them towards our Savior, Jesus Christ. He will save them from death that comes from sin here on earth. Jesus will save those who believe in Him from eternal death and hell. It is the privilege of the Christian community to care enough about others to help them in this way. There is so much joy in showing the love of God to others, seeing the change in their life, and welcoming them into the Christian community!

"Celebrate Freedom" is a big Christian community event that happens near the 4th of July in Texas. Thousands of people sit out in the summer heat, listening

to Christian singers and being together as a community. It is wonderful to be with our Christian brothers and sisters. People are patient with each other. Everyone acts with honor. If you look around, you can see groups praying. Everyone feels very protected, even in such a large group. It feels like family.

That is what the Christian community should feel like—family. There is nothing better than having a living faith within the Christian community on this side of heaven!

James 5:7-20

7 Christian brothers, be willing to wait for the Lord to come again. Learn from the farmer. He waits for the good fruit from the earth until the early and late rains come.

8 You must be willing to wait also. Be strong in your hearts because the Lord is coming again soon.

9 Do not complain about each other, Christian brothers. Then you will not be judged. See! The Judge is standing at the door.

10 See how the early preachers spoke for the Lord by their suffering and by being willing to wait.

11 We think of those who stayed true to Him as happy even though they suffered. You have heard how long Job waited. You have seen what the Lord did for him in the end. The Lord

is full of loving-kindness and pity.

12 My Christian brothers, do not swear. Do not use heaven or earth or anything else to swear by. If you mean yes, say yes. If you mean no, say no. You will be guilty for saying anything more.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone happy? He should sing songs of thanks to God.

14 Is anyone among you sick? He should send for the church leaders and they should pray for him. They should pour oil on him in the name of the Lord.

15 The prayer given in faith will heal the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

16 Tell your sins to each other. And pray for each other so you may be healed. The prayer from the heart of a man right with God has much power.

17 Elijah was a man as we are. He prayed that it might not rain. It did not rain on the earth for three and one-half years.

18 Then he prayed again that it would rain. It rained much and the fields of the earth gave fruit.

19 My Christian brothers, if any of you should be led away from the truth, let someone turn him back again.

20 That person should know that if he turns a sinner from the wrong way, he will save the sinner's soul from death and many sins will be forgiven.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

UNIT 2

The Letters of John: Tests of Real Christianity

Lesson 7

Centering Life on
the Word of Life
(1 John 1:1 to 2:2)

Lesson 8

Knowing We Know Christ
(1 John 2:3-27)

Lesson 9

Facing the Future
with Confidence
(1 John 2:28 to 3:10)

Lesson 10

Loving Well
(1 John 3:11-18;
4:7-12, 19-21)

Lesson 11

Believing in God's
Divine-Human Son
(1 John 4:1-6, 13-16a)

Lesson 12

Living Well by
Love and Faith
(1 John 5)

Lesson 13

Giving Well and Wisely
to God's Work
(2 John 1-2, 7-11;
3 John 1-11)

THE LETTERS OF JOHN

Tests of Real Christianity

John was a *disciple*—a special follower of Jesus. He was one of the 12 disciples that were close to Jesus. They walked from place to place for three years doing God's work. Jesus was teaching, healing, and helping people get to know the one true God. John was the son of Zebedee. His brother, James, was also one of the 12 disciples. (This is not the same James we just studied who wrote the Letter of James.)

Jesus called John and his brother, James, “the Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). John was the youngest of Jesus' disciples. Jesus asked John to take care of His mother, Mary, when He was dying on the cross. John wrote five books of the Bible:

- The Gospel of John—about the life of Jesus
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John—letters to Christians
- Revelation—about the events of the future.

In the Gospel of John, he called himself the *disciple* (or *follower*) *whom Jesus loved* (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20). John is known as the disciple of love, because love, as you will see, is a subject he writes of often. The subjects of love, faith, and truth are very important in John's letters.

Through John's words, we will learn about centering our lives on, knowing, and obeying Christ. We will learn how to face the future with confidence. We will test how real our faith is. Then we will want to love, live, and give well, believing and having faith in God's Divine-Human Son.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

1 John 1:1 to 2:2

Memory Verse

“Christ is the Word of Life. He was from the beginning.” (1 John 1:1a)

Word List

guilt: a very bad feeling a person has after doing something wrong

match: to make the same, like, or equal to; not different from

promise: to say something will happen for sure or without a doubt

Centering Life on the Word of Life

What is the most important thing in your life? That thing (person, idea, goal, etc.) is what your life is centered on. Most people today put themselves in the center of their life. The most important thing is to make themselves happy. Some people put their children or their family or their pets at the center of their life. Some people center their life on one goal, like winning a gold medal at the Olympics or accomplishing a business goal. As long as they have not reached that goal, they can continue to try. But after they complete that goal, they don't know what to do with their life afterwards. They have centered themselves on one thing and one thing only.

John tells us about the perfect center for our lives. In his first letter to his dear Christian family, John helped them know what is most important in life. Centering life on the Word of Life meant centering life on Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word of Life.

Real Life with Christ (1:1-4)

John knew Jesus. He had been with Jesus for about three years. Jesus was John's teacher, and He was also John's friend. John saw, heard, and touched Jesus Christ. John lived real life with Jesus and made Jesus the center of his life. Now, John wanted everyone to know the truth about Christ.

Here, John called Christ the “Word of Life” (v. 1) and “Life” (v. 2). In the beginning, God spoke—and life began (Genesis 1). God's words created life. In the Gospel of John,

**Things to
Think About**

1. How close are you to God?
2. How much does your life look like the life that John is talking about?
3. What ways do you lie about sin in your life? What can you do about these lies?
4. Which verse tells you best about how to be free from your guilt? Have you accepted God's gift of forgiveness? Will you?

John described Jesus Christ as the Word that became human (John 1:1, 14). Jesus was with God in the beginning. Then one day in human history, God spoke—and Jesus came to live among us. Jesus was fully God and fully man.

Living life is so much more than breathing and eating. John wanted his readers to know that Christ is the most important thing in life. John wrote that Jesus said, “I came so they might have life, a great full life” (John 10:10b). John wanted them to live a life centered on Christ while here on earth and to be sure of eternal life with Christ in heaven.

John wrote so we might be as close to Christ as he was. It was his joy to write to tell others about Christ and about how to have a great, full life.

The News: God is Light (1:5-7)

Light is the opposite of darkness. Jesus talked about light being good and darkness being bad (Matthew 6:22-23). John learned this from Jesus and wrote about it: “Jesus spoke to all the people, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will not walk in darkness. He will have the Light of Life’” (John 8:12). There is no darkness in God.

To compare the Christian life to life without Christ is like comparing light to darkness. If we say we are Christians, but live like those who live in darkness, we are not living in the truth of Jesus. Our lives and our words must **match** for us to live in truth.

If we live in the light that God gives us, doing right and obeying the Royal Law of love, then we are living as God planned. We are encouraged by God, and we encourage each

other as a community of faith. When we do wrong, we know that Jesus' work on the cross makes our lives clean from sin again. John wanted his readers to understand how Jesus' blood cleans them from all sin.

When Sin Comes (1:8 to 2:2)

John explained three lies about sin. First, we lie to others if we disobey God while saying we are Christians (v. 6). Second, we lie to ourselves if we say we never sin (v. 8). Third, we call God a liar when we say we do not sin (v. 10).

Christians who are following Christ and walking in the light still sin. We know this is true, but sometimes we do not want to believe it. We lie to ourselves saying, "I didn't sin." John tells us to tell the truth.

When we tell ourselves the truth, then we can also tell God the truth. When we tell Him about our sins, we know that He will hear us and forgive us. This is a very important truth. We must know and believe that God is faithful. We can depend on Him to forgive us and to make our lives clean from all sin. If we ask for forgiveness and then do not believe we are forgiven, it is like calling God a liar, too.

Many people think their sins are too

bad for God to forgive. Verse 9 is a wonderful **promise**. Pastors, friends, and missionaries repeat this verse many times to people who feel bad about their sins. It is important to tell the truth to yourself and to know you are clean. The feelings of **guilt** can hurt your life. When you give yourself and your sins to God, you can trust that you are free. God makes all free who seek His forgiveness. How is this true?

John, like a loving father writing to his dear children, wanted them not to sin. But if and when someone did sin, he let them know that there is One Who goes between them and the Father (God). That One is Jesus Christ, Whose blood cleans them from all sin (1:7, 9). This is true because Jesus is the One Who is right with God. Only He can go between sinners and God.

He also said that Jesus "paid for our sins" (2:2). In the Old Testament, a person paid for sins by killing an animal and giving it as a gift on the altar in worship. This was a *sacrifice*. They gave a small animal if the sin was not very bad (or if they were very poor). They gave a large animal for worse sins. John's readers knew

about this because they had given sacrifices themselves.

When Jesus died on the cross, He made Himself the sacrifice for sins. He was the perfect sacrifice because He lived a sinless life. His sacrifice paid for all the sins of all people for all time—yes, even for you! Jesus is the One Who paid for your sins. Jesus can set you free from sin and guilt. Make Him the center of your life today.

1 John 1

1 Christ is the Word of Life. He was from the beginning. We have heard Him and have seen Him with our own eyes. We have looked at Him and put our hands on Him.

2 Christ Who is Life was shown to us. We saw Him. We tell you and preach about the Life that lasts forever. He was with the Father and He has come down to us.

3 We are preaching what we have heard and seen. We want you to share together with us what we have with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

4 We are writing this to you so our joy may be full.

5 This is what we heard Him tell us. We are

passing it on to you. God is light. There is no darkness in Him.

6 If we say we are joined together with Him but live in darkness, we are telling a lie. We are not living the truth.

7 If we live in the light as He is in the light, we share what we have in God with each other. And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, makes our lives clean from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we lie to ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.

10 If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. And His Word is not in our hearts.

1 John 2:1-2

2:1 My dear children, I am writing this to you so you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, there is One Who will go between him and the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the One Who is right with God.

2 He paid for our sins with His own blood. He did not pay for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

1 John 2:3-27

Memory Verse

“But whoever obeys His Word has the love of God made perfect in him. This is the way to know if you belong to Christ.”

(1 John 2:5)

Word List

hypocrisy: saying one thing and doing the opposite; behaving badly but pretending to be good

mature: fully grown; to be the best possible; not child-like

mystery: something that is not known or understood; a secret

popular: very well known and liked by many people

Knowing We Know Christ

W.W.J.D.? In the 1990s, you saw these letters on signs, bracelets, and T-shirts. It was a very **popular** phrase, the first letters in the question, *What Would Jesus Do?* The idea is to ask yourself this question. If you know what Jesus would do, then do it. The book that started it all was published in 1898: *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* by Charles M. Sheldon.

The book is not about 1 John, but the idea is the same. First, study the Bible enough to know what Jesus would do. Second, listen to Jesus and obey His teachings. John makes it very clear: Jesus is our example to be followed.

John told us that we can know that we know Christ well and belong to Him. He gave three tests for knowing that you know Christ and are close to God. The first: Do you obey Christ’s teaching? The second test: Do you love others? The third test: Do you know that Jesus Christ and God are One?

Obeying His Teaching (2:3-6)

John spoke out strongly against **hypocrisy** in the lives of Christians. We are not to say one thing and yet do another. John, like James, says faith and works go together. What a person says and what a person does need to match. If they do not, that person is a liar. Even worse, there is no truth in that person.

The opposite is also true. Those people who say they know Christ and obey His teaching are telling the truth. They can know that they really know Christ well. The person who obeys also “has the love of God made perfect in him” (v. 5). This does not

Things to Think About

1. John said that truth is something you do (2:4). What do you do to obey Christ?
2. Part of obeying Jesus is to love one another, and love makes obeying easier. How much do you love God and others? What do you do to show your love?
3. Do you listen to the world around you? Do you want to follow in its ways? What can you do to keep yourself away from the world, sin and darkness?
4. How important is it to know Jesus as the Son of God who is both God and man and whose death on the cross saved us from eternal death? Is this belief at the center of your faith?

mean love without any wrong ever. Here, *perfect* means **mature** or complete. Those who obey His Word can be sure they belong to Christ. They have passed the first test.

A New Law (2:7-11)

The old law and the new law that John writes about here are a small **mystery**. The old law may be from Deuteronomy 6:4-5: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord! And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” The new law is like it, and John wrote about it in his Gospel book about Jesus. Jesus said, “I give you a new Law. You are to love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Since John does not tell us, we cannot be sure, but the next verses match these verses.

Love is what was seen in Christ and is now seen in them (and in us if we are in Christ). John uses *love* 35 times in this letter. Again, he talks about darkness and light. Darkness is now about living in hate. Light is about living in love. A person who hates can be “blinded” by his bad feelings for the other person, and then he sins. A person who loves his brother/sister in Christ will see clearly and can choose not to sin.

The true Light is Jesus Christ, who shines as an example for us to follow. As this true Light shines, the darkness of hate will go away. Choose love over hate and walk in the light of love that Jesus gives. Those who do this have passed the second test.

A Poem and a Warning (2:12-17)

This part can be seen as a poem because of the matching sentences. There are three groups of people—children, fathers,

and young men (vv. 12-14). We can see these as age groups or as groups of Christians who were more or less mature. John often calls his readers “children” because he loved them and they were younger in the faith. John encourages each group to become more mature Christians.

Next, John tells us what not to love—the world. This does not mean people. This means the three things in verse 16, “The desires of our flesh and the things our eyes see and want and the pride of this life.” All these things are part of this world and do not come from God our Father. All this is going away and will soon be gone. But Christians will live forever with the Lord.

Belief in the Last Hour (2:18-27)

The end is near. We need to know and tell the truth about Jesus. John calls false teachers “false-Christ.” The person who says that Jesus is not the Christ is against Christ. That person is a false-Christ. It is important to know that the Father and the Son are One. If anyone says something else, they are a liar. Many people were saying this then, have said it in the past, and are saying it today. This is how we know

that the end is near. Those who believe the truth that Jesus is the Christ have passed the third test.

The Holy Spirit will help Christians to stay in the light of the truth. He can help us know the truth from a lie. This is a clear teaching: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are One. It is better to not have any human teacher than to listen to someone who lies about Christ. The liars left the church because they were never truly Christians.

To obey, love, and believe in Christ are three ways to be sure we know and are growing closer to Christ.

1 John 2:3-27

3 We can be sure that we know Him if we obey His teaching.

4 Anyone who says, “I know Him,” but does not obey His teaching is a liar. There is no truth in him.

5 But whoever obeys His Word has the love of God made perfect in him. This is the way to know if you belong to Christ.

6 The one who says he belongs to Christ should live the same kind of life Christ lived.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing a new Law for you to obey. It is an old Law you have had from the beginning. The old Law is the Word that you have heard.

8 And yet it is a new Law that I am writing to

you. It is truth. It was seen in Christ and it is seen in you also. The darkness is passing away and the true Light shines instead.

9 Whoever says he is in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness.

10 But whoever loves his brother is in the light. And there will be no reason to sin because of him.

11 Whoever hates his brother is not in the light but lives in darkness. He does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, my children, for your sins have been forgiven because of Christ's name.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him Who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have power over the devil. I have written to you, young boys and girls, because you have learned to know the Father.

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him Who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong. You have kept God's Word in your hearts. You have power over the devil.

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love is not in him.

16 For everything that is in the world does not come from the Father. The desires of our flesh and the things our eyes see and want and the pride of this life come from the world.

17 The world and all its desires will pass away. But the man who obeys God and does what He wants done will live forever.

18 My children, we are near the end of the

world. You have heard that the false-christ is coming. Many false-christs have already come. This is how we know the end of the world is near.

19 These left us. But they never belonged to us. If they had been a part of us, they would have stayed with us. Because they left, it is known they did not belong to us.

20 The Holy Spirit has been given to you and you all know the truth.

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth. I have written because you do know the truth and you know that no lie comes from the truth.

22 Who is a liar? He is a person who says that Jesus is not the Christ. The false-christ will have nothing to do with the Father and the Son and he will turn away from Them.

23 A person who will have nothing to do with the Son and turns against Him does not have the Father. The one who says he knows the Son has the Father also.

24 Keep in your heart what you have heard from the beginning. Then you will belong to the Son and to the Father if what you have heard from the beginning is in you.

25 And He has promised us life that lasts forever!

26 I have written to you about those who are trying to lead you in the wrong way.

27 Christ gave you the Holy Spirit and He lives in you. You do not need anyone to teach you. The Holy Spirit is able to teach you all things. What He teaches you is truth and not a lie. Live by the help of Christ as the Holy Spirit has taught you.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

1 John 2:28 to 3:10

Memory Verse

“And now, my children, live by the help of Him. Then when He comes again, we will be glad to see Him and not be ashamed.”

(1 John 2:28)

Word List

confidence: a strong belief or trust in someone or something

confident: sure or certain, full of confidence

facing the future: a phrase about looking at the events in the future while not knowing what will happen

Facing the Future with Confidence

Facing the future is not always easy. I was told a few months ago that I have a disease called diabetes. My body does not use sugar in the right way. I have to take medicine, eat less sugar, and exercise more. If I do not do these things, my future will be full of health problems. The warnings about this disease are terrible. Many parts of my body will become unhealthy, and the disease will take my life.

However, there is hope. I can do the things the doctor tells me to do. Some people have been able to get control of this disease and live long and healthy lives. I pray that God will give me the strength and courage to do the right things to make my body healthy again. I am working to get the sugar in my blood down to normal levels and get off the medication.

I can face the future with **confidence** because I know that God loves me and wants the best for me. I may not get free from diabetes, but whatever happens I can face the future with confidence. I know that God will help me and that all things will work together for good. My confidence is not in myself but in God Who can do anything!

The future is unknown to us and can make us afraid. Yet God knows and controls the future. Christians can face the future with confidence when they understand what the Bible teaches about living as children of God.

**Things to
Think About**

1. How should believing in Jesus' future coming change how we live our lives today?
2. What are some of the good things and difficult things that come with being known as children of God?
3. How would you tell someone about the difference between the idea that "we are all God's children" and the truth of what it means to be a child of God?
4. How does knowing you are a child of God give you confidence about the future?
If you are not a child of God, do you want to have confidence about the future?
5. Is there an area of your life where you have been sinning and need to ask God to forgive you and to let the Holy Spirit give you the power to change?

Confident in Living by Christ's Help (2:28-29)

I help care for my granddaughters, and it is a joy to go to their house. The older one, Hannah, is three years old. Whenever I come, wherever she is in the house, she comes running and yelling "Grandma!" She has confidence that I love her, and she is very glad to see me. Sometimes, though, if she has done something wrong, her face will quickly change to a frown, and she will tell me about the bad thing she did. She is sad and ashamed to tell me she has not been good.

This is the picture that John gives about Jesus coming again. When we live by His help now, we will be glad and not ashamed when we see Him. How we live now *does* matter.

"Live by His help" is the same idea that Jesus talked about when He gave the picture of the grapevine and the branches. He told His followers, "I am the Vine and you are the branches. Get your life from Me. Then I will live in you and you will give much fruit. You can do nothing without Me" (John 15:5). Our life of faith comes from Jesus. Jesus is the source of life. Acts 17:28 says, "It is in Him that we live and move and keep on living. Some of your own men have written, 'We are God's children.'"

Here is another way to understand this idea. Children are like their parents because they come from them. Hannah looks like her mother did when she was three years old. We become more like our Father in heaven when we live by Christ's help, as we show love in His name, and as we obey Him. We can have confidence that we are God's children and that our future place in heaven is clear and sure.

Confident in Christ's Love (3:1-3)

The subject of love is very important to John. He used this word in his book and letters more often than any other writer of the Bible. God's love for us is so great that He calls us His children. It is not just a picture of how close we are, but true Christians are children of God. People of the world do not see us that way because they do not know the true God. If you do not know the Father, you do not know His children.

Are all people the children of God? No, the true children of God are those who believe Jesus is God's Son and have been forgiven of their sins because of His death and coming alive again. They are changed by Christ when the Holy Spirit comes into their lives. They are changed by knowing how much God loves them. In the future, they will be changed completely by seeing Jesus when He comes again. This is the hope and reason for living a pure life.

Confident in Christ's Being Right with God (3:4-10)

Christians are not perfect, but they do want to please God who loves them so much. They want to do the right things. If

they only want to do wrong things all the time, they are not true believers. They are hypocrites who talk of God's way, yet they do not live in God's way. John tells us those who keep on sinning again and again are children of the devil. Children not only look like their parents, they often act like them, too. John is telling us that we can look at a person's life to see if they are a child of God or a child of the devil.

The Holy Spirit lives within the true Christian and helps that person turn away from sinful choices. Children of God will obey Him and will also love others. First John 1:9 tells us that Christians do sin, but they ask to be forgiven and God makes them clean. The Holy Spirit gives them the power to live as His children. That is why Christians can face the future with confidence.

We do not know what tomorrow will bring to us. Still, there are some things we do know. God is in control of the future. Jesus will return. There will be a day when God will judge all people. Christians can face that day with confidence when they live as God's children today.

God loves all people. "He is waiting

for you. The Lord does not want any person to be punished forever. He wants all people to be sorry for their sins and turn from them” (2 Peter 3:9).

Are you a child of God? If not, will you become His child today?

1 John 2:28-29

28 And now, my children, live by the help of Him. Then when He comes again, we will be glad to see Him and not be ashamed.

29 You know that Christ is right with God. Then you should know that everyone who is right with God is a child of His.

1 John 3:1-10

3:1 See what great love the Father has for us that He would call us His children. And that is what we are. For this reason the people of the world do not know who we are because they did not know Him.

2 Dear friends, we are God’s children now. But it has not yet been shown to us what we are going to be. We know that when He comes again, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.

3 The person who is looking for this to happen will keep himself pure because

Christ is pure.

4 The person who keeps on sinning is guilty of not obeying the Law of God. For sin is breaking the Law of God.

5 You know that Christ came to take away our sins. There is no sin in Him.

6 The person who lives by the help of Christ does not keep on sinning. The person who keeps on sinning has not seen Him or has not known Him.

7 My children, let no one lead you in the wrong way. The man who does what is right, is right with God in the same way as Christ is right with God.

8 The person who keeps on sinning belongs to the devil. The devil has sinned from the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No person who has become a child of God keeps on sinning. This is because the Holy Spirit is in him. He cannot keep on sinning because God is his Father.

10 This is the way you can know who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. The person who does not keep on doing what is right and does not love his brother does not belong to God.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

1 John 3:11-18;
4:7-12, 19-21

Memory Verse

“My children, let us not love with words or in talk only. Let us love by what we do and in truth.”

(1 John 3:18)

Word List

accept: to believe to be true

accepted: took what was offered with favor

ignore: to look away and not do anything

member(s): a person or people who are a part of a group like a church or study group

memories: all that one remembers

rejected: would not take, not accepted

Loving Well

When my husband and I were parents of young children, we were **members** of a very loving church. The staff was wonderful in caring for those who were sick or hurting. This is often true for a church. It was the members, though, who volunteered their time and showed so much love and gave us so many great **memories**. The members of the church were like family to us.

We were members of a Bible study class. The members of that class were all about the same age. Most of them had young children, too. Many of us had growing families and were moving from apartments to houses or from smaller houses to bigger houses. This fact gave us a special way to show our love for each other. If someone was moving, the others would volunteer to help. We would pack boxes, help clean, feed all the workers, and watch the children while the others worked. In a short time, everything was moved from one place to the other. It was a lot of work, but it was also fun. This was a great way to show our love for each other and get closer together as the family of God.

Love, Not Hate (3:11-18)

Real love does not hate, kill, or **ignore** the needs of others. John had learned some important lessons from Jesus. One of them was how to love and treat others. Jesus taught many lessons on love. He showed His followers how to love by example. He showed His love as He healed, taught, and fed them. He gave His life for all. Jesus is the source and example of what love looks

**Things to
Think About**

1. How does real love show true faith?
2. How has God shown His love to you through the actions of Christians?
3. What is the difference in saying “God is love” and “love is God”? How does a right understanding of God’s love change what you do?
4. Why do you think believers loving other believers is so important? What happens when we don’t love?
5. How is it possible to accept God’s love and then love well?
6. How can you show your love in a real way to someone this week?

like. We cannot do everything the same as Jesus did because we are not God. So what does Christian love look like?

John tells the story of Cain and Abel to show what love is not. Cain was the first son of the first people God made, Adam and Eve. Abel was their second son. Genesis 4 tells the story. Abel was a shepherd, and Cain was a farmer. Both men gave a special gift to God. Abel brought a lamb. Cain brought something he had grown. God **accepted** Abel’s gift but **rejected** Cain’s. God warned Cain about the sin in his heart. Cain rejected God’s word to him and killed Abel in jealous anger. He showed his jealousy and hate by rejecting God’s word and killing his brother who did what was right. John warns us not to be like Cain.

Like Cain, the world has rejected God and His word. They hate Christians. When Christians do what is right, the world can see that their own ways are sinful. Their hate shows their jealousy. It is not a surprise that the world hates them. Jesus said this about the world and Christians: “Then they will hand you over to be hurt. They will kill you. You will be hated by all the world because of My name” (Matthew 24:9). Killing starts with hate and anger in a person’s heart. Love also starts in the heart.

Christians prove they are right with God by their love for each other. Anyone can kill, but those who let love grow in their hearts will know they have life that lasts forever. Christians give their lives for each other, help each other with food, clothing, and do not ignore those in need. That is what Christian love looks like. Love is seen in what we do, not just in what we say!

God Is Love (4:7-12)

God is love—not love is God. We must not worship the

idea of love or falling in love, which is so popular in this world. God is not only the source of real love, but God is love, true love. Because this is true, we love each other. So, what does true love look like?

The meaning of love is given in verses 9-10 which sound like John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.” John tells us strongly that “it is not that we loved God but that He loved us” (v.10). God showed love by sending His Son to pay for our sins. What love!

Our hearts should be so filled with this love that we love those that God loves. Our love shown to others is the best way for them to see God’s love for them. They cannot see God, but they can see Who He is as they see His love in us. It is not easy to love that way, but God gives the Holy Spirit to all those who trust Him. That is how He helps us to love. That is how He lives in us and loves through us. His power helps us love as we should. The world can see God’s love as they see our love.

Because God First Loved Us (4:19-21)

I have often heard the question, “Why would you do this for me?” My answer and the answer given to us in this letter is “because God loves you, and I love you because God first loved us.” The next question is, “Who is this God Who loves us?” It is then a privilege to tell that person about our wonderful God and all He has done for us. That is what happens when you show God’s love to others.

Our love for God is tested by our love for His children. It is much easier to love someone we can see than to love someone we cannot see. So, John asks, if we don’t love our brother, how can we love God? The Royal Law of God tells us to love God and love our neighbor. If we love God, we will obey His Law. It may be difficult to love all our neighbors, but it should be easier to love other members of the family of God, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Love is the most important thing that we can do. When we learn to **accept** God’s great love for us, we will love others from a heart full of love. We will serve them and show them how great God’s love truly is!

John 3:11-18

3:11 This is what you have heard from the beginning, that we should love each other.

12 Do not be like Cain. He was a child of the devil and killed his brother. Why did he kill him? It was because he did what was sinful and his brother did what was right.

13 Do not be surprised if the world hates you, Christian brothers.

14 We know we have passed from death into life. We know this because we love the Christians. The person who does not love has not passed from death into life.

15 A man who hates his brother is a killer in his heart. You know that life which lasts forever is not in one who kills.

16 We know what love is because Christ gave His life for us. We should give our lives for our brothers.

17 What if a person has enough money to live on and sees his brother in need of food and clothing? If he does not help him, how can the love of God be in him?

18 My children, let us not love with words or in talk only. Let us love by what we do and in truth.

1 John 4:7-12, 19-21

4:7 Dear friends, let us love each other, because love comes from God. Those who love are God's children and they know God.

8 Those who do not love do not know God because God is love.

9 God has shown His love to us by sending His only Son into the world. God did this so we might have life through Christ.

10 This is love! It is not that we loved God but that He loved us. For God sent His Son to pay for our sins with His own blood.

11 Dear friends, if God loved us that much, then we should love each other.

12 No person has ever seen God at any time. If we love each other, God lives in us. His love is made perfect in us.

19 We love Him because He loved us first.

20 If a person says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. If a person does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God Whom he has not seen?

21 We have these words from Him. If you love God, love your brother also.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

1 John 4:1-6, 13-16a

Memory Verse

“We have come to know and believe the love God has for us. God is love.”
(John 4:16a)

Word List

divine: holy, from heaven, from God

fooled: to trick or make to believe something that is not true

relationship: to know someone well or to have a special closeness between two people; relationships can be good, bad, different, etc.

(Example: *I have a good relationship with my doctor, and we can talk about anything.*)

Believing in God's Divine-Human Son

In the United States of America, we have freedom of religion. This means that any group can worship any god. They can tell others what they believe. It also means people are free not to believe in any god. In our history, many different groups who have used this freedom. There are almost too many religions to count. We often hear warnings that there is another new religion or false idea that has just started. People come to the doors of our homes to tell us what they believe. Freedom is wonderful and difficult at the same time. It is wonderful because we are free to tell people the truth about the One true God. It is difficult because new Christians are sometimes **fooled** by false teachings.

New Christians are like babies. They do not know what is true to believe and what is false. When we tell others about Jesus and they accept Him as their Lord, we need to remember that there are many groups in the world who teach false ideas about God, Jesus, the Bible, and many other Christian teachings. It is very important that new Christians learn to accept only the truth and reject false ideas.

John was writing to a group of new Christians who needed to understand the truth about who Jesus was. This group of believers had heard false teachers say that Jesus was not human. John wrote to remind them of the importance of believing in Jesus as both human and divine, both man and God.

**Things to
Think About**

1. What are some of the false teachings about Jesus you have heard?
2. Why do you think false teachings and ideas are so popular today?
3. Some people might ask why it is so important to understand that Jesus was both all human and all divine. How would you answer that question?
4. How can you be sure your beliefs about Jesus are right? How can you be sure about others' beliefs?
5. Explain this sentence: *Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.*
6. If you are a Christian, what gives you confidence to know you truly belong to God? What can you do if you do not have confidence?

Test the Spirits (4:1-3)

In John's time, the Roman Empire was full of different religions, just like the United States is today. One group of religions was known as mystery religions. They did not tell others what they believed. Their members did some things that looked like the things that Christians were doing. Some believers were fooled because they wanted to know the mystery of their teachings.

Not all false teachers started new religions. Some tried to teach false ideas while saying they were teaching the same truth as Christians. These are the most dangerous kinds of false teachings. Both new and mature Christians can be fooled by them if they do not have a clear understanding of the truth. John knew the believers needed to be strongly warned about the many false preachers who were teaching in this way.

John said to test the spirits to see if they are from God or not. How can you test spirits? He gave them (and us) a question to answer. What do these spirits say about Jesus? Do they teach that Jesus Christ became a man? Then they are from God. Do they teach that Jesus Christ did not become a man? Then they are not from God. Jesus and His disciples taught that He was all man and all God. Any other teaching must be rejected.

It is important to understand the difference between the false teaching about Jesus and the true teaching about Him. If Jesus only looked like a man but was all God, how can we trust Him and follow Him? If He was all man but not God, how can He save anyone?

Jesus' death proved He was all man—He really died from

the beatings and the suffering He experienced on the cross. But three days after He died, He came alive again. This proved He was all God. It is a mystery that one person could be all of both, but it is the truth. It is important to teach—and believe—the truth.

The One Who Lives in You Is Stronger (4:4-6)

John told the church to remember that they had rejected the false teachers by not accepting their changed message. They had power over them. This power was not because they were strong, but because the Holy Spirit in them was stronger than “the one who is in the world,” the devil (v. 4).

John also gave a second test for knowing who is a false teacher. Who follows them? John said that because the false teachers were “a part of the world,” the world listened to them. In 2 Timothy, Paul said: “The time will come when people will not listen to the truth. They will look for teachers who will tell them only what they want to hear” (2 Timothy 4:3).

When there is a popular teacher, one thing to ask is, “Who are the followers?” Are their followers mature believers who

know the Bible, or are they people who only want to hear things that make them happy?

True Christian teachers are a part of God’s family. They listen to the teachings and ideas of the Christian community. They teach what they have learned from the close followers of Jesus who wrote the Bible.

We Know (4:13-16a)

Knowing who is in the family of God and who is not is very important. John told us in an earlier lesson that true Christian love is a test. Some people can be loving and helpful but not be true followers of Christ. John gives us two more tests to help us know the truth.

First, the true believer will live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who have turned away from their sins and decided to follow Jesus have a **relationship** with God, not a religion. We know they have the Spirit when we can see God working in their lives. They have confidence in prayer and Bible reading. God works through them with special gifts like preaching, helping, teaching, and serving.

Second, that person will tell others that God sent Jesus “to save the world from

the punishment of sin” (4:14). It is true in history. They must tell of their faith in God's divine-human Son.

God is love. He wants a relationship with us. He sent Jesus to make that possible. We tell what we believe, then we live in God, and God lives in us. We know God's love and share it with others.

1 John 4:1-6, 13-16a

1 Dear Christian friends, do not believe every spirit. But test the spirits to see if they are from God for there are many false preachers in the world.

2 You can tell if the spirit is from God in this way: Every spirit that says Jesus Christ has come in a human body is from God.

3 And every spirit that does not say Jesus has come in a human body is not from God. It is the teaching of the false-christ. You have heard that this teaching is coming. It is already here in the world.

4 My children, you are a part of God's family. You have stood against these false preachers and had power over them. You had power over them because the One Who lives in you is stronger than the one who is in the world.

5 Those false teachers are a part of the world. They speak about the things of the world. The world listens to them.

6 We are a part of God's family. The person who knows God will listen to us. The person who is not a part of God's family will not listen to us. In this way, we can tell what is the spirit of truth and what is the spirit of false teaching.

13 He has given us His Spirit. This is how we live by His help and He lives in us.

14 We have seen and are able to say that the Father sent His Son to save the world from the punishment of sin.

15 The person who tells of Him in front of men and says that Jesus is the Son of God, God is living in that one and that one is living by the help of God.

16 We have come to know and believe the love God has for us. God is love.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

1 John 5

Memory Verse

“This is the word He spoke: God gave us life that lasts forever, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11)

Word List

continue: to keep on doing or being; to not stop

plants: (verb) to put something where it can grow

proof: anything that can be used to show that something is true or correct

Trinity: a word used to talk about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as Three in One

Living Well by Love and Faith

My friends, James and Helen, from Korea live well by love and faith. They came to the United States on a work visa. Their boss was also from Korea. He brought ten families from Korea. Both the boss and my friends said they were Christians and became members of the same Korean church. The rest of the group were not believers. The boss said the company had big problems, and he stopped paying the workers. All the men were working very hard but not getting paid. It was a terrible time.

James and Helen loved the others and prayed for them. They had faith that God was in control, but they did not understand why this was happening to them. They brought the families to my church to get food and clothes. We told them how much God loves them. They wanted to know this God who loved them enough to send help. They started going to the Korean church, and all 28 people put their trust in Jesus.

Then the boss ran away with all the money. James became the boss and sold the company. Everyone was paid for all the time they had worked. Now they understand the reason for their hard times. Today, James and Helen own their own restaurant.

Love Is Something You Do (5:1-3)

We can compare the two men in this true story of the Korean families. The boss did not show love for anyone. He lied about the company and stole all the money. We do not know what he believes, but what he did shows hypocrisy. James

**Things to
Think About**

1. Whom do you know who lives a life of Christian love and faith? Why do you think so?
2. Has there ever been a time in your life when you put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ? Will you share your story?
3. When you pray, what do you pray for?
4. How do you feel about dying? Do you know you have life forever with God? How do you know?
5. If someone were to look for proof that you believe in Jesus, what proof would they find?
6. Does it matter what you believe just as long as you believe it? Why or why not?

showed love. He prayed for them, but he also helped them get food and clothes. He asked them to go to his church. God did the rest. The people could see the love of God in what James did.

John is very clear that it is “the person who believes that Jesus is the Christ” who is a true child of God. We were all made by God, but we are not all His children. We become children of God by trusting in His Son, Jesus Christ. This makes us part of His family and **plants** in our hearts a love for God and a love for others. We can love our brothers and sisters in Christ because we have the same Father and are part of the same family.

Obedying God’s Word is a sign that we love Him and His children. It is **proof** of what is in our hearts. We cannot see what someone believes or what they trust, but we can see when they obey God and show love. We are obeying God’s Word when we choose to show love. We have power that comes from God.

Faith Is More Than Feeling (5:4-10)

Faith is more than a good feeling. To have faith is not just to believe (as we saw in Lesson 2). Having faith in Jesus means giving our lives to Him so that we are changed or *born again* as His child. Faith gives us power over sin.

“Born again” is a popular saying which comes from a talk between Jesus and Nicodemus, a religious man, in John 3:3-12. Jesus told him in verses 5-7, “For sure, I tell you, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit of God, he cannot get into the holy nation of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh. Whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” What do John’s words mean about water and blood?

Anyone who has ever seen a baby's birth knows there is water and blood. John could be talking about the birth and death of Jesus when He talks about water and blood. At Jesus' death, the soldier pushed a spear into His side, and water and blood came out. Jesus may also be reminding us about His baptism in water and the blood He shed on the cross.

In the Old Testament, the judges decided the truth of an event when two or three people said the same thing. John is giving us proof of the truth by naming three in heaven and three on earth who say the same thing. The three in heaven are one, the **Trinity**. The Word is Jesus Christ. John wrote about this at the beginning of his Gospel book (John 1:1-5). Those who put their trust in Jesus believe He is the Son of God because God said so.

Forever Starts Right Now (5:11-13)

Our confidence in having life that lasts forever does not come from our feelings. It comes from the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and the promise of God in His Word. We don't have to wait until our bodies die to start living forever. If we have trusted Jesus, our forever life has

already started. This life is a different life than the world knows. It comes from a relationship of trust and faith with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I came so they might have life, a great full life" (John 10:10b).

Life Can Be Lived with Confidence (5:14-21)

We pray for the people we love. We can be confident that we are living the life God wants for us when we **continue** to pray for each other. We pray for those who are sinning. Some sins can make a person's body die, like smoking for years. Praying does not change this. Prayer does help the person but may not change what happens because of the sin. Because of the trust relationship with Jesus, we do not live in sin like the world.

The confident life in Christ is a changed life. We become changed people who live differently. When the world tells us one thing and Jesus tells us another, we trust Jesus. We follow Him and grow in knowing the One true God. We turn away from any false gods. The love and faith that comes from God gives us a life lived well!

1 John 5

1 The person who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. The person who loves the Father loves His children also.

2 This is the way we know we love God's children. It is when we love God and obey His Word.

3 Loving God means to obey His Word, and His Word is not hard to obey.

4 Every child of God has power over the sins of the world. The way we have power over the sins of the world is by our faith.

5 Who could have power over the world except by believing that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 Jesus Christ came by water and blood. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. The Holy Spirit speaks about this and He is truth.

7 There are three Who speak of this in heaven: the Father and the Word and the Holy Spirit. These three are one.

8 There are three who speak of this on the earth: the Holy Spirit and the water and the blood. These three speak the same thing.

9 If we believe what men say, we can be sure what God says is more important. God has spoken as He has told us about His Son.

10 The person who puts his trust in God's Son knows in his own heart that Jesus is the Son of God. The person who does not have his trust in God's Son makes God a liar. It is because he has not believed the word God spoke about His Son.

11 This is the word He spoke: God gave us life that lasts forever, and this life is in His Son.

12 He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God. Now you can know you have life that lasts forever.

14 We are sure that if we ask anything that He wants us to have, He will hear us.

15 If we are sure He hears us when we ask, we can be sure He will give us what we ask for.

16 You may see a Christian brother sinning in a way that does not lead to death. You should pray for him. God will give him life unless he has done that sin that leads to death. There is a sin that leads to death. There is no reason to pray for him if he has done that sin.

17 Every kind of wrong-doing is sin. But there is a sin that does not lead to death.

18 We know that no child of God keeps on sinning. The Son of God watches over him and the devil cannot get near him.

19 We know that we belong to God, but the whole world is under the power of the devil.

20 We know God's Son has come. He has given us the understanding to know Him Who is the true God. We are joined together with the true God through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and the life that lasts forever.

21 My children, keep yourselves from false gods.

John 1:1-5

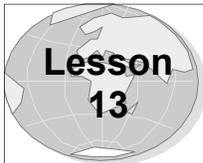
1 The Word (Christ) was in the beginning. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it.

4 Life began by Him. His Life was the Light for men.

5 The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness has never been able to put out the Light.



Adult Bible Study in
Simplified English

Bible Text

2 John 1-2, 7-11;
3 John 1-11

Memory Verse

“Dear friend, you are doing a good work by being kind to the Christians, and for sure, to the strangers.”
(3 John 5)

Word List

donate: to give to a group that helps others

invest: to give something and hope something good will grow from it; for example, when you pay for college for your children, you *invest* in their future

lonely: being very sad because one is alone

Give Well and Wisely to God's Work

God has work for His children to do. Most of us know that there is much to be done to help others and to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. We can help in many different ways. We can teach. We can give money. We can **donate** food, clothing, and things we no longer use. We can talk to people who are **lonely** or hurting. We can give our time in many different ways.

My friend and sister in Christ, Kerry, went through a difficult time of need. Her husband had a heart attack and died while driving. They had a terrible accident, and Kerry was thrown out of the car. She broke so many rib bones that they could not count all the breaks. She had burns and cuts all over her body. She was also alone. After getting out of the hospital, she needed to go see many doctors and places where they helped her learn to move again. She could not drive a car. It was my privilege to help her during this time. I had a car and the time to take her. God had given me a wonderful job where I could work at whatever time I wanted to.

This is just one example of the kind of work God asks us to do. There are many ways to serve God and His Church.

Love the Church (2 John 1-2)

The Church is not a building or a company. The Church is made up of all true believers in Jesus Christ. Paul uses the picture idea of the body of Christ, and John calls us the family of God. It is a very large family that lives all over the world!

Things to Think About

1. What do you love most about your church?
2. How has your church made a difference in your life and that of your family and friends?
3. How does your church do mission work in the community and the world?
4. Read Matthew 5-7 and make a list of what Jesus told us to do. How can you better live in the teachings of Jesus?
5. What lies, if any, have you heard about Jesus? What is the truth?
6. How can you and your church do more to invest in missions?
7. What can you do to make peace in your church when problems arise?

The church is also a group of Christians. This group lives in one area. They sometimes have their own building or they meet in schools or houses. They worship together, serve together, and send people from their group all over the world to tell others about Christ. They are a part of the body of Christ and a part of the larger family of God.

The church needs people who are willing to serve on staff and volunteer. It needs donations of money, things, and time. The church depends on its members to be able to be what God wants it to be—a place of worship, growth, learning, help, and a source of faith and love. The church is sometimes seen as the hands and feet of Jesus. It is a special family for the members and visitors.

The Church—not the building, but the people who are Christ's followers—is sometimes called the bride of Christ. John wrote about this in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Now in 2 John, John may have been using the same idea to call a church “the chosen lady.” He may have called the Christians “her children.” John told them of his love for them and the importance of the truth. The truth is what they all believed—the Word of God. That included the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus and His close disciples, like John. The truth and love is what kept them together as a special family.

Live by Jesus' Teachings (2 John 7-11)

Watch out! John again warns these people whom he loves that there are many false teachers who are not teaching the truth. There was a group called the Gnostics who believed that Jesus Christ did not have a real human body. They were strong at this time and were teaching many people this lie. That is why John is

teaching this truth so strongly: Jesus was both divine and human. He tells them not to talk to false teachers, not to help them, or give them a place to stay. If they do, they are sharing in those people's sins. This could hurt the goals of the church. They could have less than the promise of a "great full life" if they lived in these lies.

It is wise to know the true teachings so that you do not listen to or follow the false teachings. In John's time, the people did not have all the writings of the New Testament that we have today. These New Testament "books" were actually letters that were just being written and passed around to the new churches.

Our study of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus helps us to know the truth from a lie. Then we can live as Jesus wants us to do by obeying His truths.

Invest in His Church (3 John 1-11)

In his third letter, John wrote to a much loved brother in Christ, Gaius. This younger man was one of John's "children" in the faith. His joy in knowing that Gaius was following the truth tells us how wise it is to invest in those who are younger. We invest in them by teaching them the truth

and praying that they will follow it. In this way, we invest in the future of His Church.

Gaius was wise, being kind to both those he knew and strangers who were going from place to place teaching the truth about Jesus Christ. These were missionaries who depended on others to invest in their important work. John encouraged him to continue to help those who were working for the Lord. They did not get help from those who were not believers. They needed money, donations of food, and a place to stay. By investing in them, Gaius and others would be working with them as they told about Jesus. They were investing in growing His Church.

We can compare the good work of Gaius to the problems caused by another member of that church, Diotrephes. This member had too much pride and wanted control over the church. He did the opposite of Gaius. He spoke against John and his friends. He put people out of the church for helping missionaries. This was sinful.

Problems happen in churches today, too. We must follow what is good, truthful, and helpful to the body of Christ (the people who are His followers). We should

love the church and work against the problems. We can invest in the church and the mission of sharing Jesus. We love the Church best when we put Jesus first, teach, help others who teach the truth, and live in His teachings. Give well and wisely to God's work—the Church!

2 John 1-2, 7-11

1 The church leader writes to the chosen lady and to her children. I love you because of the truth. I am not the only one who loves you. All who know the truth love you.

2 It is because the truth is in us and will be with us forever.

7 There are many false teachers in the world. They do not say that Jesus Christ came in a human body. Such a person does not tell the truth. He is the false-christ.

8 Watch yourselves! You do not want to lose what we have worked for. You want to get what has been promised to you.

9 Anyone who goes too far and does not live by the teachings of Christ does not have God. If you live by what Christ taught, you have both the Father and the Son.

10 If a person comes to you with some other kind of teaching, do not take him into your home. Do not even greet him.

11 The person who does has a share in his sins.

3 John 1-11

1 The church leader writes to the much-loved Gaius. I love you because of the truth.

2 Dear friend, I pray that you are doing well in every way. I pray that your body is strong and well even as your soul is.

3 I was very happy when some Christians came and told me about how you are following the truth.

4 I can have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.

5 Dear friend, you are doing a good work by being kind to the Christians, and for sure, to the strangers.

6 They have told the church about your love. It will be good for you to help them on their way as God would have you.

7 These people are working for the Lord. They are taking nothing from the people who do not know God.

8 So we should help such people. That way we will be working with them as they teach the truth.

9 I wrote a letter to the church. But Diotrephes wants to be the leader and put himself first. He will have nothing to do with us.

10 So if I come, I will show what he is doing by the bad things he is saying about us. Not only that, he will not take the Christian brothers into his home. He keeps others from doing it also. When they do, he puts them out of the church.

11 Dear friend, do not follow what is sinful, but follow what is good. The person who does what is good belongs to God. The person who does what is sinful has not seen God.