WELCOME

The enemy of the truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived, and dishonest - but the myth - persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.

- John F. Kennedy

Myth is a powerful enemy. She is subtle and she is sly. She erodes truth over time. Myth’s craftiness is precarious and makes all of us susceptible to her lies. A myth can grow and mature as it is reinforced by our culture, our media, and our own gullibility. Who among us has not fallen prey to at least one urban legend? Surely everyone would plead guilty to passing on a story or two that we believed to be trustworthy because it happened to a “friend of a friend.”

Although relatively harmless in the form of folklore, a myth can be dangerous when it enters into the realm of weightier matters. For an ethnic race, myth can introduce prejudice and discrimination. For a political hopeful, myth can haunt the entire candidacy. For a company, myth can radically alter consumer views and drastically affect the bottom line. But perhaps the greatest damage a myth can do is in the arena of faith. Pitted against the truth of God, a myth has the ability to affect how we think, how we live, how we love, and how we worship.

No one understood this better than the author of 1 John.

And we know that the Son of God came so we could recognize and understand the truth of God—what a gift!—and we are living in the Truth itself, in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. This Jesus is both True God and Real Life. Dear children, be on guard against all clever facsimiles. 1 Jn. 5:20-21 - The Message
The battle between truth and myth runs throughout the entire letter of I John. The lines are drawn sharply through the images of light and darkness, life and death, love and hate, and obedience and sin. Written to first century Christians, I John challenges its recipients to steer clear of doctrinal heresies born of myth and displayed in actions. In the pages of this letter we read of John’s encouragement to his dear children in the faith to know and apply the true gospel. We read of his warnings to his followers to avoid heresies and false teachers. We read of his challenge for these believers to experience true fellowship with the Father and true faith in Jesus Christ.

For the next several months, we will spend our days in this powerful letter. We will read of what true faith in Jesus is. We will study the deep truths of love, life and faith. We will be encouraged through this journey to strive towards obedience to the scriptures and fellowship with the Father. Through all this, we will be shown the true nature of who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for us, and how we are to properly respond in faith and deed.

Covering the whole book of I John in eight lessons, I John – The True Life, will challenge you to live a life of genuineness in both your beliefs and your behavior. Each study will be broken into a five-day journey, focusing on understanding the letter, addressing critical issues that arise, and applying the principles of this book to our lives today. There will also be opportunities to journal your thoughts to God on what He is teaching you.

**PREVIEWING THE STUDY**

I John – The True Life is broken into eight lessons detailing the authentic beliefs and practices of followers of Jesus Christ. Through this journey, you will discover biblical principles that are sure to change your life! The topics are as follows…

Lesson One ................................................................. True Life
Lesson Two ............................................................ True Identity
Lesson Three ............................................................ True Light
Lesson Four ..................................................... True Doctrine and Deeds
Lesson Five .......................................................... True Actions
Lesson Six ........................................................... True Discernment
Lesson Seven ........................................................ True Love
Lesson Eight .......................................................... True Faith

Each week as your group meets, you will focus in on one of these sections in the book of I John. Although each lesson is best understood in the context of the whole study, I John – The True Life has been written in such a way that each lesson “stands alone.” When your group meets, you will discuss what each individual has learned through their study
and experience on the topic. To help prepare the discussion, 1 John – The True Life guides you through a lesson that will expose you to the main themes that emerge from the portion of scripture highlighted.

Each study is divided into seven segments. The first five segments are intended to be done in your personal time of preparation for the group meeting. They are designed to be done over the course of five days. Each day will add something new and different to your study.

**WARNING:** This study is not one that you can complete minutes before you attend your group.

To get the most out of the material, it is suggested that you spend a little bit of time each day on the lesson. You will be rewarded for your consistency in the text, and your group will benefit from the insights that you glean from your unhurried inspection.

The final two sections will then be completed as a group together… drawing on the work done in the first five days. On the next page is an outline of the different segments.

- **Day One: Overview the Truth**
  On your first day of study, you will get an overview of the main idea in the lesson. A brief introduction to the topic, as well as a reading of the biblical text will give you direction for your week of preparation. You will also be encouraged to make notes and observations.

- **Day Two: Summarize the Truth**
  On your second day of study, you will build upon the observations you have made to gain a better understanding of what the letter is saying. The goal of this day is to better acquaint you with the key concepts and phrases that appear in the passage. This doesn’t require having all your questions answered regarding the highlighted text. This is a process that will take days and days to unfold. Be patient and God will reward.

- **Day Three: Understand the Truth**
  Moving into day three, more and more of your inquiries into the meaning of this letter will be addressed. Through questions and various resources, you will gain a deeper insight into the significance of the instructions that John is conveying to his spiritual children. This will be a day for you to begin to answer those questions that arose earlier in your study. Hopefully, by the end of day three, two major questions will be answered. 1) What does this passage say? and 2) What does this passage mean?
• **Day Four: Apply the Truth**
  Day four will give you the opportunity to get personal with the epistle. God has told us in his Word that all the scripture we read is beneficial to us. Not only is it beneficial to teach us certain things, but it is also beneficial to encourage good behavior and to correct poor behavior. On this day, you will be asked to evaluate your entire life (personal, family, work and ministry) in light of the scripture you are laboring through.

• **Day Five: Respond to the Truth**
  On your fifth and final day of study, you will have the privilege to respond to God through a technique known as “journaling.” There is nothing magical about this process. It’s as simple as writing a letter to your Heavenly Father. This day will give you the opportunity to let the story of your life intersect with the lives of John and the lives of other first century Christians. This will be the last section you do before your group meets.

• **Process the Truth Together**
  Probably the greatest gains in your study of the book of 1 John will come when you are processing the truths learned together in community. This can be the most treasured time of your week, as you seek to learn and grow from one another’s insights and experiences.

• **Putting the Truth into Practice**
  It would be a tragedy if we spent all this time studying this great letter and didn’t let it affect how we live our lives. The final thing that your group will do is to take what you have learned in your study and apply it to your life today. This is a critical step, and has the potential to be life-changing. Take time as a group to work through this... developing action strategies based upon your study of this book.

**INTRODUCING 1 JOHN**

It has been said that to read a New Testament letter is like eavesdropping on a conversation in which you can only hear one side. Such is the case with 1 John. Because we only have entrance into the conversation through John’s words, we must speculate about the exact nature of the circumstances surrounding the letter. However, the historical setting and internal nature of the letter leaves us with some very telling clues concerning the situation to which John was writing.
Believed to be written towards the end of the first century (most scholars place the writing of this letter in the mid 90’s), I John was penned to address a community of believers in and around the city of Ephesus.

At the time of the writing of I John, there were three factions existing in the community of believers in Ephesus. The first group were true Christians who had an authentic view of who Jesus was, what He did on the cross for them, and how their lives where to be different because of the gospel. The other two groups were contrasting heretically-inclined groups, one being from a Jewish background and the other being from a Greek background. The Jewish followers tended to hold a low view of Christ’s deity and a high view of the law. This encouraged a legalistic lifestyle and an improper recognition of Jesus as one who was capable of atoning for sins. The Greek followers, who were exploring the emerging tenants of Gnosticism, held a low view of Jesus’ humanity and a low view of ethical behavior. This led to a denial of the incarnation of Jesus and unrighteous behavior.

Both of these heretically-inclined groups introduced dangerous myths into the community of believers in the first century. Therefore, John wrote his epistle to encourage the true believers to maintain a proper view of Jesus Christ and to live an ethically pure life.

We would do well to heed these words of encouragement today; to remember well who Jesus is, and how we are to live.

PRAYER
OF BLESSING

Our Father in Heaven, we come to Your word believing that it has the power to change the lives and the hearts of Your people. We ask that You reveal Yourself through our time spent in study and meditation. We ask that You use this time to deepen our love for You and our faithfulness to the mission that You have called us to. We give You our fears, concerns, hopes and dreams. May You Bless. AMEN
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
The Swiss political philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau once said, “Falsehood has an infinity of combinations, but truth has only one mode of being.” No one knows this better than the United States Secret Service. From its inception in 1865, the US Secret Service Division has been charged with the task of suppressing counterfeit currency. Through the years, the Secret Service has seen an “infinity of combinations” when it comes to counterfeit bills. But, no matter how many variations of the true currency is introduced into our money system, the method of determining counterfeit remains the same. Through the years, the one thing that has proven most successful in identifying false currency is knowing well the authentic bills. The Secret Service advises its trainees and the US citizenship at large to become as familiar with the true currency as possible. This will make the counterfeit currency much easier to identify and eradicate.

The book of I John seeks to expose and eradicate counterfeit ideas and expressions of Christianity that can seep into a community of believers. What will prove most successful in this quest is to know well the TRUE LIFE that marks the faith and ethics of Christ followers.

Begin your study of I John by reading the entire book in one setting. As you read, try to pick up on the contrasting images in this letter and the major themes that emerge.

F.Y.I. — First John was written to a church or group of churches in crisis— churches who were being attacked by false teaching (see 2:18–28; 4:1–6; 5:6–7). Some individuals who had once been associated with the Christian community had adopted heretical doctrine, particularly as it related to Christology, and had left the church (2:19). Evidently, after their departure they continued to spread their teachings to those who remained within the churches (see 2:26; 4:1–3). Undoubtedly, this theological assault created confusion and crisis within the believing community. In response to this situation, the author penned 1 John. 

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH

Based upon your reading of I John, write a short paragraph that captures the “Big Picture” of the letter. Why was John writing this letter to the early Christians? What were his major points of encouragement?

In a few sentences, summarize what John says about the two points of emphasis in his letter.

Jesus Christ

Christian Ethical Behavior

Let’s probe deeper into this book:

Compare the introduction of John’s gospel (John 1:1-14) with the introduction of John’s letter (I John 1:1-4). Are there some common words and ideas shared by both passages? If so, what are they, and why are these phrases and ideas significant?

John uses stark contrasts to communicate to his audience…for instance – Light vs. Darkness. See how many other contrasts within the book that you can recall.

For Further Study — Several other New Testament books are attributed to the Apostle John. Among them are The Gospel of John, Revelation, and II & III John. For a greater understanding of the issues that the first century church faced, read II and III John (both are only 1 chapter long), and Revelation chapters 2-3.

DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

To gain a better understanding of the purpose of I John, let’s take a look at the introduction to his letter (all Scripture in this study is quoted from the New International Version unless noted otherwise).
I John 1:1-2
That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

In John’s writings, he uses the Greek word “logos” (translated into English: “word”) to refer to Jesus Christ. In this introduction he makes certain statements about the true nature of Jesus. What do these two verses tell us about who Jesus is, and what He came to do?

In establishing what is true about Christ, John intends to refute two commonly held errors. One was that Jesus was just a man and not God, and the other was that Jesus was a divine being who never fully became human, He just “appeared” to be human. Below are statements John made about Jesus in verses 1-2. Place the statements where they fit best in the table that follows.

A. from the beginning  
B. we have heard  
C. we have seen with our eyes  
D. we have looked at and our hands have touched  
E. was with the Father  
F. has appeared to us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus is Completely Human</th>
<th>Jesus is Completely Divine</th>
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F.Y.I. INCARNATION — The word incarnation means “in flesh” and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth. The result is
that Christ remains forever unblemished deity, which He has had from eternity past; but He also possesses true, sinless humanity in one Person forever.\(^2\)

I John 1:3-4

\(^{3}\)We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. \(^4\)We write this to make our joy complete.

Why is John proclaiming this message and writing this letter? How does the truth of who Christ is bring fellowship and joy?

For Further Study — For John, the idea of Christ’s followers knowing and living the truth brought him great gladness of heart. Read and Reflect upon these other instances where John finds joy in truth. 3 Jn 1:4; 2 Jn 1:4; 3 Jn 1:3.

DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH

Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of your work, your family, your ministry, and your personal life.

Have you ever believed something to be true in your Christian life, only to discover later that what you believed was false or lacking? If so, what was it, and how did you discover the real truth?

How important is the True Life to you? What value do you place on knowing and living out the authentic Christian existence? Why or why not is it important to you?

In John’s introduction, he speaks of his personal encounter with Jesus Christ. What is your personal relationship with Jesus like? Do you encounter Him in real ways?

John expresses to his reader in verse 3 his desire for them to enjoy fellowship with him and the Father and the Son. Christian community is at the heart of the True Life. Spend a few moments evaluating your fellowship. Do you have authentic relationships with others? Do you experience joy in your relationships? What could you do to further develop your Christian community?

The True Life brings joy. What are some things that are true about your relationship with God that bring you joy?

**DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH**

In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…

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Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

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Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

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But, I am anxious and fearful about…

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I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

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____________________________________
STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.

PROCESS TRUTH TOGETHER
Can you recall a time that you were a participant in passing on an urban legend? Have you ever forwarded an email or told a story to a friend regarding something you believed to be true but it was not? What was it? How did you feel when you discovered it was not true?

Are there any urban legends that you refuse to believe to be untrue? Why do you think myths are so attractive and what makes us so susceptible to their deception?

In tonight’s group you are going to be introduced to the book of I John. A book written to expose the myths of some who have associated themselves with Christ. You will encounter the True Life that is to be believed in and lived out by the followers of the True Christ.

As a group (and drawing from the scriptures and information from other sources) develop a character sketch of John the Apostle.

Who is he?
What was his relationship and history with Jesus Christ?

What was his role within the early church?

What are some significant accomplishments in life?

What is the current situation (at the time I John was written)?

Review as a group the “Big Picture” of I John. Have several people share their summary paragraph from Day Two.

John wrote this letter to clear up mistaken beliefs about the person of Jesus. In your initial pass through I John, what have you learned about the nature and work of Jesus Christ?

Mistaken beliefs in Jesus Christ lead to mistaken Christian ethics and behavior. Once again, as you take a first pass through I John, what do you initially learn about how true followers are to live?

To correct doctrinal error, John maintained throughout his letter that Jesus was completely divine and completely human. This is what orthodox Christianity has affirmed throughout the centuries. What
do you think are some of the dangers of denying either the deity or humanity of Jesus Christ?

F.Y.I.  HYPOSTATIC UNION — The second person, the preincarnate Christ came and took to Himself a human nature and remains forever undiminished Deity and true humanity united in one person forever. Both natures are necessary for redemption. As a man, Christ could represent man and die as a man; as God the death of Christ could have infinite value sufficient to provide redemption for the sins of the world.3

What would you say is THE key verse in the book of I John? Why?

As a group, agree upon and write a message statement for the book of I John. A message statement is a one sentence explanation of why the letter was written… emphasizing the key themes.

PUTTING TRUTH INTO PRACTICE

I John was written so that its recipients could experience true Christian community. The True Life begins with authentic belief, but is completed by authentic living. The thought of this brought great joy to the apostle’s heart.

Do you feel satisfied with your relationship with God and with others? Why or why not? What would you like to do to improve these relationships?

What do you believe are the essential components to authentic fellowship with God and with other believers? Would you be willing to agree upon these “essentials” as a group, and pledge to live them out during your time together this year?

Spend some time tonight in your group in prayer concerning your time of community this year. Ask for God to give you a vision for your group that lines up with His will for you.

**For Further Study** — Throughout your study of 1 John, you are encouraged to continue to read the entire letter in one setting. Each week, your study will focus on a small portion of the book, and you will no doubt gain from working through that section. HOWEVER, you will be rewarded greatly in your study if you continue to read through the complete book each week. It will give you context, as well as a deeper understanding of the truths of this great work.
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
It’s probably a duck!

So the old adage goes, “If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck… it’s probably a duck.” In a variety of life’s situations, this time-proven test has been used to ascertain the true nature of individuals, organizations, and institutions. Conventional wisdom says that when certain characteristics, appearances, and behaviors are present in an individual, a mark is left on that person that identifies them and places them in a certain camp.

Conventional wisdom is not the only place that this maxim is true. When it comes to the True Life, there are certain beliefs and behaviors we engage in that place an identifying mark upon us which says we are true followers of Jesus Christ.

Read I John 1:5-2:6 making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based upon your reading of I John 1:5-2:6, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

What truths do you glean through the following phrases?
God is Light
If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Let’s probe deeper into I John 1:5-2:6

What are the qualities and characteristics of light? How does it compare and contrast with darkness?

For Further Study — The motif of light and darkness is found in many places in the scripture? For a more comprehensive reading on this topic, spend some time in the following verses. Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 60:20; John 8:12; Matthew 5:14.

Day Three: Understand the Truth

Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made and to your summary of the section.

I John 1:5-7

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

The first identifying mark of a true follower of Jesus is that they are in fellowship with God. According to these verses, what are the conditions for fellowship with God?
What is the relationship between the death of Jesus and you and I being identified as a follower of God?

For Further Study — Identification with Christ’s death is a key theme in some of the Apostle Paul’s writings. Consider how the following verses might enrich your understanding of identification with Christ: Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:12.

I John 1:8-2:2

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

What truths do you learn from these verses about the believer’s relationship to sin?

F.Y.I. — When a believer is experiencing true fellowship with God he may then be tempted to think or say that he is, at that moment at least, free from sin. John warned against this self-deluding conception. If Christians understand the truth that God’s Word teaches about the depravity of the human heart, they know that just because they are not conscious of failure does not mean that they are free from it. If the truth is “in” them as a controlling, motivating influence, this kind of self-deception will not take place. Whether someone claims to be “without sin” for a brief period of time or claims it as a permanent attainment, the claim is false.

According to these verses, what are we to do when we sin? What does Christ do when we sin? Why are both necessary for fellowship with God?

Jesus is said to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Why was this sacrifice necessary? (HINT: See Hebrews 9:22).

1 John 2:3-6
3We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

According to I John, one of the identifying marks of a true believer is obedience. The question this raises is, “How much of our salvation is based upon our obedience?” (HINT: See Ephesians 2:8-9). What then is the relationship between obedience and salvation?

John urges those who abide in Christ (“live in him”), to walk as Jesus did. Is this an expectation of perfection? Why or why not? (use I John 1:8,10 to support your answer).

F.Y.I. OBEDIENCE — A major area of evidence that we are genuine believers is found in a life of obedience to God’s commands. A perfect life is not necessary, of course. John is rather saying that in general our lives ought to be ones of imitation of Christ and likeness to him in what we do and say. If we have genuine saving faith, there will be clear results in obedience in our lives (see also 1 John 3:9–10, 24; 5:18). Thus James can say, “Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” and “I by my works will show you my faith” (James 2:17–18).  

DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH

Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of your work, your family, your ministry, and your personal life.

Take a brief inventory of your life. Do you live a life in “the light?” What areas do you keep in “the dark” or hidden from others? Finances? Social relationships? Secret sins?

To walk in the light with God, it is necessary to first be purified from all your sins. According to verse 7, this is accomplished through the blood of Jesus. Have you reached a point in your spiritual journey where you have experienced the cleansing of Christ? If so, give details.

F.Y.I. — Anyone who comes to Christ for salvation must have at least a basic understanding of who Christ is and how he meets our needs for salvation. Therefore an explanation of the facts concerning salvation must include at least the following: (1) All people have sinned (Rom. 3:23). (2) The penalty for our sin is death (Rom. 6:23). (3) Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8). But understanding those facts and even agreeing that they are true is not enough for a person to be saved. There must also be an invitation for a personal response on the part of the individual who will repent of his or her sins and trust personally in Christ. 3

Walking in the light also involves the confession of continued sin in the believers life. Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to reveal any sin currently in your life. Don’t rush this point. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in your heart.

Christ is said to be our advocate who speaks to the Father on our behalf. Do you believe that you are worthy of such advocacy? Why or why not? How does that make you feel about Christ?

Obedience is an identifying mark of a true believer in Jesus Christ. If you were on trial for being a Christian, what would the evidence say? Would you be convicted based upon your obedience? Explain.

For Further Study — This can be a challenging set of verses for any follower of Jesus. On one hand, we are called to be obedient followers of Christ, keeping God’s commands. On the other hand, these passages clearly indicate that we will never be without sin (or live in perfect obedience). This can sometimes be very troubling for a struggling Christian. You will be wise to continue to study with diligence the commands of God, striving towards obedience, as well as reminding yourself daily of God’s grace in your life. As a matter of fact, it is God’s grace that gives you power to live the obedient life.

DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH
In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You …

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Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

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Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

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But, I am anxious and fearful about…

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I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

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I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…

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I am asking for Your power in…

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STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.

PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER

Every group or culture has identifying characteristics that mark them. Below is a list of professions. As a group, try and come up with as many stereotypes for each group. For instance: Professors – wear glasses and have messy hair.

Doctors

________________________________________

Pastors

________________________________________

Sales Reps

________________________________________

Construction / Builders

________________________________________

IT support staff

________________________________________
Being a Christ-follower carries with it certain identifying characteristics as well. These are traits that should let us and the rest of the world know that we are Christians. Tonight, let’s look at those distinctive qualities.

As a group (and drawing from I John), review the first century climate into which John was writing.

Who was John writing to?

What were some views of those within the community of believers that gave John concern?

What are some of the key doctrinal truths that come from I John (especially doctrinal truths related to Jesus Christ)?

What are some of the key metaphors that John uses in writing this book?

Review as a group I John 1:5-2:6. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.

From tonight’s passage (and tonight’s passage alone – I John 1:5-2:6), make a list of all the identifying marks of a believer in Jesus Christ (how a Christ-follower behaves and believes).
We are called by Scripture to be holy. Do you think that a person can achieve a complete state of sinlessness? Why or Why not? Use I John 1:5-2:6 to support your answer.

Christians continually confess their sins to God. What does confession mean? What does it look like in the life of a believer? How important is it for the Christian life?

Jesus Christ speaks on our behalf to the Father. On what basis does the Father forgive our sins? Does He just dismiss them, or are they dealt with somehow? Why is that significant?

I John 2:6 says that whoever claims to live in Christ (or abide in Christ) must walk as Jesus did. How did Jesus respond to the following situations…

Tempted to sin

Confronted with the outcast of society

Hurt by His enemies
Flooded by the demands of life

PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE
To claim to be without sin goes against the very fabric of what it means to be a Christian. We come to Christ because we recognize that we are sinful and need forgiveness. So, one of the identifying marks of a Christian is one who realizes his or her own state of sinfulness and is actively confessing those sins to God.

Do you have a regular time of confession with God? Do you feel the need or have the desire to confess certain sins to others?

F.Y.I. — James 5:15 says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” You are encouraged to find a small group (2 to 3 others) of the same sex to begin meeting with on a regular basis in order to share more openly what is going on in your life. It is healthy to share both the things that are going well, and the things that you are struggling with.

Obedience to God is one of the identifying marks of a Christian. What areas of your life do you need more of God’s grace to grow in?

Spend some time tonight in your group in prayer thanking God for the forgiveness that He has granted you. Feel free to share requests concerning your own spiritual walk.
1 JOHN 2:7-17

DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
Twinkle, twinkle, little star… how I wonder what you are!

Shining like diamonds in the darkened sky, stars have always captivated our imagination. What exactly are these luminaries that cover the heavens during the hours of night? The initial response is that these stars we see are actually other suns from distant reaches of the universe, radiating their light through the galaxies into our own solar system. This explanation, however, is only partially true. In reality, some of the stars we see are not actually suns at all but are rather nearby planets, reflecting the light of our own sun. Consequently, as you stare into the nighttime sky, some of the stars you see are radiating from the true light that is within them, while others are merely darkened planets that while they appear to shine, actually have no true light at all.

Likewise, when the Apostle John stares into the community of followers in the first century, he will see some who walk with true light, and others who are merely darkened orbs.

Read I John 2:7-17 making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based upon your reading of I John 2:7-17, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

What truths do you glean through the following phrases?
The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Let’s probe deeper into these verses:

In this section, love plays a prominent role.

Who are we instructed to love?

Who (or what) are we instructed not to love?

For Further Study — John used the word world a great deal. He used it seventy-eight times in his gospel and twenty-seven additional times in his other writings. Look at the following verses to gain a better understanding of John’s theology of the world. John 1:12; 3:19–21; 7:7; 16:8–9; 8:21, 24; 8:44

DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made, and to your summary of the section.

1 John 2:7-8

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.
John is issuing an “old” command that was given from the beginning (of Jesus ministry) to recognize who is truly in the light. While the command is not stated in this verse, his readers must have known what the command was because of John’s play on words calling it “new.” What do you believe this command is?

Hint — Read about the time Jesus talked about a “new” command in John’s gospel (John 13:34; 15:12).

I John 2:9-11
9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

According to John, what is the determining factor of whether or not an individual is truly in the light? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

What are some of the benefits of being “in the light?” What are some of the dangers of being “in the darkness?”

In I John 2:12-14, the author gives six reasons that he is writing his letter. Which of these six do you find the most helpful to your understanding of I John and why?

I John 2:15-17
15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.
What are some of the characteristics of “the world” according to this verse? What should the believer’s relationship to the world be?

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**F.Y.I.** — John used the word world to describe the world in sin and darkness as well as under the domination of Satan.¹

Three ingredients are said to be present in the world’s system. Take a moment to add further description to these three elements. What does it look like in today’s world…

Cravings of sinful man?

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Lust of his eyes?

---

Boasting of what he has and does?

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What does John mean when he says that the world and its desires pass away? How does that knowledge affect the way believers should order and prioritize their lives?

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**DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH**

Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of your work, your family, your ministry, and your personal life.

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Is your life characterized by “living in the light?” Why or why not? What can you do to bring more of your life into the light?

Living in light or darkness is largely tied to your love or hatred towards others. Where are the potential areas of darkness (hatred) in your life? Why is it there, and what steps can you take to be released from this hatred?

Walking in the light also means not falling in love with the dark things of this world. Are there areas of your life that the world controls? What are those areas? Pray that God would begin to redeem this aspect of your life.

Loving the world is incompatible with loving God. Are there things of the world or things of the world’s system that you esteem more than God? Take time today to lift those areas up to God and ask him to begin to re-prioritize your life’s love.

Which of the three areas below do you struggle with most? What steps can you take to overcome that struggle?

Cravings of sinful man?

Lust of his eyes?

Boasting of what he has and does?
**For Further Study** — The above struggles are common snares that we all live in danger of. Spend some time in the following passages, seeking to find strength in avoiding these pitfalls: Romans 13:14; I Peter 2:11; Proverbs 23:4-5; I Peter 5:5

**DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH**

In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

But, I am anxious and fearful about…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
I am asking for Your power in…

STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.

PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER
When you were growing up, were you afraid of the dark? Why?

What did you do in those younger years to avoid darkness?

The dark is a scary place to be… and not just for children. Even grown-ups exhibit certain trepidation around dark places. John encourages us in his letter to avoid the shadowy recesses of hate and to walk in the radiance of love. Tonight, you will have a chance to discover what it means to live a life that is in the light.

As a group, contrast the characteristics of Light and Darkness.

What are the dominant features of light? What about darkness?

In what ways do people behave differently in the dark as opposed to the light?

What are some of the benefits of light over darkness?
Review as a group | John 2:7-17. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.

In verses 7 and 8 John issues a command. Although it was not stated, we believe we can know what the command was. Based upon your study, what was his command?

Hint — Refer to the first question on day three of your study for help.

According to this passage you are studying tonight, what determines whether or not a person is walking in light or darkness? What does this stark contrast tell you about God’s view of our relationship with others?

John speaks often of “the world.” What is your understanding of the way he uses this phrase? What are the characteristics that portray “the world?”

What should the believer’s relationship to the world be? Practically, what do you feel that looks like today?

There are warnings in this passage against, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (NASB). What is the distinction between these three snares? What do they look like today?
PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE

Is your group characterized by “light?” That is, do you believe you do well in living a life of love verses hatred? How can you continue to grow in areas of love for one another? How can you avoid hatred in your other relationships?

John has warned us against the desires of this world: the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, the boasting of what we have and what we've done. As a group, identify one of these three pitfalls as an area of focus for the next two weeks. Spend time discussing ways in which the members of your group can strengthen one another in this area.

The things of the world are fading away. Spend some time tonight in careful evaluation of your priorities. Is your life ordered around the things of God or the things of this world? What changes do you need to make this week to begin to properly order your life?

Close tonight by having some folks in the group share selections from their Day Five Journal. Pray through some of the request that they have asked God to help them with.
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
Belief and Behavior are linked...

A quick survey of the behavior of a culture will tell you an enormous amount about what the individuals within that culture believe. Take for instance the American culture. One of the most striking behaviors in our culture is our infatuation with the automobile. Americans spend more money and time on our cars, truck, and vans than almost any other culture on the planet. Combine that with the ever-increasing size and amenities of the American automobile and you have a culture that is fixated on their vehicles. This behavior however should not be divorced from the belief that Americans have concerning their independence. Sociologists suggest that this belief in independence is the terminal value of the American culture. So it would only follow that the object that gives us the most independence – a car – is also the most prized of all our possessions. Thus, a prime example of the relationship between belief and behavior.

So, on your course to living out the True Life, you will find that how you behave ethically is directly affected by what you believe theologically.

Read 1 John 2:18-3:12, making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based on your reading of 1 John 2:18-3:12, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
What truths do you glean through the following phrases?

… the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ… Such a man is the antichrist.

F.Y.I. ANTICHRIST — The designation of this person as the antichrist need not be a reference to the specific apocalyptic figure that will arise at the end of time. It may rather be a declaration that the one who opposes Christ by rejecting his true identity has taken on the “spirit of the antichrist.”

Dear friends, now we are children of God

No one who lives in him keeps on sinning

Let’s probe deeper into these verses:

Doctrine: What is the BIG deceptive lie spoken of in this passage?

Deeds: What do you learn about sin in this passage?

DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made and to your summary of the section.

I John 2:18-23

18Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. 19They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. 20But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. 21I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. 22Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. 23No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

True Doctrine (correct teachings) is important to the Apostle John. So important is true doctrine that John was willing to let the disruptors leave. As you read this paragraph, can you ascertain what doctrinal issue is at stake?

John says that we are in the last hour. What does he mean by this? How should that affect how his readers (we) respond?

F.Y.I. LAST HOUR — Several references are made to the “last times” in various places in the New Testament. Peter declared, referring to the astounding presence of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, that “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people’” (Acts 2:16-17). Paul uses the same kind of language in 1 Timothy 4:1, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith.” (See also Isaiah 2:2; Dan 12:9; Micah 4:1; 2 Tim 2:17; and 2 Pet 3:3.) All of these references are to the fact that Jesus brought a new age, as opposed to the age marked by the Law of Moses. This is indeed the last time, and at the end of these days, Jesus will return, but we know neither the day nor the hour when he will come; neither did John.  

I John 2:24-29

See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he promised us—even eternal life. 26 I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. 27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him. 28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

In the midst of doctrinal heresy, John calls his followers to remember what they had heard from the beginning. Most commentators believe this to be the gospel message. What is the gospel, and why is it important for these believers to be reminded of it?

All believers have been anointed with the Holy Spirit. According to this verse, what are some advantages of the Spirit indwelling us?

I John 3:1-6

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Following true doctrine are true deeds. In this section, John calls us children of God and says that we will one day be like Him. What does this tell us about how we are expected to live our lives? Who are we to imitate? When will this ultimately be fulfilled?
What was Jesus' relationship to sin? How has he dealt with sin? How should believers in Jesus Christ deal with sin?

F.Y.I. SIN — John is not claiming that Christians do not sin, for he has already said (1:8-10) that if we claim to be without sin, we are liars. The expression “who lives in him,” literally means “abides, or remains” in him. This statement was not intended to mean that we do not sin; it means we do not live a life of sin.3

I John 3:7-12

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. 11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.

In this passage, John establishes two contrasting lifestyles. One marked by sin and the other marked by doing what is right. In the below table, place as many words and phrases from the above verses in their appropriate place. An example has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OF GOD</th>
<th>OF THE DEVIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He who does what is right</td>
<td>He who does what is sinful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the above chart, what do you believe should be the true deeds of a follower of Jesus Christ?

For Further Study — Commentators have long debated on the exact meaning of John 3:7-12. You are encouraged in your personal study to spend some extra time consulting commentaries or other sources concerning this difficult text. As you do so, keep in mind again that John is not claiming that Christians do not sin (this would contradict his own words in I John 1:8, 10).

DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH
Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of your work, your family, your ministry, and your personal life.

Have you ever found yourself in a disagreement over doctrine (Christian teachings) with another person or group? How did you respond?

True doctrine was incredibly important to the author of I John. How important is it in your life? What steps are you taking to grow in your understanding of doctrine?

How often do you remember the Gospel? What does it do for you to recount what Christ did for you? Spend some time this week “remembering.”

For Further Study — One specific way we are called to “remember the gospel” is through communion. This is a practice that the church has been doing for centuries. Spend some time reviewing the passages that speak of the last supper ceremony: I Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-20.
Christians are also marked by their true deeds. These behaviors follow what they believe. How does what you believe about Jesus Christ affect how you live your actual life?


DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH
In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…


Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…


Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

But, I am anxious and fearful about…


I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…


I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…


I am asking for Your power in…

STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.

PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER
How would your behavior differ if you believed that tomorrow you were going to be given ten million dollars? How would you behave if you believed you only had one month to live?

It is interesting to see how behavior can change based upon what beliefs we hold. As a matter of fact, what we believe and how we behave go hand in hand. Tonight we are going to take a close look at how Christians are to believe (true doctrine) and how they then are to behave (true deeds).

As a group (and drawing from 1 John 2:18-3:12 as well as other scripture) develop a doctrine and deed profile list.

What do you believe are the essential beliefs that Christians should hold?

What do you believe are the essential behaviors that Christians should exhibit?

Review as a group 1 John 2:18-3:12. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.
What are the characteristics of the “antichrist?” What does he profess? What does he try to get others to believe? Why is this dangerous?

According to 1 John 2:18-23, what should our response to those who doctrinally oppose us? Do you see this practiced today? In what ways?

The Gospel message is something that we are to remember. It is a way to call us back to the central truths of Christianity. What are the crucial aspects of the gospel message? Make sure to make specific mention of Christ’s nature and actions.

True belief should lead to righteous behavior. What does the gospel message teach us about sin? What does it teach us about how we are to live?

What are some of the deeds that mark Christians? For every “behavior” or “deed” make sure to give the “belief” or “doctrine” that encourages Christians to behave that way.
PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE

What steps can you as a group begin to undertake to strengthen your understanding of Christian doctrine? Will you commit as a group to always continue to grow in this area?


How disciplined are you in your lifestyle? What areas of the spiritual life could you use more obedience in?


Spend some time tonight in your group in prayer about obediently following Christ. Pray that you will understand what you believe and let it rightfully affect your life. Feel free to lift up concerns that you may be facing in other areas as well.
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
More than words …

It was a wise individual who said, “Actions speak louder than words.” The truth of this statement has been validated through history, experience, and common sense. Suppose a business partner of yours constantly SAID that he or she wanted what was best for your partnership, yet everything they DID destabilized your relationship and brought you one step closer to ending the joint venture. You would be foolish to believe their words over their actions.

So it goes when living out the True Life. Sometimes saying “I love you” can be an easy thing to do. At no real cost, you and I can communicate a superficial care for one another that places no real demands on either party. But how would you test that love? How would you know if it were real? It would take more than just words to know if someone really loved you… it would take action. It would take sacrifice.

Read 1 John 3:13-24 making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based upon your reading of 1 John 3:13-24, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

What truths do you glean through the following phrases?
Anyone who does not love remains in death

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us

Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth

Let’s probe deeper into these verses:

What does this section of scripture teach you about love?

What does this section of scripture teach you about sacrifice?

**DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH**

Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made, and to your summary of the section.

*I John 3:13-15*

13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

Why should believers NOT be surprised when those of the world hate them?
**For Further Study** — *The theme of the world hating believers is common in John’s literature. As a writer of one of the four gospels, he records Jesus’ teachings on this subject matter. For a better understanding of why the world might hate Christ-followers, read John 15:18-20 and John 17:13-16.*

What are the two characteristics of one who does not love (or hates) his brother? Why do you feel these metaphors of hate are so graphic? What does this tell you about God’s view of hatred?

**F.Y.I.** — Verse 15 “no murderer has eternal life.” – This does not mean that the murderer cannot be transferred from the sphere of death to the realm of eternal life. Indeed, forgiveness is available to all who repent, including those who murder. This statement is one of present reality. No murderer possesses the eternal life that comes from “abiding in him.”

I John 3:16-18

16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.* 17 *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?* 18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

Given the metaphor for hate is so strong, it should not surprise us that John gives an equally strong example of love. Whose example of love are believers to follow, and what characteristic of that love is featured in these verses?

In these verses, John links love with action. What are some of the actions that should follow love?

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I John 3:19-24

19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

20 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

21 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 22 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

According to verses 19-21, what will God look at when evaluating our love? Why is this comforting?

F.Y.I. “THIS THEN IS HOW WE KNOW” — refers to what John said in verses 17–18. Tangible demonstrations of love for the brethren show the believer’s true character. They should be a comfort to us when we feel guilty that we have not met many needs, a condition that prevails no matter how generous we may be. We can overcome feelings of false guilt by remembering that God knows our real motives. He does not judge on the basis of appearance as we often judge ourselves.

John concludes this section by giving us two commands. What are they, and how do they summarize the overall message of the book of I John? (For help on this, you may wish to review the message statement you came up with in Lesson 1.)

Finally, John gives one more way that believers can be assured of their proper relationship with God. What is this assurance, and what do you think it looks like in a Christian’s life?

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DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH

Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of your work, your family, your ministry, and your personal life.

Love is a key theme in the book of 1 John. Specifically, love for your brothers and sisters in Christ. How well would others say you love? How do you “show” your love to them?

Verse 13 instructs us not to be surprised if the world hates us. Have you ever experienced the hate of “the world?” If so, what was it and how did you respond?

John, continuing an idea first introduced by Jesus Christ, challenges us by comparing hatred to murder. Is there unresolved hatred or bitterness that you carry towards another person? What steps do you need to take to begin to repair that relationship?

The type of love that believers are to display is a sacrificial love. Have there been times in your life when you have been called to love someone sacrificially? What was the instance, and how did you respond?

Our actions will speak louder about our love than our words. What are some “love actions” that you need to show to the following:

- Family members?
- Neighbors?
- Those in your Community in need?
- Co-workers?
- Fellow Believers?
DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH
In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

But, I am anxious and fearful about…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

I am asking for Your power in…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.
PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER
What do the following three encounters have in common?

Your boss tells you that you’re a valuable member of the team, yet you never are invited to share your input.

Your college student tells you that she studied almost four hours every night last semester, but her grade point was 1.7.

Your adult sibling tells you that they just don’t ever have the money or time to come and visit you, yet every month you get a postcard from them from some exotic location.

Obviously, two conflicting messages are being sent. How do you know which one is the truth? What “principle” do you learn from that?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Actions always speak louder than words. In tonight’s lesson, you will receive encouragement from the Apostle John to make sure the words of love you speak are matched by your sacrificial actions.

As a group (and drawing from 1 John 3:13-24 and other scripture), develop a “theology of action.”

How did God SHOW His love for us?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

How can we SHOW our love to God?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
How can we SHOW our love for others?


Review as a group I John 3:13-24. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.

John paints the world in black and white. Use the table below to classify the ideas of this passage into black and white categories. An example has been done for you. See how many other contrasts you can find in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLACK</th>
<th>WHITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jesus is our example of how to love one another. Spend some time tonight reminding each other of how Christ loved us. Use both I John and other scripture texts. What principles do you learn on how we are to love others?


How are Christians to respond to individuals in need? How well do you think we as a group have done with this command? How well have you done with this command?


Once again, obedience (action) is a key theme in this section. According to verses 23 and 24, what are true followers of Christ commanded to do? Again, how well do you think we as a group have done with this command? How well have you done with this command?

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PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE

I John 3:13 says that we are not to be surprised if the world hates us. How do you need to respond then when you sense hostility from “the world?” Use some principles gained from tonight’s lesson to reinforce your answer.

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Are there some areas in your life currently where your ACTIONS are drowning out your WORDS? What can you do to correct this discrepancy?

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What are some ways that you as a group can begin to SHOW your love to each other? What are some ways that you as a group can SHOW your love to those in your community who have significant material needs?

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Close tonight by having some folks in the group share selections from their Day Five Journal. Pray through some of the requests that they have asked God to help them with.
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
In a world saturated with clever advertisements, relentless email spam, and deceptive infomercials, it is easy to be fooled by product claims.

- Re-grow hair in just weeks!
- A $145 value for only $19.95!
- A flatter stomach in just five minutes a day!

With everything from imitation jewelry to knockoff brands, it’s no wonder we are cautioned, “Buyer beware!” In today’s marketing climate it takes real discernment in order to not get misled. In today’s spiritual climate, it also takes discernment to avoid deceptive teachings and philosophies.

John’s advice to his first century community is still helpful today… “BEWARE!”

Read I John 4:1-6 making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based upon your reading of I John 4:1-6, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

What truths do you glean through the following phrases?
Do not believe every spirit

Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God

The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world

Let’s probe deeper into these verses:
What are some of the characteristics of the spirit of the antichrist?

What are some characteristics of the Spirit of God?

DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH
Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made, and to your summary of the section.

1 John 4:1

‘Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Remember, John wrote his letter to confront some heretical groups who were beginning to emerge within the Christian community. With that in mind, how were first century Christians to respond to the new messages that they heard? How would that look in the twenty-first century?
F.Y.I. SPIRIT — The use of the word “spirit” may refer not only to spiritual beings, but also to false teachers (prophets) and their teachings.

Why were John’s readers NOT suppose to believe everything they heard? Would you say that is still a point to emphasize today? Why or why not?

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I John 4:2-3

“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

What is the “test” that John’s readers were to measure these teachings (spirits) against? Why was that a significant test for the first century community?

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F.Y.I. Gnosticism — A name given to a complex system of religious philosophies that began to emerge in the 1st century. Gnosticism took many different forms, but one of the key components in John’s day was the denial of Jesus’ humanity. As a Divine Being He neither assumed a properly human body nor died, but either temporarily inhabited a human being, Jesus, or assumed a merely phantasmal human appearance.

Why is the incarnation (the Son of God, taking on human flesh) of Jesus Christ so important to the Christian faith? What would happen to our theology if His becoming a man was not real?

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What are the characteristics of the spirit of the antichrist? Do you see any of those evidenced today? In what forms?

I John 4:4-6

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Believers have one in us who is greater than the spirit of the antichrist that is in the world. Who is it that is in us (hint: see verse 2)? How powerful is He? How is His power shown?

For Further Study — For a more in-depth understanding of the power of the one within us, study the following passages: Acts 1:8; Romans 8:11; 8:26; 15:16; I Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 5:22-23; I Peter 4:14.

Can you think of examples of when the world was ready to accept something about Jesus that was not true? Why do false teachers and false teachings receive such an open audience from the world?

Spend some time contrasting what you know to be true about Jesus Christ, and what both the world and false religions teach about Him. In what ways is their message different? What is the consequence of each message? Why is that significant?

DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH

Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think
through the specific areas of your work, your family, your ministry, and your personal life.

Are you more or less likely to believe a new teaching you hear? What is the test you personally engage in to determine if what you hear is true?

Is there a belief or practice that you currently hold that needs to be “put to the test?” A belief about Christ that may not be completely accurate? How would you go about settling the matter?

How prepared are you to lead others in the truth and away from false philosophies and errors? What could you do to sharpen your ability in this area?

For Further Study — There are many resources available to help you better understand the truth of Christianity. A suggested reading would be Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know by Wayne A. Grudem.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. How well do you do in relying on the power of the Spirit within you? What can you do to become more dependent upon His power in your life?

DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH
In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…
Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

But, I am anxious and fearful about…

I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…

I am asking for Your power in…

STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.

PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER

Have you ever bought something based upon how incredible it was advertised, only to receive it or begin using it and find out that it was significantly inferior to what you expected? What was it? How was it sold? How was it inferior?
How do you guard against making similar mistakes today when you see AMAZING products advertised?

Tonight, we will discover that discernment is not only important in the world of promotion, but it is also crucial in the spiritual world as well. Are you in danger of falling victim to false teaching and misleading philosophies? What can you do to make sure you don’t? Continue with us tonight and find out.

As a group (and drawing from 1 John 4:1-6 and other scriptures) begin to draw some boundary lines between what is true and what is false.

〡True or 〡False:
Jesus Christ appeared to be human, but was in fact only a divine phantom or spirit made to resemble a man.

〡True or 〡False:
Jesus Christ has eternally existed as the second person of the Trinity (The Son) and therefore is of the same divine essence as God the Father.

〡True or 〡False:
Believers should accept the truth of the world, and they should expect the world to embrace the truth of Christianity.

Review as a group 1 John 4:1-6. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.

What were some of the false teachers (spirits) in John’s day professing? What do some of the false teachers (and teachings) of our day profess?

What does the word discernment mean? Why is it an important characteristic for believers to possess?

As a group, discuss what the incarnation of Jesus Christ means, and why it is an important truth for believers to hold on to.
What are some of the great benefits of having the Holy Spirit indwelling the life of the believer? How can He help us in discernment? What other ways can He empower believers?

PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE
How vulnerable are you to the possibility of being deceived into believing something that is not true? What can you do to better “test” the teachings you hear?

Are you by nature a discerning person? What are some practical ways a person can grow in the area of discernment?

Do you live a life under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit? How have you seen His magnificent power displayed in your life?

Spend some time tonight in your group in prayer about becoming men and women who discern well the spirits of falsehood and deception. Also, pray for one another, that each of you would allow the Holy Spirit to have a more active role in your lives.
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
Perhaps no other word in the English language is more widely used than the word love. You can love your spouse and children, you can love your job, you can also love pizza and ice cream. The Beatles told us all we need is love, and it is love that makes the world go ‘round. You can fall in love and fall out of love. Love can hurt, love can heal. Love can even make you crazy.

With the immense range of the use of this word, you would think we would know what love really is. Yet the question of our day is so often, “What is TRUE LOVE?”

The Apostle John shares with his readers in the first century what true love is. Maybe there is something for us to learn about love in the pages of this ancient document.

Read I John 4:7-21 making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based upon your reading of I John 4:7-21, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

What truths do you glean through the following phrases?
God is Love

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us

Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another

Perfect love drives out fear

Let’s probe deeper into these verses:

According to 1 John 4:7-21, what is the relationship between the love we have for others and God’s love for us?

**F.Y.I. LOVE** — In Christian experience there is a highly satisfying love content that distinguishes it from all other religions and elevates it to heights far beyond even the purest and noblest philosophy. The love content is more than a thing; it is God Himself in the midst of His Church singing over His people. True Christian joy is the heart’s harmonious response to the Lord’s song of Love.

**DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH**

Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made, and to your summary of the section.

**1 John 4:7-10**

7 *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.* 8 *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.* 9 *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.* 10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

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Love originates with God. Using this text (as well as other biblical references), what do you learn about God's love? How does He demonstrate this love to us? Were we "love worthy?"

We are to participate in this love. In what ways are we recipients of God's love? In what ways are we distributors of God's love? What does distributing God's love look like?

F.Y.I. ATONEMENT — *It means ‘a making at one’, and points to a process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity. Its use in theology is to denote the work of Christ in dealing with the problem posed by the sin of man, and in bringing sinners into right relation with God.*

I John 4:11-17

**1** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **2** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. **3** We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. **4** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **5** If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. **6** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. **7** In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment, because in this world we are like him.

Because of God’s love for us, there are certain obligations upon us. What are those responsibilities? Why do you think we are compelled to heed these obligations?

**For Further Study** — *Love is not the only attribute we are obliged to show others. God’s forgiveness is also compelling. Allow the following parable to challenge how you respond to your brothers and sisters. Matthew 18:23-35*

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Abiding (living) in God’s love is another command from this passage. What do you believe that looks like in the life of a believer? What are some of the characteristics of an individual who is abiding in God’s love?

Therefore, what confidence can we have in judgment? What is it based upon?

I John 4:18-21

8 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 9 We love because he first loved us. 10 If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

According to verse 18, what do fear and love have in common? Why?

What comfort can a believer find in this verse (remember verse 17 was speaking of judgment)?

F.Y.I. NO FEAR IN LOVE — With this confidence we can then be beyond fear. This is why John assures us that there is no fear in love: because our confidence in our salvation is made secure. He also assures us that fear comes in when punishment is involved, and punishment will not be involved in our lives when we have allowed perfect love to abide in us.

Can you love God and yet claim to hate a brother or sister? Why or why not? What is the implication of this truth?

DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH

Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of work, family, your ministry, and your personal life.

In what tangible ways do you experience God’s love in your life?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Love is one of God’s most noted attributes. Spend some time in prayer praising Him for being a God of love.

Does the love of God flow through you to others? In what ways?

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______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Is there a relationship that you are in today that is strained? What can you do to show your love for that person THIS WEEK?

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Love should drive away fear. How fearful are you of God’s judgment? From promises in these verses (and other scripture) can you draw comfort and security?

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For Further Study — The Apostle Paul writes of the security we can find in God’s love in his letter to the Romans. If you are struggling with feeling secure in God’s love and salvation, read the following verses: Romans 5:1-10; Romans 8:37-39.

Are you in danger of claiming to love God, while harboring hatred towards another person or group of people? If so, confess this to God and begin to seek out ways to share with them the love of God.
D A Y  F I V E :  R E S P O N D  T O  T H E  T R U T H  
In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…

_________________________________________________________________________________

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_________________________________________________________________________________

Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

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Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

But, I am anxious and fearful about…

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I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

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I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…

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I am asking for Your power in…

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S T O P !  Y o u  w i l l  c o m p l e t e  t h e  r e m a i n d e r  o f  t h e  s t u d y  w i t h  y o u r  
group the next time you meet.
PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER
Poetry can be fun!

Start your group tonight by having everyone take time to write a love poem. It can be serious (like a love poem to a spouse, parent, or child), it can be humorous (like a love poem to a favorite food or sports team), or it can be both (like a funny love poem written to a spouse). After you have taken time to write these, have some folks share their poems with the group.

The greatest and most noble form of all poetry is the love poem, because the greatest and noblest of all characteristics is love. It was love that caused God to act on our behalf and send His Son. And it was this love of God that has caused us to love Him. So deep is the richness of God’s love, that it will take a journey of a lifetime to discover. Tonight, we begin the journey.

As a group (and drawing from I John 4:7-21) begin to develop an introductory understanding of the nature of Christian love.

Where does love originate?
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
How is love shown?
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
How should we respond to love?
__________________________________________________________
What traits is love opposed to?
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__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Review as a group I John 4:7-21. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.
How does God show his love to the following…

His Son (Jesus Christ)?

His children (believers)?

The world (both believers and non-believers)?

What is our responsibility as recipients of God’s love? What does the lifestyle of an individual look like who is living out God’s love for others?

Living in God’s love is a command for believers. This is sometimes called “abiding.” What does it mean to “abide?” What are the characteristics of an “abiding” Christian?

How does love drive away fear? How then should a believer respond to fears of judgment? Why?

What would John say to the person who claimed to be a Christian, and yet openly professed hatred towards someone else? What would be his logic? Do you find that to be convincing?
PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE

True love originates with God. He is worthy to be praised and adored because of His love. Spend some moments tonight first in silent prayer, then corporately, praising God for His attribute of love.

Would others characterize you as a loving person? As a loving group? Why or why not?

For Further Study — Known as “the love chapter,” I Corinthians 13 has been read at more weddings than almost any other scripture text combined. Sometimes we overlook the deep truths of this chapter because of our familiarity with the passage. As a group, read through I Corinthians 13. Have each person share one truth they wish to apply to their lives from this chapter.

We as believers can find comfort and security in God’s love. Is there anything that you are fearful of right now? How can God’s love drive out that fear?

Spend some time tonight with your group in prayer asking God to reveal someone to whom you can show His love to next week. Feel free to share requests concerning fears that you face.
DAY ONE: OVERVIEW THE TRUTH
Everyday we are asked to place our faith in something or someone. From trusting that the chair we sit down in will hold us up, to believing the directions we just received from a stranger will get us to where we need to go. We exercise faith.

The True Life that you and I are called to live is a life that is accessed by faith. The author of Hebrews writes: “without faith, it is impossible to please God.” So is the case with the True Life. True faith not only asks us to believe a certain thing, it also asks us to behave a certain way.

Read I John 5:1-21 making notes where appropriate. For example: look for repeating words or themes. What do these verses tell us about God? About Jesus Christ? About Christian behavior? Also look for commands, warnings, and promises. Finally, look for new thoughts for you.

DAY TWO: SUMMARIZE THE TRUTH
Based upon your reading of I John 5:1-21, write a short paragraph that summarizes what took place in these verses.

What truths do you glean through the following phrases?

This is love for God: to obey his commands
God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son

We are Children of God

Let’s probe deeper into these verses:

Count how many times the word (or variation of the word) believe appears in I John 5?

Count how many times the word (or variation of the word) life appears in I John 5?

DAY THREE: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

Review days one and two of your study. Pay special attention to the notes that you have made, and to your summary of the section.

I John 5:1-5

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

What role does belief and faith play in these verses? How important are they to living out the Christian life?
Obedience is also prominent in this passage. How is obedience and love linked in these verses? What does this tell you about Christian ethics?

For Further Study — Read I JOHN 5:6-10. It is simplest to take the term “water” as a reference to the baptism of Jesus by which His public ministry was. “Blood” would then refer to His death, by which His earthly work was terminated. John's insistence that He did not come by water only, but by water and blood, suggests that he was refuting a false notion of the type held by Cerinthus. Cerinthus taught that the divine Christ descended on the man Jesus at His baptism and left Him before His crucifixion. Thus he denied that one Person, Jesus Christ, came by both water and blood. Cerinthus was doubtless not alone in such views, which John regarded as utterly false and contrary to the true testimony of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three are in agreement. The Spirit’s witness may be thought of as coming through the prophets (including John the Baptist). The Spirit’s witness, then, was augmented by the historical realities involved in “the water” and “the blood.” Both the baptism and the crucifixion of Jesus are strongly attested historical facts. All three witnesses (“water” and “blood” are personified) “are in agreement” that a single divine Person, Jesus Christ, was involved in these events. One therefore has no reason for not accepting God’s testimony to the person of Christ. If man’s testimony can be accepted when adequately attested (Deut. 19:15), God’s testimony, being greater, ought also be accepted. But before specifying the content of God’s testimony (which is done in 1 John 5:11-12), John paused parenthetically to remark that accepting this testimony internalizes it for the one who believes. Each believer has God’s truth in his heart. By contrast, anyone who disbelieves God has made Him out to be a liar (cf. 1:10). For John there was no middle ground, no suspension of opinion. One either believes or he impugns God’s veracity.¹

I John 5:11-15

¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Eternal life means living in peace with God forever. How does one obtain eternal life? What role does Christ play? What role does faith play?

What can those who believe in Christ be confident about? What does “according to His will” mean?

For Further Study — Read 1 JOHN 5:16-17. This is one of the more difficult passages in 1 John. Three interpretations have been presented for your consideration. (1) that sin unto death refers to a crime for which the authorities may exact the death penalty (e.g., murder which could be a capital offense; (2) that the sin is one that the church might punish with death by asking God to visit the sinner as he did Ananias and Sapphira as recorded in Acts 5, and (3) that the sin is one which causes the church to withdraw fellowship or excommunicate the sinner. But there is no confirmation for these meanings.

1 John 5:18-21

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

Whose responsibility is it to preserve the believer from sin and the evil one? How does this understanding change the way you view your life?

2 Roberts, J.W: The Letters of John, p. 141
DAY FOUR: APPLY THE TRUTH
Now the time has come to take all that you have learned so far, and apply it to your life. As you enter into this time of application, think through the specific areas of work, family, your ministry, and your personal life.

Belief and faith are central to the Christian life. What have you found that helps strengthen your faith? What is it that bolsters your belief in God?

We are told that God’s commands are not burdensome. Do you feel this to be true? Why or why not?

John says that we can have confidence bringing our request to God. What is it that you are praying for? Is this in line with His will? You are encouraged to continue to pray in faith for this matter.

Life is also a key idea in this passage. What is your view of eternal life with God? What can you do to grow in your understanding of eternal life? Consider committing to memory, I John 5:11-12.

Eternal life is linked with belief. John states quite clearly that this life is through Jesus Christ. Have you had an encounter with Jesus in such a way that you believe in who He is and what He’s done? If so, when was it? If not, would you consider placing your faith in Him now?
DAY FIVE: RESPOND TO THE TRUTH
In light of what you have discovered about God and about yourself these past four days, finish the following statements with a several sentence prayer to the Lord.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Through the passage this week I have learned that You…

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________________________________________________________________________

Lord, I wish that I was more like Your Son Jesus Christ in the area of…

________________________________________________________________________
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Heavenly Father, I desire to live a life of truth.

But, I am anxious and fearful about…

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I confess I have fallen short of Your truth in…

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________________________________________________________________________

I am seeing Your faithfulness to me in…

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

I am asking for Your power in…

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

STOP! You will complete the remainder of the study with your group the next time you meet.
PROCESS THE TRUTH TOGETHER
An insightful observer once quipped, “Everybody believes in something.”
If this is true, then what are some of the things (both good and bad) that
the following people are “believing” in?

Stockbroker

Christian

Scientist

Atheist

Muslim

What are the consequences for these individuals if what they believe in
turns out to be a lie?

Our days in 1 John are almost complete. If you have persevered thus far,
you will be rewarded for the time spent in this book. As we look at the
final chapter of this dear epistle, we see a strong emphasis placed on
eternal life that comes through true faith. Tonight, we conclude the True
Life looking towards a hope of the eternal life.

As a group (and drawing from 1 John) summarize your study of this
amazing book.
What do you believe are the major themes and ideas that emerge from I John?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What did you discover to be new or interesting in your study of this book? Any new thoughts or ideas… or perhaps a call to change a behavior?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Based upon your study, how has your view of Jesus Christ grown? How about your view of the Father?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Review as a group I John 5:1-21. Have someone share their summary paragraph from Day Two.

How many times did the word “believe” (or variations of it) appear in Chapter 5? Do you think that is significant? Why or why not?

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What is eternal life? How do we receive it?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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Why do believers have confidence when they bring their requests before God? Should this change how we pray? Should “praying according to his will” change how we pray?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
In what ways does God protect us from the evil one? What is our responsibility in this area?


PUTTING THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICE
How would you categorize your faith in God - strong, growing, weak, shaken or other? Why?


Are there any of God’s commands that you feel are burdening you? If so, what are they? God’s commands should not be burdensome, so pray as a group that God would grant you relief from your burdens.


In your lesson, you were asked to consider memorizing 1 John 5:11-12. Where you able to do that? Would you like to share it with the group? What does this passage mean to you personally?


Close tonight by having a time of commitment. Spend some time in prayer asking God to keep each of us faithful to Him. Pray for one another. Pray that each of you will continue in true belief and true behavior. May you forever live the True life.