

The Book Of First John

Written To Present A

True Picture Of Christ

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1 John

OVERVIEW:

First John was written to dispel doubts and to build assurance by presenting a clear picture of Christ. Entering history, Jesus was and is God in the flesh and God in focus—seen, heard, and touched by the author of this letter, John the apostle. John walked and talked with Jesus, saw him heal, heard him teach, watched him die, met him arisen, and saw him ascend. John knew God—he had lived with him and had seen him work. And John enjoyed fellowship with the Father and the Son all the days of his life.

The elder statesman in the church, John wrote this letter to his “dear children.” In it he presented God as light, as love, and as life. He explained in simple and practical terms what it means to have fellowship with God.

At the same time, false teachers had entered the church, denying the incarnation of Christ. John wrote to correct their serious errors. So, John’s letter is a model for us to follow as we combat modern heresies.

John opens this letter by giving his credentials as an eyewitness of the incarnation and by stating his reason for writing (1 John 1:1-4). He then presents God as “light,” symbolizing absolute purity and holiness (1 John 1:5-7), and he explains how believers can walk in God’s light and have fellowship with him (1 John 1:8-10) with Christ as their defender (1 John 2:1-2). John urges them to obey Christ fully and to love all the members of God’s family (1 John 2:3-17). He warns his readers of “antichrists” and the antichrist who will try to lead them away from the truth (1 John 2:18-29).

In the next section, John presents God as “love”—giving, dying, forgiving, and blessing (1 John 3:1-4:21). God *is* love, and because God loves us, he calls us his children and makes us like Christ (1 John 3:1-2). This truth should motivate us to live close to him (1 John 3:3-6). We can be sure of our family relationship with God when our lives are filled with good deeds and love for others (1 John 3:7-24).

Again, John warns of false teachers who twist the truth. We should reject these false teachers (1 John 4:1-6) as we continue to live in God's love (1 John 4:7-21).

In the last section, John presents God as "life" (1 John 5:1-21). God's life is in his Son. To have his Son is to have eternal life.

Do you know God? Do you know Christ? Do you know that you have eternal life? First John was written to help you know the reality of God in your life through faith in Christ, to assure you that you have eternal life, and to encourage you to remain in fellowship with the God who is light and love. Read this letter written by one overwhelmed by God's love, and with renewed confidence, pass on his love to others.

THE BLUEPRINT

John wrote about the most vital aspects of faith so that readers would know Christian truth from error. He emphasizes the basics of faith so that we can be confident in our faith. In our dark world, God is light. In our cold world, God brings the warmth of love. In our dying world, God brings life. When we lack confidence, these truths bring us certainty.

1. God is light (1 John 1:1-2:27)

The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life. [2] This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and announce to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was shown to us. [3] We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

[4] We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete.

[5] This is the message he has given us to announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. [6] So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness. We are not living in the truth. [7] But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.

[8] If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. [9] But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. [10] If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

[2:1] My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely. [2] He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

[3] And how can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments. [4] If someone says, "I belong to God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth. [5] But those who obey God's word really do love him. That is the way to know whether or not we live in him. [6] Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Christ did.

[7] Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment, for it is an old one you have always had, right from the beginning. This commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. [8] Yet it is also new. This commandment is true in Christ and is true among you, because the darkness is disappearing and the true light is already shining.

[9] If anyone says, "I am living in the light," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is still living in darkness. [10] Anyone who loves other Christians is living in the light and does not cause anyone to stumble. [11] Anyone who hates a Christian brother or sister is living and walking in darkness. Such a person is lost, having been blinded by the darkness.

[12] I am writing to you, my dear children, because your sins have been forgiven because of Jesus.

[13] I am writing to you who are mature because you know Christ, the one who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you who are young because you have won your battle with Satan.

[14] I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father.

I have written to you who are mature because you know Christ, the one who is from the beginning.

I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won your battle with Satan.

[15] Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. [16] For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil

world. [17] And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.

[18] Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the end of the world has come. [19] These people left our churches because they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left us, it proved that they do not belong with us. [20] But you are not like that, for the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and all of you know the truth. [21] So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and falsehood. [22] And who is the great liar? The one who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Such people are antichrists, for they have denied the Father and the Son. [23] Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father either. But anyone who confesses the Son has the Father also.

[24] So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will continue to live in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. [25] And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

[26] I have written these things to you because you need to be aware of those who want to lead you astray. [27] But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you all things, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So continue in what he has taught you, and continue to live in Christ.

2. God is love (1 John 2:28-4:21)

And now, dear children, continue to live in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame. [29] Since we know that God is always right, we also know that all who do what is right are his children.

[3:1] see how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are! But the people who belong to this world don't know God, so they don't understand that we are his children. [2] Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him,

for we will see him as he really is. [3] And all who believe this will keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure.

[4] Those who sin are opposed to the law of God, for all sin opposes the law of God. [5] And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, for there is no sin in him. [6] So if we continue to live in him, we won't sin either. But those who keep on sinning have never known him or understood who he is.

[7] Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it is because they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. [8] But when people keep on sinning, it shows they belong to the Devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy these works of the Devil. [9] Those who have been born into God's family do not sin, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they have been born of God. [10] So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the Devil. Anyone who does not obey God's commands and does not love other Christians does not belong to God.

[11] This is the message we have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. [12] We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was right. [13] So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

[14] If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to eternal life. But a person who has no love is still dead. [15] Anyone who hates another Christian is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them. [16] We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters.

[17] But if anyone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to help—how can God's love be in that person?

[18] Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions. [19] It is by our actions that we know we are living in the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before the Lord, [20] even if our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

[21] Dear friends, if our conscience is clear, we can come to God with bold confidence. [22] And we will receive whatever we request because we obey him and do the things that please him. [23] And this is his commandment: We must

believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. [24] Those who obey God's commandments live in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Holy Spirit lives in us.

[4:1] Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. [2] This is the way to find out if they have the Spirit of God: If a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ became a human being, that person has the Spirit of God. [3] If a prophet does not acknowledge Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist. You have heard that he is going to come into the world, and he is already here.

[4] But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won your fight with these false prophets, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. [5] These people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. [6] But we belong to God; that is why those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

[7] Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] But anyone who does not love does not know God—for God is love.

[9] God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. [10] This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

[11] Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. [12] No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.

[13] And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. [14] Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] All who proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. [16] We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. [17] And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

[18] Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us. [19] We love each other as a result of his loving us first.

[20] If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? [21] And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too.

2. God is life (1 John 5:1-21)

1 John 5:1-21

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. [2] We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. [3] Loving God means keeping his commandments, and really, that isn't difficult. [4] For every child of God defeats this evil world by trusting Christ to give the victory. [5] And the ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

[6] And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit also gives us the testimony that this is true. [7] So we have these three witnesses— [8] the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree. [9] Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his Son. [10] All who believe in the Son of God know that this is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son.

[11] And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life.

[13] I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. [14] And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. [15] And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

[16] If you see a Christian brother or sister sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it. [17] Every wrong is sin, but not all sin leads to death.

[18] We know that those who have become part of God's family do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot get his hands on them. [19] We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the power and control of the evil one. [20] And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we are in God because we are in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.

[21] Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Sin

EXPLANATION:

Even Christians sin. Sin requires God's forgiveness, and Christ's death provides it for us. Determining to live according to God's standards in the Bible shows that our lives are being transformed.

IMPORTANCE:

We cannot deny our sin nature, maintain that we are "above" sinning, or minimize the consequences of sin in our relationship with God. We must resist the attraction of sin, yet we must confess when we do sin.

THEME: Love

EXPLANATION:

Christ commands us to love others as he loved us. This love is evidence that we are truly saved. God is the Creator of love; he cares that his children love each other.

IMPORTANCE:

Love means putting others first and being unselfish. Love is action—showing others we care—not just saying it. To show love we must give sacrificially of our time and money to meet the needs of others.

THEME: Family of God**EXPLANATION:**

We become God's children by believing in Christ. God's life in us enables us to love our fellow family members.

IMPORTANCE:

How we treat others shows who our Father is. Live as a faithful, loving family member.

THEME: Truth and Error**EXPLANATION:**

Teaching that the physical body does not matter, false teachers encouraged believers to throw off moral restraints. They also taught that Christ wasn't really a man and that we must be saved by having some special mystical knowledge. The result was that people became indifferent to sin.

IMPORTANCE:

God is truth and light, so the more we get to know him the better we can keep focused on the truth. Don't be led astray by any teaching that denies Christ's deity or humanity. Check the message; test the claims.

THEME: Assurance

EXPLANATION:

God is in control of heaven and earth. Because his word is true, we can have assurance of eternal life and victory over sin. By faith we can be certain of our eternal destiny with him.

IMPORTANCE:

Assurance of our relationship with God is a promise, but it is also a way of life. We build our confidence by trusting in God's word and in Christ's provision for our sin.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

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