

# 1 John

- Theme:** Tests for Assurance
- Author:** Apostle John
- Recipients:** Surrounding Asian churches (possibly the 7 churches of Revelation 2-3)
- Date of Writing:** A.D. 85-100
- Place of Writing:** Ephesus (?)
- Occasion:** Crisis, heresy, and conflict resulting from a growing incipient Gnosticism
- Purposes:**
1. To promote in the child of God true joy (1:4)
  2. To prevent the child of God from committing sin (2:1)
  3. To protect the child of God from those who would lead them astray (2:26)
  4. To provide assurance of salvation for the child of God (5:13)

# 1 John

Theme: Tests for Assurance of our Salvation

Key Thought: "By This We Know"

	1:5	God Is Light				3:10	3:11	God Is Love				5:12	
1:1-4													5:13-21
Prologue: The Word of Life	Walk in the Light	Obey the Command of Love	Know Your Spiritual Status	Be Warned of Enemies of the Faith	Live Like Children of God	Love One Another: Part One	Test the Spirits	Love One Another: Part Two	Obey God and Experience the Victory of Faith	Believe in the Son and Enjoy Eternal Life	Conclusion: The Confidence and Characteristics of the Child of God		
	1:5 2:2	2:3 2:11	2:12 2:14	2:15 2:28	2:28 3:10	3:11 3:24	4:1 4:6	4:7 4:21	5:1 5:5	5:6 5:12			
These things I write that:	Joy may be full	May not sin			Not be deceived						Know you have eternal life		
	Satisfaction	Sin Less			Safety						Security		

**Key Words:** Know, Love, Son, Life (eternal), Commandment(s), Light, Darkness, Beginning, In/by this, Believe, Fellowship, Spirit, Born, Overcome, Abide, Know, True

# Introduction to 1 John

## I. Author

Though this epistle does not state the name of its author, solid evidence suggests that it was written by John, the son of Zebedee and the brother of James (cf. Mark 1:19-20). Strong similarities between this letter and the Gospel of John (see chart) substantiate the testimony of many early Church Fathers—e.g. Papias, Polycarp, and Irenaeus—that both works are the products of John, the apostle of Jesus.

### Similarities Between the Gospel of John and First John

	<u>John</u>	<u>1 John</u>
Similar Themes	Light vs. Darkness	1:5; 3:19-20; 8:12; 12:35
	“Children” of God & “Children” of the Devil	1:12; 8:39-44; 13:33
	Those who know God also know his Son	3:1, 7-10; 5:18
	5:23; 6:40; 8:42; 14:6-11	2:23; 4:15; 5:1
Similar Wording	<u>John</u>	<u>1 John</u>
	“No one has seen God at any time” (1:18)	“No one has seen God at any time” (4:12)
	“He gave His only begotten Son” (3:16)	“God has sent his only begotten Son” (4:9)
	“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life” (3:36)	“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (5:12)
	“he who hears My word and believes . . . has passed from death into life” (5:24)	“We know that we have passed from death to life” (3:14)
	“But one of the soldiers pierced His side . . . immediately blood and water came out” (19:34)	“This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ” (5:6)

## II. Date and Place

The three Johannine epistles were probably written to churches in Asia Minor, while John was ministering in Ephesus. The epistles of John are usually dated between A.D. 80-95. However, the exact date and place of writing cannot be determined with certainty.

## III. Purpose

1 John was written to a church or group of churches in crisis—churches being bombarded by false teaching. Some individuals who had once been associated with the Christian community had adopted unorthodox doctrines and left the church (2:19). Evidently, after their departure, they continued to spread their propaganda to those who remained.

Undoubtedly, this influx of heresy created confusion within the believing community. In response to this situation, the author penned 1 John, which has two primary objectives:

(1) To combat the propaganda of certain false teachers—As the author addresses the beliefs of these heretics, he argues that these individuals are not genuine believers—they lack the marks of authentic Christianity. **Doctrinally**, they have compromised the person and work of Jesus Christ. The author criticizes those who did not confess Jesus as the Christ (2:22) and denied that the Christ had come in the flesh (4:2-3). Most likely, these false teachers were influenced by early Gnostic ideas. Gnosticism was a heretical movement that became prominent in the second century A.D. While Gnosticism took many forms, it usually emphasized the essential goodness of spirit and the inherent evil or inferiority of all matter. Influenced by this type of understanding, these heretics may have viewed Christ as some type of spirit, perhaps a spirit who had empowered Jesus during part of his ministry. However, they did not directly associate the Christ with the human Jesus; this led to a rejection of Jesus Christ as the unique God-man. Combined with this faulty view of the person of Christ was a deficient view of his death. 1 John contains specific statements that emphasize the atoning results of Christ's death (2:2; 4:10). Thus, as the author highlights the importance of the incarnation, he also stresses the distinctive nature of Christ's work. **Morally**, the false teachers minimized the seriousness of sin (1:6-10). They claimed that it was possible to have

fellowship with God regardless of one's behavior (1:6). By contrast, 1 John insists that one's relationship to God has ethical implications (2:3-4)—genuine love toward God demands obedience (5:3). Finally, these heretics failed **socially**. Their spiritual pride resulted in a lack of brotherly love (2:9, 11). On the other hand, the author states that love for fellow believers is a manifestation of genuine Christianity (3:14).

- (2) To reassure believers—With the onslaught of these false teachings, doubt and confusion probably developed among believers. What were they to believe—“the traditional teachings of the apostle” or the doctrines of these false leaders? To clear up this uncertainty, the author reminds his audience of the truthfulness of Christianity. He wants them to understand the reality of their faith so that they might know that they have eternal life (5:13). In fact, over 9 % of the verbs in the book are occurrences of words meaning “know” (*ginosko, oida*, Gk). John depicts Christian assurance from both an objective and a subjective perspective. Objectively, believers know the historicity of Jesus Christ's life and work. The events of his life were observed by eyewitnesses (1:1-3). Similarly, those who have trusted God's Son possess eternal life (5:12). Subjectively, Christians know that their lives have been transformed through faith in Christ. John summarizes the characteristics of true Christianity as right belief, righteousness, and love. He wants those believers to observe the manifestations of their faith that are evident in their lives.

The contrast between the condemnation of the false teachers and the reassurance of believers is apparent throughout the book. 1 John shows that humanity can be divided into two groups—the children of God and the children of the devil (3:10). No other classification is possible.

#### IV. Seven Contrasts in 1 John

1. Light vs. darkness (1:5 – 2:11)
2. The Father vs. the world (2:12-17)
3. Christ vs. the antichrist (2:18-28)
4. Good works vs. evil works (2:29 – 3:24)
5. The Holy Spirit vs. the spirit of error (4:1-6)

6. Love vs. Pious Pretence (4:7-21)
7. The God-born vs. the natural-born (5:1-21)

V. The “If we say / He who says” of 1 John

Seven times in this letter there is an “If we say,” or “He who says” statement; and each time it marks a test by which false religion is exposed. These are seven tests of honesty and integrity. They search us. They call us to examine ourselves to see if our conduct matches our confession. They expose hypocrisy. They test reality.

- |      |                            |   |
|------|----------------------------|---|
| 1:6  | <u>False Fellowship</u>    | “ <b>If we say</b> that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie.”          |
| 1:8  | <u>False Sanctity</u>      | “ <b>If we say</b> that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”   |
| 1:10 | <u>False Righteousness</u> | “ <b>If we say</b> that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” |
| 2:4  | <u>False Allegiance</u>    | “ <b>He who says</b> I know Him, and keeps not His commandments is a liar.”                 |
| 2:6  | <u>False Behavior</u>      | “ <b>He who says</b> he abides in Him ought to walk even as He walked.”                     |
| 2:9  | <u>False Spirituality</u>  | “ <b>He who says</b> he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness.”        |
| 4:20 | <u>False love to God</u>   | “ <b>If someone says</b> I love God; and hates his brother, he is a liar.                   |

## VI. Summation of the Description of the False Teachers in 1 John

<u>A New Theology</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>Response of 1 John</u>
<u>A New Theology</u>	They comprised the uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus Christ.	Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God whose death provides forgiveness of sin.
<u>A New Morality</u>	They minimized the importance of sin; they claimed to have fellowship with God despite their unrighteous behavior.	Christianity has ethical implications; fellowship with God requires righteousness.
<u>A New Spirituality</u>	Their teachings resulted in spiritual arrogance; consequently, they did not show love to genuine believers.	God is love; thus, love for fellow Christians is a mark of true Christianity.

## Outline of 1 John

<u>Prologue:</u> The Word of Life	1:1-4
I. <u>God is Light</u>	1:5 – 3:10
A. Walk in the Light.	1:5 – 2:2
1. God is Light.	1:5 – 1:7
2. Resist sin.	1:8 – 2:2
B. Obey the command to love.	2:3-11
1. Know God and keep His commands.	2:3-6
2. Learn the New Command and love others.	2:7-11
C. Know your spiritual status.	2:12-14
D. Be warned of enemies of the faith.	2:15-28
1. Beware of the world.	2:15-17
2. Beware of the antichrists.	2:18-28
E. Live like children of God.	2:28 – 3:10
1. Be confident and ready for His coming.	2:28 – 3:3
2. Be righteous and do not sin.	3:4-10
II. <u>God is Love</u>	3:11-24
A. Love one another: part one.	3:11-24
1. Love in action.	3:11-18
2. Live in confidence.	3:19-24
B. Test the spirits.	4:1-6
C. Love one another: part two.	4:7-21
1. Love others because God loves you.	4:7-10
2. Love others because God lives in you.	4:11-21
D. Obey God and experience the victory of faith.	5:1-5
E. Believe in the Son and enjoy eternal life.	5:6-12
<u>Conclusion:</u> The Confidence and Characteristics of the Child of God.	5:13-21
A. Know you have eternal life.	5:13
B. Be confident in prayer.	5:14-17
C. Do not continue in sin.	5:18-20
D. Keep yourself from idols.	5:20-21

**“Faith is the Victory”**  
**1 John 5:1-5**

- |      |   |       |
|------|---|-------|
| I.   | <u>Experience victory by believing in Jesus</u>   | 5:1   |
|      | 1. Know who to believe                            |       |
|      | 2. Know what to believe                           |       |
| II.  | <u>Experience victory by loving others</u>        | 5:1-2 |
|      | 1. Love the Father                                | 5:1   |
|      | 2. Love the Savior                                | 5:1   |
|      | 3. Love the brothers                              | 5:2   |
| III. | <u>Experience victory by obeying God</u>          | 5:2-3 |
|      | 1. God’s commandments are a blessing              | 5:2   |
|      | 2. God’s commandments are not a burden            | 5:3   |
| IV.  | <u>Experience victory by overcoming the world</u> | 5:4-5 |
|      | 1. You must be born of God                        | 5:4   |
|      | 2. You must believe in Jesus                      | 5:5   |