

## Winter Bible Study

### January 17, 24, 31, February 7, 14

The members of John's congregation lived in an era where being a faithful follower of Jesus was difficult. Some persons—possibly former members of his congregation—denied that Jesus had come in the flesh and doubted the importance of ethical living based on the teachings of Jesus. There were others who offered alternative (i.e. false) teachings on the nature of eternal life.



John loved his congregation, and these three short letters show just how much he wanted them to experience the fullness of life in Christ. To do this, they needed to be wary of false teaching. And so in the midst of a crisis, John wrote three letters to them. 1 John is a general letter to the entire congregation and addresses matters of Jesus' identity, eternal life, and the nature of Christian love. 2 and 3 John are personal notes to individuals within the church that focus on specific issues resulting from the challenges the congregation was facing. Through these letters, John's hopes are clear: *the way we talk about loving God must match the way we actually love one another.*

John's letters are timely for our—or any—congregation. We live in a time of chaos and crisis. Social media manipulates us and conflicting news reports confuse us. The way people relate to the church is changing; many persons reduce faith in Jesus to a set of privately held beliefs that have little or no influence on daily choices and the way we interact with one another. In the midst of challenging social and spiritual change, how are we to follow Jesus?

### To prepare for our study

1. Give some thought to the following questions:
  - a. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing Christianity in our day? How might our congregation engage these issues?
  - b. Is being a Christian more a matter of *belief* or *behavior*? What guidance does John give in these letters? How do you tell the difference between a genuine Christian and one who has wandered from their faith?
2. If you can, read 1, 2, 3 John three times each
  - a. The first time, simply read the letters. If you can, read them out loud.
  - b. The second time, read the letters with the above questions in mind. What are John's answers to these issues?
  - c. The third time, read the letters paying attention to these questions:
    - i. What affirmations can be made about Jesus Christ?
    - ii. What affirmations can be made about eternal life?

## Bible Study schedule

- January 17:** Introduction; 1 John 1:1-2:2  
**January 24:** 1 John 2:3-4:6  
**January 31:** 1 John 4:7-5:21  
**February 7:** 2 John; 3 John  
**February 14:** Ash Wednesday prayer service

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