



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

October 5-11

1 John 1:1-4

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

The Christian faith is not built on wishful thinking, religious speculation, or a collection of inspiring ideas. It is built on a Person who entered history. John begins his letter by emphasizing that Jesus was heard, seen, looked upon, and touched. The eternal Son of God truly came in the flesh, and John and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to His life. Jesus has been revealed to us so that we can know with confidence who He is.

But John doesn't simply want his readers to know facts about Jesus. He wants them to experience fellowship with Jesus. The apostles proclaim what they have seen and heard so that others can share in fellowship with

them, and ultimately with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This fellowship produces something the world cannot manufacture: complete joy. **Jesus is the proven Son of God who completes our joy.**

Read

Read 1 John 1:1-4 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

1 John 1:1-4

[1] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—[2] the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—[3] that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. [4] And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

John's experience with Jesus didn't end with him. Because John had encountered the risen Christ, he wanted others to know Him, too. He says, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.” Genuine fellowship with Jesus should naturally overflow into helping others know Jesus.

Living on mission begins with knowing Christ ourselves and then faithfully sharing what we know about Him with others. As a group, consider: Who has God placed around us who needs to hear the truth about Jesus? We don't have to have every answer. Like John, we can simply testify to the Jesus we have come to know and invite others into fellowship with Him.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- October 5-11

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 1:1-4

1. Session Overview

First John begins with remarkable confidence. John does not introduce Jesus as an abstract idea or distant religious figure. He presents Him as the eternal Son of God who entered human history. John and the other apostles heard Him, saw Him, observed Him, and touched Him. The eternal “word of life” was made manifest. Christianity therefore rests on the historical revelation of Jesus Christ.

But John's purpose is deeply relational. He proclaims Jesus so that his readers can experience fellowship with the apostles and, ultimately, fellowship “with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” That fellowship leads to complete joy. This gives us the central idea for the session: Because Jesus Christ truly entered history as the eternal Son of God, we can experience genuine fellowship with God that results in complete joy.

2. Opening

Ask:

What’s the difference between hearing someone tell you about an experience and actually experiencing it for yourself?

Why does an eyewitness usually carry more credibility than someone who simply heard the story secondhand?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 1:1-4 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 1:1-2

John begins his letter by taking his readers back to “that which was from the beginning.” Jesus did not begin to exist at Bethlehem. He is the eternal Son who was with the Father and then was “made manifest” to us. Yet John immediately combines this extraordinary claim about Jesus' eternality with very physical language: “we have heard,” “we have seen with our eyes,” “we looked upon,” and “have touched with our hands.” The eternal Son truly entered the physical world. Jesus is not merely an idea to believe, an example to follow, or a spiritual experience to pursue. He is the Son of God who entered history and made God known to us.

This matters because our confidence in Christ rests on what God has revealed, not merely on what we feel. Feelings change. Circumstances change. Questions arise. But John points his readers toward the historical reality of Jesus Christ. The apostles didn't invent a message about Jesus; they testified to the One they encountered. Our faith rests on the same revealed Christ. We don't determine who Jesus is; we receive who God has revealed Him to be.

Another text to read is 1 Corinthians 15:1-17.

1 John 1:3-4

John explains why he proclaims what he has seen and heard: “so that you too may have fellowship with us.” The word fellowship carries the idea of sharing or participating together in something. But John quickly makes clear that Christian fellowship is much deeper than friendship or simply spending time with other Christians. “Indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Through Christ, sinners are invited into genuine relationship with God and into a new community of people who share that relationship with Him.

John then connects fellowship with joy: “we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” The deepest joy of the Christian life isn't ultimately found in better circumstances, greater success, or getting everything we want. Complete joy flows from knowing and sharing life with God through Jesus Christ. This also explains why John cannot keep the message to himself. He has encountered Jesus, enjoys fellowship with Jesus, and now wants others to experience that fellowship too. The joy we find in Jesus becomes complete as we know Him, share life with His people, and invite others to know Him with us.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 1:1-4?
2. Why do you think John emphasizes the physical reality of Jesus so strongly?
3. How does knowing that Christianity is grounded in the historical person of Jesus strengthen our confidence in Him?

4. How would you explain the difference between knowing about Jesus and having fellowship with Jesus?
5. What things are you tempted to look to for the joy that John says is ultimately found in fellowship with God?
6. How should our fellowship with God affect our fellowship with one another?
7. If you genuinely believe Jesus is the eternal Son of God who has been revealed to us, how should that change your life this week?

6. Application

Take time this week to consider two questions:

- Am I enjoying fellowship with Jesus or simply knowing things about Jesus?
- Where am I currently looking for joy apart from Christ?

Set aside intentional time this week simply to be with Jesus through His Word and prayer. Rather than approaching that time as another spiritual task to accomplish, approach it as an opportunity to enjoy fellowship with the God who has made Himself known to you.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You that You have not left us guessing about who You are. Thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Give us confidence in who Jesus is and draw us into deeper fellowship with You. Forgive us for looking to the things of this world to give us the joy that only You can provide. Help us know Christ, enjoy Christ, and faithfully proclaim Christ so that others might know Him too. In Jesus' name, amen.

8. Memory Verse

“That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

1 John 1:3





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

October 12-18

1 John 1:5-2:6

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John now turns from the reality of Jesus to the character of God: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Light describes God's absolute holiness and truth. If we claim fellowship with Him, our lives cannot be defined by hiding in darkness while insisting that nothing needs to change.

Walking in the light does not mean Christians never sin. John immediately tells believers what to do when they do: confess rather than conceal, trust Christ's cleansing rather than excuse sin, and obey Jesus rather than

merely claim to know Him. Fellowship with Christ brings us out of hiding and into an honest life of repentance, forgiveness, obedience, and growing freedom from sin's control.

Read

Read 1 John 1:5-2:6 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

1 John 1:5-2:6

Walking in the Light

[5] This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. [6] If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [7] 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 cleanses us from all sin. [8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (ESV)

Christ Our Advocate

[1] My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. [2] He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. [3] And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. [4] Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [5] but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: [6] whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

A church that walks in the light should be a place where people do not have to pretend. Because Jesus cleanses and advocates for sinners, we can confess honestly, receive grace, and help one another pursue holiness. As a group, practice the kind of fellowship that tells the truth about sin without abandoning grace. That kind of community becomes a powerful witness in a culture built on image management and hiding.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- October 12-17

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 1:5-2:6

1. Session Overview

God is light, and genuine fellowship with Him changes the way we relate to sin. The passage alternates between false claims and gospel truth. Some claim fellowship while walking in darkness, claim to have no sin, or claim never to have sinned. John answers each claim by calling believers into the light. Believers who walk in the light make sure their sin is acknowledged, confessed, and cleansed.

The opening of chapter 2 keeps grace and holiness together. Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father and the atoning sacrifice for sin, so believers do not have to hide when they fail. At the same time, knowing Christ produces obedience. John is not teaching sinless perfection; he is describing a life increasingly shaped by the light of God rather than the darkness of sin.

2. Opening

Ask:

Why are people often more comfortable hiding a struggle than admitting it?

What is the difference between fighting sin and pretending you do not have sin?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 1:5-2:6 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 1:5

Light communicates His holiness, truth, purity, and moral perfection. God does not adjust His character to our preferences, and He does not contain a mixture of good and evil. He is completely holy. That means fellowship with God cannot be separated from who God is. We do not bring God into our darkness and ask Him to approve it; He brings us into His light. Before John addresses behavior, he grounds everything in God's character. The call to holiness begins not with self-improvement but with seeing God rightly.

1 John 1:6-2:6

Walking in the light means living honestly before God. John exposes the instinct to claim fellowship with God while remaining committed to darkness. In contrast, those who walk in the light acknowledge sin instead of denying it. Confession is not earning forgiveness; it is agreeing with God about our sin and trusting His promise to forgive and cleanse because of Jesus.

John then makes sure believers understand that grace is not permission to remain in sin. When we sin, Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father. He is the righteous One who has dealt with our guilt. Because we know Him, obedience becomes the direction of our lives. Fellowship with Christ leads to freedom from the need to hide, freedom from condemnation, and growing freedom from sin's domination.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 1:5-2:6?
2. What is the difference between walking in darkness and struggling with sin while walking in the light?
3. Why is confession difficult for us?
4. How does Jesus as our advocate change the way we respond when we fail?
5. Where are you tempted to hide, minimize, or excuse sin?
6. What area of obedience is Christ currently pressing on in your life?
7. Do you have someone in your life who serves as your accountability partner?

6. Application

Bring one specific area of sin into the light this week. Confess it honestly to God, receive the cleansing Christ provides, and if appropriate share it with a trusted believer who can pray with you and hold you accountable. Then identify one concrete act of obedience that reflects walking in the light.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Holy God, You are light and there is no darkness in You. Bring what is hidden in us into the light. Give us humility to confess sin, faith to trust the cleansing work of Jesus, and courage to obey You. Thank You that Christ is our advocate when we fail. Teach us to walk in the light together. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

October 19-25

1 John 2:7-14

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John has already told us that God is light and that those who know Him walk in the light. Now he shows one of the clearest evidences of that walk: love for other believers. The command to love is both old and new. How? It's old because God has always called His people to love, and new because Jesus embodied that love perfectly and formed a new community around Himself.

John also pauses to remind believers who they are. Their sins are forgiven, they know the Father, they know the One who is from the beginning, they have overcome the evil one, and God's Word abides in them. We do

not love one another in order to earn an identity; we love because the gospel has already given us one.

Read

Read 1 John 2:7-14 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 2:7-14

The New Commandment

[7] Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. [8] At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. [9] Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. [10] Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. [11] But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

[12] I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

[13] I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

[14] I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

The way Christians love one another is part of our witness to the world. A divided, bitter, or indifferent church obscures the light we claim to walk in. A church that forgives, serves, encourages, and bears burdens displays something different. As a group, identify one practical way you can intentionally love someone in the church family this week.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- October 18-25

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 2:7-14

1. Session Overview

This passage ties assurance to both gospel identity and brotherly love. John speaks tenderly to “little children,” “fathers,” and “young men,” reminding believers of what is already true because of Christ: forgiveness, knowledge of God, spiritual strength, victory, and the abiding Word. These are not achievements to earn but realities to remember. That gospel identity produces a new way of relating to others. Hatred belongs to darkness; love belongs to light. John does not let a believer separate devotion to God from how they treat fellow Christians. To walk in the light is to love one another because the light of Christ has changed both who we are and how we see His people.

2. Opening

Ask:

What is something you act differently about when you are secure in your identity?

Why is it sometimes easier to talk about loving people than to actually love the people closest to us?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 2:7-14 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 2:12-14 - Do You Know the Gospel?

John interrupts his warning and encouragement to remind believers of their gospel identity. Their sins are forgiven for Jesus’ name’s sake. They know the Father. They know the eternal Christ. They have overcome the evil one, and the Word of God abides in them. John wants the church to obey from assurance, not anxiety. Christians often drift into one of two errors: trying to obey so God will finally accept us, or using grace as a reason obedience does not

matter. John rejects both. The gospel tells us what God has done and who we are because of Christ, and that identity becomes the foundation for a transformed life.

1 John 2:7-11

John says the command to love is both old and new. It is old because love has always been central to God's will, yet it is new because Jesus has revealed its fullest meaning, and His people are now living it out. The true light is already shining. That creates a searching test: someone who claims to be in the light while hating a brother or sister is still walking in darkness. Love is not an optional personality trait for especially warm Christians. It is evidence that the light of Christ is shaping us. Love does not mean approving everything another person does; it means seeking their good with the same grace, truth, patience, and sacrifice we have received from Christ.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 2:7-14?
2. What is the difference between walking in darkness and struggling with sin while walking in the light?
3. Which gospel identity statement from verses 12–14 encourages you most?
4. Why do you think John connects assurance with love for other believers?
5. How can unresolved bitterness keep someone walking in darkness?
6. What is one practical expression of love that costs something?
7. How can we love someone while still speaking truth or setting healthy boundaries?
8. Who is God calling you to move toward in love this week?

6. Application

Choose one person in the body of Christ whom you can intentionally love this week. Encourage them, forgive them, serve them, meet a need, or initiate a difficult but gracious conversation. Before you act, remind yourself of one gospel truth from verses 12–14 and let what Christ has done for you shape what you do for them.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You that our sins are forgiven in Christ and that we know You as our Father. Let Your Word abide deeply in us. Expose hatred, bitterness, and indifference in our hearts, and teach us to love one another as people who have been loved by Jesus. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

“Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.”

1 John 2:10





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

October 26 - November 1

1 John 2:15-17

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John now confronts a competing love. We cannot claim to love the Father while giving our hearts to a world organized in rebellion against Him. "The world" in this passage does not mean people or God's good creation; it describes a system of desires, values, and pride that pulls us away from God. John names three expressions of that worldliness: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. All three promise satisfaction, but none can last. The world is passing away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever. Walking in the light requires learning to love what lasts more than what is fading.

Read

Read 1 John 2:15-17 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

1 John 2:15-17

Do Not Love the World

[15] Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. [17] And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Our culture constantly disciplines our desires. Living on mission means we cannot simply mirror whatever the world celebrates. When believers display contentment, self-control, humility, generosity, and obedience, we offer a visible alternative to a life built on appetite, appearance, and status. Ask as a group: Where are we most tempted to look just like the world around us?

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- October 26- November 1

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 2:15-17

1. Session Overview

John's command not to love the world is about allegiance. He is not teaching Christians to withdraw from people or despise creation. He is warning against loving the system of desires and values that resists the Father. The problem is not merely what is "out there"; the world appeals to desires within us. That is, the craving to satisfy ourselves, possess what we see, and build an identity around status or self-sufficiency. The decisive reason to reject worldliness is that it is passing away. John contrasts temporary desire with the enduring life of the one who does God's will. Spiritual maturity therefore involves more than avoiding obviously sinful behaviors; it means retraining our loves so that our hearts are increasingly captured by the Father and what lasts forever.

2. Opening

Ask:

- What is something you wanted badly at one point but later realized could not satisfy you?
- Where do you feel the strongest pressure to keep up, prove yourself, or have more?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 2:15-17 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 2:15-17

John speaks directly to the heart: do not love the world or the things in the world. The issue is not whether we live among people in the world but whether the world's values have captured our affection. John exposes three common channels of temptation: desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and pride in possessions or status. These categories reach beyond specific sins to the deeper loves underneath them.

Worldliness often looks normal because everyone around us may be chasing the same things. The question is not simply, "Is this allowed?" but "What does this reveal about what I love?" The Father calls us to a different center of gravity. We can enjoy His gifts without making them gods and engage the world without allowing it to disciple our hearts.

John gives a reason to loosen our grip: the world is passing away along with its desires. Everything the world offers (pleasure, possessions, applause, status) is temporary. Building a life around what is temporary guarantees eventual disappointment. By contrast, the one who does the will of God abides forever. John is not teaching salvation by works; he is describing the enduring life that belongs to those whose allegiance is with God. Doing God's will reveals that our hope has shifted from what is fading to what is eternal. Mature disciples learn to ask not only what feels good now, but what will matter forever.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 2:15-17?
2. Which of John's three categories of desire is most recognizable in our culture?
3. How can good things become rival loves?
4. What helps us recognize worldliness when it looks normal?
5. What does "the world" mean in this passage?
6. Which of the desires in verse 16 do you find most subtle?
7. How can Christians enjoy God's good gifts without loving the world?
8. Where are you most tempted to seek identity from what you have, how you look, or what others think?
9. What does doing the will of God look like in a specific area of your life right now?
10. What is one temporary pursuit you may need to hold more loosely?

6. Application

Identify one area where the world is shaping your desires more than the Father is. Name it clearly. Then replace that influence with a concrete practice that redirects your heart toward God—Scripture, generosity, fasting, simplicity, gratitude, or obedience in a specific area.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, expose the rival loves in our hearts. Forgive us for chasing desires that cannot last. Teach us to enjoy Your gifts without worshiping them and to live for what is eternal. Shape our desires so that doing Your will becomes our joy. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

"And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

1 John 2:17



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

November 2-8

1 John 2:18-27

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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*Studying God's Word **In Community***

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John warns the church that deception does not only come from outside the church. False teachers had departed from the community and denied the truth about Jesus. John calls their teaching "antichrist" because it opposes the true identity of Christ. The issue is not merely theological trivia; what we believe about Jesus determines whether we truly know the Father. Believers are not left defenseless. John calls them to let what they heard from the beginning abide in them, and he reminds them that they have an anointing from the Holy One. The Spirit does not lead us away from the gospel into novelty; He confirms the truth about Jesus and helps believers remain in Him.

Read

Read 1 John 2:18-27 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

Scripture

1 John 2:18-27

Warning Concerning Antichrists

[18] Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. [20] But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. [21] I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22] Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. [23] No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. [24] Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

[26] I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. [27] But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

A dark world is full of spiritual claims, confident voices, and competing versions of Jesus. Living on mission requires both conviction and discernment. We do not need to be afraid of every question, but we do need to know the gospel well enough to recognize a counterfeit. As a group, encourage one another to test teaching by Scripture and to speak about the real Jesus with clarity and grace.

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- November 2-8

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 2:18-27

1. Session Overview

John addresses a crisis created by teachers who had left the church and denied essential truth about Jesus. He uses strong language because Christ's identity is central to the gospel. To deny the Son is to deny the Father. The church cannot preserve unity by treating every claim about Jesus as equally true.

At the same time, John does not want believers to panic. They have heard the apostolic message and have received the Holy Spirit. Their calling is to remain, let the original gospel abide in them, and abide in Christ. The Spirit's work and the Word's truth belong together. Discernment is therefore not chasing secret knowledge but remaining anchored to the Jesus revealed in the gospel.

2. Opening

Ask:

- What is something you wanted badly at one point but later realized could not satisfy you?
- Where do you feel the strongest pressure to keep up, prove yourself, or have more?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 2:18-27 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 2:18-23

John warns that “many antichrists” have come. In context, he is describing teachers whose message opposes the true Christ. Their departure from the church exposed a deeper departure from apostolic truth. John focuses especially on their denial that Jesus is the Christ and insists that the Son and the Father cannot be separated.

Discernment begins with Christology: What does this teaching say about Jesus? A message can use Christian vocabulary and still distort the gospel if it redefines the Son. John gives

believers permission to name falsehood for what it is while keeping the test centered on revealed truth rather than personality, popularity, or novelty.

1 John 2:24-27

John's positive command is simple: let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. The safest path in a deceptive age is deep-rootedness in the gospel. If the message about Christ remains in us, we remain in the Son and in the Father, and we possess the promise of eternal life.

John also reminds believers of the anointing they received, a reference to the Spirit's presence and teaching ministry. He is not saying Christians never need teachers; John himself is teaching them. He is assuring them that they do not need the false teachers' supposedly superior knowledge. The Spirit enables God's people to recognize and remain in the truth already given about Christ.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 2:18-27?
2. What makes false teaching spiritually dangerous?
3. Why does John make the identity of Jesus the central test?
4. What modern messages about Jesus might sound attractive while changing who He is?
5. What does it look like practically to let the gospel "abide" in us?
6. How do the Word and the Spirit work together in discernment?
7. What helps you remain steady when persuasive voices disagree?
8. How can familiarity with Scripture protect us from deception?
9. Where do you feel pressure to soften or redefine truth about Jesus?
10. What practice would help the gospel abide more deeply in you this week?

6. Application

Choose one regular source of spiritual influence in your life (a podcast, teacher, social account, book, or conversation) and practice biblical discernment. Ask: What does this say about Jesus? Is it consistent with the apostolic gospel? Then spend time in the text itself so your ability to recognize truth grows from familiarity with Scripture.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, keep us from deception. Root us deeply in the truth You have revealed about Your Son. Give us discernment through Your Word and Spirit, humility to be corrected, and courage to remain faithful when falsehood is persuasive. Help us abide in Christ. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

“Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.”

1 John 2:24





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

November 9-15

1 John 2:28-3:10

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John moves from abiding in Christ to the hope of Christ's return. Believers are already children of God, yet what they will be has not fully appeared. When Christ appears, they will be like Him because they will see Him as He is. That future hope changes present behavior: everyone who hopes in Christ purifies himself. John then draws a sharp contrast between practicing righteousness and practicing sin. He is not saying a Christian never sins; the letter has already made that impossible. He is describing the settled direction and practice of a life. Jesus appeared to take away sins and destroy the works of the devil, so those born of God cannot be at peace with a life defined by sin.

Read

Read 1 John 2:28-3:10 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 2:28-3:10

[28] And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

[29] If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. [1] See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

[4] Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. [5] You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. [6] No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. [7] Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. [8] Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. [10] By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Holiness is not withdrawal from mission; it gives credibility to mission. A church that talks about the transforming power of Jesus while making peace with sin sends a confused message. As we pursue purity, we show that Christ not only forgives but changes people. Encourage one another this week to fight sin from the security of being God's children.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- November 9-15

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 2:28-3:10

1. Session Overview

This passage holds identity, hope, and holiness together. John begins with assurance: believers are called children of God because of the Father's love. Their final transformation is still future, but it is certain. Seeing Christ will complete what grace has begun. That future hope creates a present desire for purity.

John then uses intentionally stark language about sin and righteousness. He is describing characteristic practice, not claiming believers achieve sinless perfection. Earlier he told Christians to confess sin and rely on Christ as Advocate. Here his concern is whether someone's life is oriented toward righteousness or comfortable with ongoing rebellion. New birth creates a new direction because Christ came to take away sins and destroy the works of the devil.

2. Opening

Ask:

How does knowing who you belong to affect the way you live?

What future event are you looking forward to that changes how you prepare today?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 2:28-3:10 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 2:28-3:3

John calls believers to abide in Christ so that His appearing produces confidence rather than shame. Then he directs their attention to the Father's astonishing love: we are called children of God, and that is what believers truly are. Christian obedience grows from belonging.

Our identity is secure, but our transformation is not yet complete. When Christ appears, we will be like Him. John's point is practical: future hope produces present purity. We do not purify ourselves to earn sonship; because we are God's children and expect to see Christ, we increasingly want our lives to resemble Him now.

1 John 3:4-10

John defines sin as lawlessness and reminds believers that Jesus appeared to take away sins. The Son of God also appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Because Christ's mission is opposed to sin, those who abide in Him cannot treat sin casually or make it the settled practice of their lives. The language is severe because John is exposing false assurance. A person can claim spiritual knowledge while their life is oriented toward rebellion. New birth creates a new family resemblance. Believers still stumble and confess, but they cannot be content to remain under sin's rule. The direction of the Christian life is toward righteousness and love because God's life is at work within His children.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 2:28-3:10?
2. How does being called a child of God shape your sense of identity?
3. Why should hope in Christ's return affect present choices?
4. Where would living "ready" change your behavior?
5. What does it mean to you to be called a child of God?
6. How does assurance of future transformation give hope in present struggles?
7. Why is it dangerous to treat sin casually?
8. How can we distinguish ongoing repentance from settled rebellion?
9. What sin are you actively fighting right now?
10. What evidence of God's transforming work can you thank Him for?

6. Application

Name one area where you need to "practice righteousness" more intentionally. Do not begin with shame; begin with your identity as God's child. Then choose one concrete step of repentance and one concrete practice of obedience that moves you toward Christlikeness.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the love that has made us Your children. Fix our hope on the return of Christ and use that hope to purify us. Give us courage to fight sin, confidence in Your grace when we stumble, and a growing family resemblance to You. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

1 John 3:2-3





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

November 16-22

1 John 3:11-24

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John returns to the command believers heard from the beginning: love one another. He contrasts the way of Cain, marked by hatred and death, with the way of Jesus, who laid down His life for us. Christian love therefore cannot remain in words alone. It moves toward people, meets real needs, and is willing to sacrifice. That kind of love also becomes part of the believer's assurance. When our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts. We can come before Him with confidence as we believe in Jesus, love one another, and abide in Him. The Spirit's presence confirms that we belong to God.

Read

Read 1 John 3:11-24 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 3:11-24

Love One Another

[11] For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. [12] We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. [13] Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. [14] We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

[16] By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. [17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

[19] By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; [20] for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. [21] Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; [22] and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. [23] And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. [24] Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Holiness is not withdrawal from mission; it gives credibility to mission. A church that talks about the transforming power of Jesus while making peace with sin sends a confused message. As we pursue purity, we show that Christ not only forgives but changes people. Encourage one another this week to fight sin from the security of being God's children.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
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 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- November 16-22

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 3:11-24

1. Session Overview

John contrasts two family resemblances: Cain represents hatred that leads toward death, while Jesus reveals love that gives itself away. The standard for Christian love is therefore not sentiment but the cross. We know love because Christ laid down His life for us, and His people learn to lay down their lives for one another.

John then addresses assurance. Believers can experience a condemning conscience even when they are sincerely following Christ. John does not tell them to trust every feeling. God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Faith in Jesus, love for one another, obedience, prayer, and the Spirit's presence together give believers confidence that they abide in God.

2. Opening

Ask:

When has someone's practical act of love meant more to you than their words?

What is the difference between feeling guilty and being truly convicted of sin?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 3:11-24 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 3:11-18

John says the message heard from the beginning is that believers should love one another. Cain is the negative example: hatred flows from darkness and can culminate in death. The world's hostility should not surprise Christians because the values of light and darkness are fundamentally opposed.

Jesus provides the positive definition of love: He laid down His life for us. Therefore Christian love is willing to sacrifice. John immediately makes it practical—if someone has resources, sees a brother or sister in need, and closes their heart, mere words about love ring hollow. Biblical love acts “in deed and in truth.”

1 John 3:19-24

John recognizes that our hearts can condemn us. Conscience matters, but it is not infallible. God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. When believers are walking in faith and love, they can reassure their hearts before Him rather than being ruled by constant self-accusation. John summarizes God's command: believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. Those who keep His commands abide in Him, and the Spirit gives assurance of God's presence. Confidence before God is therefore not self-confidence. It is gospel confidence rooted in Christ, expressed in obedient love, and confirmed by the Spirit.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 3:11-24?
2. How does the cross redefine love?
3. What needs are easiest for us to notice but ignore?
4. What might laying down your life look like in ordinary relationships?
5. When your heart condemns you, where do you tend to look for assurance?
6. How do faith in Christ, love for others, and obedience work together in this passage?
7. What practical need could our group meet together?

6. Application

Choose one person whose need you can meet in a concrete way this week. Make your love visible through time, money, service, presence, or sacrifice. If your heart is condemning you, also rehearse the gospel: God is greater than your heart, Christ has laid down His life for you, and your confidence rests in Him.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You for showing us love through Jesus laying down His life for us. Keep us from loving only in words. Make us generous, sacrificial, and attentive to real needs. When our hearts condemn us, anchor our confidence in Christ and assure us by Your Spirit. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

1 John 3:18





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

November 23-29

1 John 4:1-6

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John tells believers not to believe every spirit. False prophets are in the world, so Christians must test what they hear. The decisive question is what a message confesses about Jesus Christ. Believers can practice discernment without fear because the One who is in them is greater than the one who is in the world. John contrasts the spirit of truth with the spirit of error and ties discernment to listening to the Word. The Holy Spirit leads God's people to the truth, He is the teacher, and He helps us recognize and remain in it.

Read

Read 1 John 4:1-6 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 4:1-6

Test the Spirits

[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. [4] Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. [5] They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Holiness is not withdrawal from mission; it gives credibility to mission. A church that talks about the transforming power of Jesus while making peace with sin sends a confused message. As we pursue purity, we show that Christ not only forgives but changes people. Encourage one another this week to fight sin from the security of being God's children.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- November 23-29

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 4:1-6

1. Session Overview

John assumes a spiritual world in which not every spiritual influence comes from God. The church therefore needs discernment. His primary test is Christological: true confession acknowledges Jesus Christ came in the flesh. In the original crisis, false teachers distorted the identity of Jesus, so John gives the church a concrete doctrinal standard.

The passage also guards against fear. Believers belong to God, and the Spirit who indwells them is greater than the spiritual opposition in the world. John again connects the Spirit and truth: those who know God listen to the message. Healthy discernment is therefore neither gullibility nor paranoia; it is confident testing rooted in Christ, Scripture, and the Spirit.

2. Opening

Ask:

What makes a message sound believable even when it's not true?

Have you ever believed something because the speaker was confident, sincere, or persuasive?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 4:1-6 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 4:1-6

John commands believers not to believe every spirit but to test the spirits because many false prophets have gone into the world. The command assumes that spiritual claims require evaluation. Experiences, impressions, and persuasive teachers must not be accepted simply because they use God-language. John's central test is the confession of Jesus Christ come in the flesh. Truth about Jesus matters. Any spirituality that minimizes His incarnation,

redefines His identity, or moves away from the apostolic Christ fails the test. Discernment begins by asking whether a message agrees with who Jesus truly is.

John immediately reassures believers: “you are from God.” Their confidence is not in their own intelligence but in the One who is in them. The Spirit of God is greater than the spiritual power at work in the world. Discernment can therefore be practiced from confidence rather than fear.

John also notes that worldly messages resonate with the world, while those who know God listen to the apostolic witness. The Spirit of truth and the truth of Scripture are not rivals. The Spirit forms a people who hear, receive, and remain in the truth about Christ.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 4:1-6?
2. What kinds of things do people accept today simply because they feel spiritual?
3. Why is the incarnation such an important test?
4. How can we test claims without becoming cynical?
5. What is the difference between being open-minded and being undiscerning?
6. Why does what we believe about Jesus matter so much?
7. How can fear distort discernment?
8. What role should Scripture play in evaluating experiences and teachers?
9. What source of influence do you need to test more carefully?

6. Application

Practice a simple discernment habit this week. When you hear a spiritual claim, ask three questions: What does this say about Jesus? Is it consistent with Scripture? Does it lead me toward faithful obedience to Christ? Bring one example to your next group conversation.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, give us discernment in a world of competing voices. Keep us from gullibility and from fear. By Your Spirit, root us in the truth about Jesus and give us confidence that the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. Amen

8. Memory Verse

“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

1 John 4:4



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

November 30-December 6

1 John 4:7-21

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John reaches one of the clearest statements in the letter: God is love. He defines love by what God has done. God sent His only Son so that we might live through Him, and sent Him as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. The cross tells us what love is. Those who have received this love are called to love one another. As God's love matures in us, it produces confidence rather than fear. We love because He first loved us, and claims to love God are exposed as empty when we refuse to love His people.

Read

Read 1 John 4:7-21 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 4:7-21

God Is Love

[7] Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. [9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

[13] By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. [14] And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. [16] So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. [17] By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. [19] We love because he first loved us. [20] If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Our love becomes a visible sign of the invisible God. John says no one has seen God, yet when believers love one another, His love is displayed among them. A church marked by sacrificial love gives the world a glimpse of God's character. Ask how your group can make God's love tangible to someone who feels unseen, isolated, or afraid.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- November 30- December 6

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 4:7-21

1. Session Overview

John grounds Christian love in the nature and action of God. “God is love” does not mean love is whatever we want it to be. The next verses define divine love through the sending of the Son. God takes the initiative toward undeserving sinners, gives His Son so we might live, and deals with our sin through His sacrifice.

That received love becomes the source of our love for others and the foundation of assurance. As believers abide in God and His love is perfected among them, fear of judgment gives way to confidence. John closes with a simple test: a person cannot credibly claim to love the unseen God while hating a visible brother or sister.

2. Opening

Ask:

When have you been loved in a way you did not earn?

How does fear affect the way people relate to God and to one another?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 4:7-21 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 4:7-12

John calls believers to love one another because love is from God. He then defines the source and shape of love: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him, and He sent Him as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Love begins not with our pursuit of God but with His initiative toward us.

That means Christian love cannot be reduced to sentiment or affirmation. It is cross-shaped: holy, sacrificial, costly, and aimed at the true good of the other person. Having been loved

this way, believers “ought” to love one another. God’s invisible character becomes visible through the love of His people.

1 John 4:13-21

John connects abiding, the Spirit, confession of Jesus, and love. Believers know God abides in them because He has given His Spirit, and their confession centers on the Father sending the Son as Savior of the world. Christian assurance is Trinitarian: the Father sends, the Son saves, and the Spirit assures.

As God’s love reaches maturity in believers, it produces confidence for the day of judgment. Perfect love casts out fear—not every ordinary anxiety, but the fear of condemnation before God. The believer’s confidence rests in God’s love made known in Christ, and that security frees us to love rather than constantly protect ourselves.

John gives the foundation for all Christian love: “We love because he first loved us.” Love is a response before it is an achievement. We do not manufacture it from within; we receive God’s love and then reflect it outward. John also gives a searching test. A claim to love God is contradicted by hatred toward a brother or sister. Love for God and love for His people cannot be separated. The command is clear: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 4:7-21?
2. How does this passage define love differently from our culture?
3. What part of God’s initiating love is most meaningful to you?
4. How can fear keep us from loving others freely?
5. What does “perfect love casts out fear” mean in context?
6. Where is there a gap between your stated love for God and your treatment of someone else?
7. How can our group make God’s love visible this week?

6. Application

Begin each day this week by receiving before doing: thank God specifically for how He has loved you in Christ. Then choose one concrete way to reflect that love to another person—especially someone you find difficult, inconvenient, or easy to overlook.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

God, You are love, and You showed Your love by sending Your Son for us. Help us receive that love deeply enough that fear loses its grip. Teach us to love one another in ways that make Your character visible. Expose hatred and indifference in us and make us more like Jesus. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

“By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;”

1 John 4:19





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

December 7-13

1 John 5:1-12

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

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Gospel Connections and Conversations

[Click Here to report your Gospel Connections & Conversations](#)

Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John brings together themes that have run through the entire letter: faith, love, obedience, and victory. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Love for God produces love for His children, and love for God is expressed through obedience. His commands are not burdensome because new birth gives believers a new relationship to God. John then returns to the identity of Jesus and the testimony God has given about Him. The Spirit testifies, and God's testimony centers on this: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Eternal life is not found in religious effort, spiritual experience, or moral achievement. Whoever has the Son has life.

Read

Read 1 John 5:1-12 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 5:1-12

Overcoming the World

[1] Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. [2] By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. [3] For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. [4] For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. [5] Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[6] This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. [7] For there are three that testify: [8] the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. [9] If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. [10] Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. [11] And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

The Christian message is both exclusive and invitational: life is in the Son. We do not need to dilute that truth to love people well. Instead, because eternal life is found in Jesus, we can speak about Him with clarity, humility, and urgency. As a group, pray for specific people who need to hear that life is found in Christ.

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- December 7-13

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 5:1-12

1. Session Overview

John refuses to separate the marks of new birth. Believing in Jesus, loving God, loving His children, and obeying His commands belong together. Faith is not mere intellectual agreement; it is a Christ-centered trust that produces a transformed family resemblance. Because believers are born of God, they share in Christ's victory over the world.

The second half of the passage emphasizes testimony. John insists that God Himself has testified concerning His Son, and the Spirit bears witness to the truth. The conclusion is simple and absolute: God has given eternal life, this life is in His Son, and whoever has the Son has life. Assurance rests not on our ability to save ourselves but on God's trustworthy testimony about Christ.

2. Opening

Ask:

What is the difference between knowing something is true and building your life on it?

Where does our culture tell people to look for "life" or fulfillment?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 5:1-12 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 5:1-5

John begins with belief: everyone who believes Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. But that new birth never stands alone. Love for the Father produces love for His children, and love for God is expressed by keeping His commands. Christian faith creates a new relationship to God, His people, and obedience.

John then says God's commands are not burdensome because everyone born of God overcomes the world. This does not mean obedience is always easy. It means God's

commands are no longer the oppressive demands of a stranger; they are the good will of the Father we love. Faith in Jesus gives believers a new allegiance that enables them to resist the world's competing claims.

1 John 5:6-12

John points to testimony concerning Jesus and emphasizes that the Spirit testifies because the Spirit is truth. Whatever interpretive questions surround “water and blood,” John’s main emphasis is clear: God has provided sufficient testimony concerning His Son, and refusing that testimony ultimately treats God as untrustworthy.

The content of God’s testimony is beautifully simple: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Eternal life is a gift located in a Person. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” John wants believers to rest their assurance and proclaim their message on God’s testimony rather than human speculation.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 5:1-12?
2. How do faith, love, and obedience reinforce one another?
3. In what sense are God’s commands not burdensome?
4. What does it mean for faith to overcome the world?
5. How does genuine faith in Jesus change the way a person lives?
6. What makes obedience feel burdensome, and how does the gospel reshape that?
7. Where do you most feel the pull of “the world”?
8. Why is God’s testimony about Jesus more important than our changing feelings?
9. What does it mean personally to say “whoever has the Son has life”?
10. Who in your life needs to hear this good news?

6. Application

Write down one area where faith in Christ needs to become visible through obedience this week. Then write the name of one person who needs to hear that life is found in Jesus. Pray for that person daily and look for an opportunity to speak clearly and graciously about Christ.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You for giving us eternal life in Your Son. Deepen our faith in Jesus so that it produces love, obedience, and courage. Help us overcome the world by trusting Christ, and make us faithful witnesses to the life that is found in Him alone. Amen.

8. Memory Verse

“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

1 John 5:11-12





UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Being Light in a
Dark World*

December 14-20

1 John 5:13-21

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Gospel Connections and Conversations

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

John states his purpose clearly: he has written so that those who believe in the name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life. The letter is meant to produce settled assurance. That assurance also gives believers confidence in prayer because they know the God who hears them. John closes with confidence about holiness, spiritual protection, and truth. Those born of God do not make peace with sin; the evil one cannot ultimately claim them; and the Son of God has come and given understanding so believers may know the true God. The letter ends where it began: with confidence in Jesus Christ and the life found in Him.

Read

Read 1 John 5:13-21 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

1 John 5:13-21

That You May Know

[13] I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. [14] And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. [15] And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

[16] If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. [17] All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

[18] We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

[19] We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

[20] And we know 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, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

[21] Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Assured Christians should become courageous Christians. When we know where life is found, we can pray boldly, fight sin honestly, and speak about Jesus confidently. Assurance is not meant to make us passive; it frees us to live on mission without needing to prove ourselves or fear that Christ will fail us.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- December 14-20

Small Group Curriculum - 1 John 5:13-21

1. Session Overview

The closing section gathers the major themes of the letter into a series of confident statements. John wants believers to “know” they have eternal life. Assurance rests on faith in the Son and is strengthened by the evidence John has traced throughout the letter: truth about Christ, obedience, love, and the Spirit’s work.

That assurance produces confidence in prayer and perseverance in holiness. John also calls believers to pray for a brother or sister caught in sin, though the phrase “sin that leads to death” has been interpreted in different ways. Whatever the precise referent, John’s pastoral aim is clear: sin matters, prayer matters, and believers can live with confidence because they belong to God and know the true One through Jesus Christ.

2. Opening

Ask:

What is the difference between hoping you are secure and knowing you are secure?

How would greater assurance in Christ change the way you pray or face temptation?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read 1 John 5:13-21 aloud. Encourage the group to listen for repeated words, contrasts, commands, promises, and statements about Jesus.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1 John 5:13-15

John states the purpose of his letter: believers may know they have eternal life. Christian assurance is not arrogance. It is confidence in God’s promise concerning His Son. John has spent the letter giving tests of life not so sincere believers will live in constant panic, but so they can recognize the work of grace and rest in Christ.

That assurance leads directly to confidence in prayer. We can approach God knowing that He hears requests made according to His will. Prayer is not manipulating God into our plans; it is

the confident communion of children who trust their Father and increasingly desire what He desires.

1 John 5:16-17

John applies confidence in prayer to a brother or sister caught in sin. Instead of gossiping, distancing ourselves, or assuming the worst, believers should pray. John distinguishes between sin that leads to death and sin that does not, a difficult phrase Christians have understood in different ways. The passage does not invite speculation as much as it calls the church to take sin and intercession seriously. John's statement that "all wrongdoing is sin" keeps us from minimizing sin. At the same time, his instruction to pray keeps us from responding without hope. Christians should carry one another before God, asking Him to bring repentance, restoration, and life.

1 John 5:18-21

John closes with three "we know" statements. Those born of God do not live in an unbroken practice of sin; they belong to God and are guarded from the evil one; and the Son of God has come and given understanding so believers can know the true God. These truths summarize the confidence John has been building throughout the letter. The world lies in the power of the evil one, but believers are not left in darkness. They are "in him who is true" through His Son Jesus Christ. John's final description is climactic: Jesus is the true God and eternal life. Assurance is ultimately not confidence in ourselves but confidence that the true Christ has come, has given life, and will keep His people.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in 1 John 5:13-21?
2. Have you ever felt unsettled in your salvation? If so, why?
3. How can believers have assurance in their salvation?
4. How does assurance change prayer?
5. What has given you the greatest assurance as we have studied 1 John?
6. How should we respond when another believer is caught in sin?
7. Why is it important to take sin seriously without abandoning hope?
8. What does praying according to God's will look like personally?
9. How does belonging to God change the way you face spiritual opposition?
10. What is one way you want to live differently because you know you have eternal life?

6. Application

End the series by writing down three things you now "know" because of 1 John: one truth about Jesus, one evidence of God's work in your life, and one next step of obedience. Then pray with confidence for another believer and for one person who does not yet have life in the Son.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You that in Jesus we can know we have eternal life. Give us confidence to pray, courage to fight sin, love to carry one another, and assurance that we belong to You. Keep us in the truth and make us faithful lights in a dark world. In Jesus' name, amen.

8. Memory Verse

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

1 John 5:13

