

A study of John's First Letter

Welcome to our Summer study of First John. This study expands the WordGo study from 2 weeks to 4 weeks and adds some interactive elements.

A few suggestions on how to approach this study:

1. Question: Do we use this or WordGo?

Suggestion: Start with WordGo if you wish, especially if you want to read the notes, or listen to the teaching. But this study packet will include WordGo elements, so if you have to choose one, choose this packet.

Week 1 of this study packet corresponds Week 1 Day 1 of WordGo

2. Question: Do I have to do all the questions?

Suggestion: Nope! To prepare for our discussion, I'd suggest doing all of the General Discussion Questions. But you are welcome to choose any other questions and activities you'd like – one or some or all of a section or multiple sections. There will be a chance to discuss the "optional" activities during our group time.

3. Question: I want to make sure I'm able to share one of the creative questions during group time.

Suggestion: That is awesome, and I'm excited to help you do that! Send an email to one of the leaders and we will use share-screens and other interactive elements to share with the group on zoom.

4. Question: when will I get the rest of the lessons?

Answer: due to the flu and some medical challenges, Jenny is still editing some of the lessons. She will always send them out a week in advance, but if she can finish them sooner you will get them as soon as they are ready. In the meantime, you want to get ahead, use the WordGo app, especially the notes and lecture features.

5. Question: if some of this isn't from WordGo, where did it come from?

Answer: Jenny used several sources to compile the background info and inspire the questions. A partial list of resources include:

- Blue Letter Bible Website
- WordGo App
- 1 John: Lifeway Explore The Bible
- Cultural Background Study Bible
- Serendipity Bible
- Be Real: Wiersbe commentary of 1 John
- Description of Spiritual Practices from the First Pres Winston-Salem Lenten and Advent devotionals.

1 John Week 1

Scripture: 1 John 1: 1-4

Doctrine: God The Son

Key Question: What does John want us to know about Jesus?

ESV

The Word of Life

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.

The Message

1 ¹⁻² From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us.³⁻⁴ We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!

The Living Bible

1 Christ was alive when the world began, yet I myself have seen him with my own eyes and listened to him speak. I have touched him with my own hands. He is God's message of life. **2** This one who is life from God has been shown to us, and we guarantee that we have seen him; I am speaking of Christ, who is eternal Life. He was with the Father and then was shown to us. **3** Again I say, we are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may share the fellowship and the joys we have with the Father and with Jesus Christ his son. **4** And if you do as I say in this letter, then you, too, will be full of joy, and so will we.

Notes:

John is saying that Eternal Life is not just a heavenly reward, but is a “present reality on earth” and that followers of Jesus experience life in a way that is immeasurably better, deeper, and more abundant than their lives were before Christ.

John probably wrote this letter from Ephesus around A.D 80-90. He may have moved there during the time of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple. The letter was probably sent to the church in Ephesus as well as several churches in the surrounding area.

One reason for the letter was to confront false teachings that had cropped up among the churches. The travelling teachers were presenting themselves as Christ followers but were preaching a false version of faith.

“Christians believe that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. These beliefs are central to our faith and walk with Christ, as well as our walk with fellow believers. True fellowship with God and with the Church rests on the central truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.” (Lifeway)

Note from WordGo:

The foundation of fellowship with God is not found in us, but in God! Fellowship with God is founded on His love and living sacrifice. **Sinful people can know a holy God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.**

Fellowship is to know and belong to God forever as His child on the basis of Jesus’ saving work.

To walk with God is to reflect the qualities of perfection that He alone possesses. But John makes clear that all holiness, righteousness, and goodness comes from God.

Suggested overview:

[Books of 1-3 John Summary: A Complete Animated Overview \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-3-John-Summary)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1: Read the ESV version of 1 John 1:1-4. What does John say is the purpose of this letter?

2. Underline any words and phrases in this passage which are repeated.

3. Key themes in this book are “light”, “life”, and “love”. Circle any of these words (or phrases that imply them) that appear in this section.

4. Read the Message version of 1 John 1:1-4 while keeping in mind that John was a writing to a group of believers as their pastor. Write down any words to describe how John might have been feeling while writing from this perspective:

5. Read The Living Bible version of 1 John 1:1-4 while keeping in mind that John was writing as a close personal friend of Jesus. Write down any words to describe how John might have been feeling while writing from this perspective:

6. Think back over the Gospel of John – what do you think were some of John’s most vivid and precious memories of his time with Jesus? (hint: flip through the Gospel of John, noting the chapter headings to jog your memory)

7. Look up a definition of “Christian Fellowship” and jot down some thoughts about what makes Christian Fellowship important, and what makes it different from friendships with non-believers:

[Fellowship - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary - \(studylight.org\)](http://studylight.org/Fellowship-Bridgeway-Bible-Dictionary)

[Fellowship - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words - \(studylight.org\)](http://studylight.org/Fellowship-Vine's-Expository-Dictionary-of-NT-Words)

[Fellowship - Holman Bible Dictionary - \(studylight.org\)](http://studylight.org/Fellowship-Holman-Bible-Dictionary)

8. Use this map to circle Jerusalem and Ephesus. It is likely that John would have travelled by boat, but for a sense of scale, google “distance from Jerusalem to Ephesus” to see how long it would take to travel over land.



DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

1. Scan 1 John 1:3-4. What kind of fellowship does John describe?

2. Write Gen 1:1 and John 1:1 below. Underline any phrases that are similar.

3. Look at the list of Attributes of God, and jot down any that seem evident from this scripture:

4. Think about the various faith groups you have encountered. List specific ways that belief and commitment to Jesus Christ serves as common ground for people with diverse backgrounds, goals, and opinions:

What Biblical examples can you think of that show how commitment to Jesus helped form the basis of Christian fellowship among early believers?

5. Have you ever seen a church community based on anything other than Jesus? (i.e. formed with a great emphasis on a pastor, or a type of worship, or a location...). What happens when something other than Jesus is used as the foundation for a group of Christ-followers?

6. Read over this list of aspects of Christian Community. Pick one attribute of fellowship with God or with each other, and look up the Verse. Write down a modern-day example of this attribute.

Fellowship With God:

- a. consisting in the knowledge of his will (Job 22:21; Jhn 17:3)
- b. agreement with his designs (Amo 3:2)
- c. mutual affection (Rom 8:38,39)
- d. enjoyment of his presence (Psa 4:6)
- e. conformity to his image (1Jo 2:6; 1:6)
- f. participation of his felicity (1Jo 1:3,4; Eph 3:14-21)

Fellowship Of saints with one another:

- a. in duties (Rom 12:5; 1Cr 12:1; 1Th 5:17,18)
- b. in ordinances (Hbr 10:25; Act 2:46)
- c. in grace, love, joy, etc. (Mal 3:16; 2Cr 8:4)
- d. mutual interest, spiritual and temporal (Rom 12:4,13; Hbr 13:16)
- e. in sufferings (Rom 15:1,2; Gal 6:1,2; Rom 12:15)
- f. in glory (Rev 7:9)

WALKING IN FAITH

1. What ways can we encourage moments of true unity and fellowship among believers, in the faith-groups you are currently in?

2. What ways can we encourage the leaders and servants who facilitate Christian community?
(Church staff workers, pastors, custodians, coffee-providers, etc)

3. Contact someone from our group's prayer list to let them know that you have prayed for them this week.

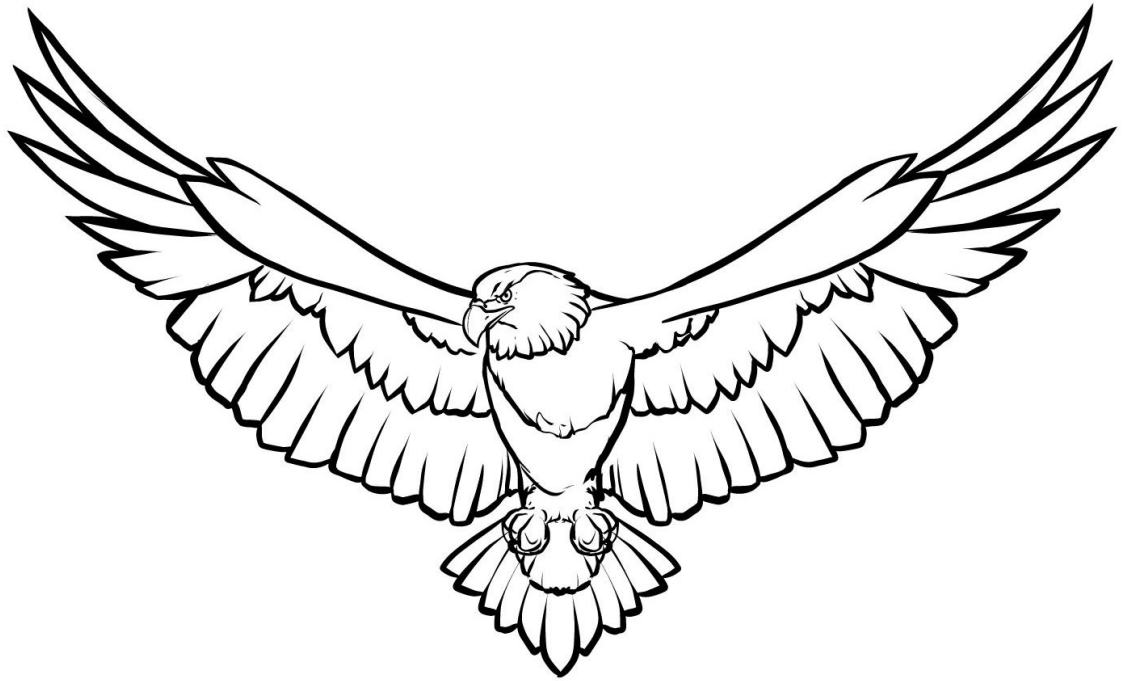
4. Look at the list of Attributes of God, and pray this week calling God by an attribute that feels meaningful to you right now ("Holy God", "Infinite God", "Eternal God", "God Who Is All Good").

5. God revealed himself to John and the other disciples in the person of Jesus. Name some other ways God revealed himself to His people throughout scripture:

CREATION AND WORSHIP

1. Suggested Hymns:
 - a. Abide With Me
 - b. In The Garden
 - c. Be Thou My Vision
 - d. Blessed Be The Tie That Binds
2. Read the description of John from the Encyclopedia of Christian Art (next page).
3. Search for images of the Apostle John and find one that interests you. Note the painter and where the painting is located
[Global Site Search Page \(nga.gov\)](#)
[Search media - Wikimedia Commons](#)
[Apostle John Statues](#)
4. John is sometimes depicted with an Eagle in art. Watch a video on how to draw an eagle, or print out this outline.
[How to draw a bald Eagle flying easy step by step, bird drawing \(youtube.com\)](#)

5. Write down facts that you know about John in and around the eagle.



Who was Apostle John – Dictionary of Christian Art

Traditionally the youngest of the original twelve apostles, and identified as the “beloved disciple” in recognition of his special relationship with Jesus. The son of Zebedee, a Galilean fisherman, and Salome, a female follower of Jesus, John was called to discipleship one day when he and his brother, James Major, were mending fishing nets. Along with James and Peter, John was included in the intimate circle of the first three disciples who were present at the Transfiguration and the Agony in the Garden. As the “beloved disciple” John was privileged to lean his head on Jesus’ heart at the Last Supper. At the Crucifixion, the crucified Jesus entrusted the care of his mother to John. As he ran ahead of Peter on Easter morning to see the empty tomb, John immediately believed in the Resurrection, and later recognized the Risen Christ at the Sea of Tiberias. According to legend, John established seven churches in Asia Minor and returned to Ephesus where he and Mary Magdalene cared for Mary until (the end of her earthly life). He was supposed to be the same “John the Elder” who wrote the Book of Revelation during his exile on the island of Patmos. At an old age, John died in his sleep in Ephesus, the only apostle not to be martyred – a sign of Jesus’ special affection.

In Christian art, John was depicted as a youthful, beardless, and effeminate man with long curly hair and was dressed in red. His attributes included a book, scroll, chalice (especially one with serpents or snakes), cauldron, palm, and eagle signifying the elevated inspiration of his Gospel, Epistles, and Book of Revelation. He was distinguished from the other apostles in the narrative scenes of the life of Jesus by either his bodily proximity at the foot of the cross or his head on Jesus’ heart at the Last Supper, or by his red robe which symbolized divine love.

PRAYER PRACTICE

Pray using this prayer from WordGo:

God, You are absolutely faithful, righteous, and just. Everything about You is perfect! Before You we are a sinful people; we confess that we run away from You, when we should run towards You. Father, give us wisdom to clearly see our condition before You.

Yet because of Your goodness and Your great love, You still desire fellowship with us. *Thank You* for making a way for this fellowship through the costly sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus, on the Cross.

God, give us a deep satisfaction in Your love. Will You make it our greatest desire and the core of our existence? Refine and correct us – as you did with John – and as You do for all Your beloved children.

Help us to fully understand the beauty of the gift You offer us in fellowship with You!
Oh my soul, may I look again today at the perfection of Your Light. I am sinful, but Christ is perfect and righteous!

Amen.