

**PREPARATION FOR LESSON:** Read the book of 1 John

## BACKGROUND

The author is John the apostle. (The *we* and *us* he uses is literary plural to avoid over-using the words *I*, *me* and *my*.) We first meet John in the gospels as a teenager. He was learning the trade of fishing, in partnership with his family. He and his brother James were cousins of Jesus. (Salome, their mother was a sister of Mary. Compare John 19:25 with Matt. 27:56). While still a teenager, Jesus called John to be an apostle. John was part of that inner circle of disciples, along with Peter and James. Altho he was the youngest of the 12 apostles, he had the deepest understanding of Jesus.

After the day of Pentecost, the apostles took the gospel message thruout the known world. Peter was the major leader to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. In the late '60s, just before their deaths, both warned that false teaching would enter the local churches. In the early '70s, John became pastor of the Ephesian church, which met in a private home. By the '80s, traveling teachers were spreading new ideas about Jesus, about sin and how believers treat each other. This continued over the next 10 years.

By 90 AD, church members thruout the province of Asia are totally confused. They are not sure who or what to believe. John is the only apostle still living. He is c. 80 years old and continues as pastor of the Ephesian church. He writes these believers to bring them back to the basics of the gospel message.

The believers are Jewish. John does not say they are Jewish, but his writing style tells us it is for Jewish people. There is repetition, circular thinking and picture language combined with contrasts. The content also points to Jewish readers. John uses a picture of them as spiritual children in relation to God as Father. Family was an important part of Jewish culture. Jewish fathers spent time with their children to teach, train and encourage them. The relationship between father and children was one of enjoyment and security. A picture of them as children of God the Father has great meaning for Jewish believers. In Gentile, Roman families, a servant raised the children; the father was not involved. There was no father-child relationship. So this picture would have no meaning whatever for Gentile believers.

**THEME** A faith in common that his readers would have with **him**, with traveling **teachers** and with other **believers**.

They need to know what this faith looks like; they need to know the basics of a common faith.

John develops 3 basics - agreement about Jesus, about sin and about the way they treat other believers.

## DEFINITIONS

- Fellowship:** A faith in common that leads to spiritually enjoying and relating to other believers and to God.
- Agape, love:** Used (in the original Greek) 46 times in the book; it is always about choices; not about feelings/emotions.  
It is a *choice to obey God; a choice to do what is right towards others*.  
Because it is about choices, it is love that can be commanded.
- Confess:** To *say the same thing*. God says it is wrong and I agree - it is wrong.
- World:** 5 times it means *humanity; people* on this earth.  
18 times it means the *world system* with the values of Satan that are in opposition to God.
- Know:** One Greek word means *to know progressively thru experience*. (from *gnosis* - used 26 times).  
The other Greek word means *to know as a fact from observation; be sure*. (*eido* - used 14 times).
- Deity phrases:** Jewish phrases of deity that John applies to Jesus -  
*The One from the Beginning, the Word of Life, Eternal Life, the Righteous One*.
- Deity names:** Jewish names of deity that John applies to Jesus - *Son, Son of God, Lord* and *Christ/Messiah*.
- Humanity:** The name and phrase to show the humanity of Jesus: *Jesus; come in the flesh*.

## DEVELOPED TOPICS - Three basics of their common faith

### The 1<sup>st</sup> basic - agreement about Jesus

In first-century law, the testimony of a witness could only be accepted if 2 of their 5 senses were involved. So John mentions three - *I heard, saw and touched Jesus. I lived with Him for 3 ½ years. I have had 60 years to test and reflect on it. I can say with authority, 'This is the truth about Jesus. I know it for a fact'*.

John and his readers have a common faith about God the Father, but that is not enough. Their common faith also needs to agree about Jesus. False teachers have said: Jesus is not true humanity; not true deity; is not Savior; His death had no value, or His death had value but was only for the Jews. One by one, John corrects these false ideas about Jesus.



### The 1<sup>st</sup> basic - about Jesus *continued*

He is true humanity: 1:2; 4:2 Jesus had a real human body of blood, flesh and bone when He lived on this earth.

He is true deity: It is seen in His names and titles. 1:1; 1:3; 2:22-23; 3:5; 5:20

**2:22-23** It is impossible to have companionship with God the Father when a person denies the deity of His Son.

**5:20** *We know for a fact that Jesus has come as deity. He has given us understanding about God the Father. We can enjoy a relationship with God the Father because we believe correctly about Jesus. Just as we know the Father is true deity, we also know Jesus is true deity. We declare this by the names we use for Him. He is God's Son. He is Eternal life.*

He is Savior: 2:2 Propitiation means *Making a payment that meets the requirements of God the Father.*

Jesus made payment for the sins of everyone; 4:14 His death has eternal value.

### The 2<sup>nd</sup> basic - agreement about sin This also is part of their faith in common.

1:8 People are not basically good; there is a sin nature.

1:10 There is no secret knowledge that will make them perfect, so they do not commit acts of sin.

1:6 Enjoying companionship with a holy God is impossible while living in unholiness.

1:9 Unholiness can be cleansed by admitting it and asking for forgiveness.

2:1-2 Jesus was separated from the Father in our place; As Advocate, He defends believers from Satan's accusations.

2:3 God expects obedience from those in His family.

#### How these basics helped the Jewish believers::

2:19, 22 They now understand why John stopped the teachers who said Jesus was not deity. They realize those who left the church did not have a common faith with them.

2:26-27 They now understand - while God provides gifted teachers, their dependence should not be on people. Their most important teacher is the Holy Spirit within them.

4:1-4 The Holy Spirit in them is greater than the unholy spirit (Satan) in the world. It is the Holy Spirit who helps believers recognize false teachers - based on what they teach about Jesus and about sin.

3:2-3 It was the Holy Spirit who gave John insight about the future of believers when Jesus returns.

*Believers will see Him as He is:* they will see Jesus in the glory of His deity.

*Believers will be like Him:* they will have a resurrection body as Jesus had.

It will be flesh and bones that can be seen and felt; we will eat; we will have identity and self-awareness; we will know our loved ones; they will know us.

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> basic - agreement on how believers treat each other - with love

*Agape meaning doing what is right based on God's standards.*

*God is love* means He always does what is right because He is Deity, holy and perfect.

*To love God* means to obey what God says.

*To love the world* means to obey what the world system says is right.

*To love believers* means to do what is right towards them.

*To hate believers* means to do what is wrong towards them - revenge, bitterness, false accusations.

### PROBLEM PASSAGE 5:16-17 *sin that leads to death*

There are times believers deliberately and willful refuse to obey God. After much warning, if they still refuse, God may take their life prematurely. When they are dying, church members should not ask God to spare their life. This is judgment from God. Because they are believers, they will have eternal life. But they may die prematurely because they refuse to obey God in this life.

### APPLICATION

3:23 *This is His command...to love one another....* We are to do what is right for the well-being of other believers and for our own protection. Sometimes this means being supportive, but it also means setting boundaries and correcting others when they need it.

5:21 *Guard yourselves from idols* The Greek grammar John uses means...

"Once and for all make up your mind you will protect yourself from any teaching - any ideas - any activity that would pull you away from Jesus - anything that would make you think less of Jesus."

