

BLESSED ASSURANCE

Bible studies in 1 John



Bathurst Presbyterian Church 2019

Do you think you're really a christian? Do you have eternal life? Are you sure? How can you be sure? Would you like to be sure?

God has some comforting things to teach us in 1 John. Because God doesn't just want us to be saved. God wants us to *know* we are saved. He wants us to have blessed assurance.

As with any study, you'll get the most out of them if you're able to read the relevant passage and answer the questions before your group meets. That will also equip you to best encourage the others in your group with what you say. However, if some weeks you don't get to prepare, please don't use that as an excuse to not go along. Just being there is a great way of showing the group that they're important to you. Plus, the studies are designed to be useful even if you're thinking about them for the first time at your group.

Each study firstly works through the verses (section by section) so as to help build an understanding of what the overall passage means. The study then ends with a "Think it over" section in which practical applications are considered. All the studies match the Bible talks on Sunday and are designed so they can be done either before or after hearing the talk.



1 John 1:1-4

It's always helpful when reading a New Testament letter to get a quick feel for the entire letter before diving into smaller sections. So brace yourself for a big read!

Read 1 John 1-5

- 1) Read through the entire letter without stopping (except to perhaps change readers). Did you notice any clues about who has written the letter?
- 2) Did you notice any clues about the original recipients of the letter?
- 3) Did you notice any clues about why the letter was written?
- 4) What sorts of topics are repeated in the letter?
- 5) What do you think is the main point of the letter?

Re-read 1 John 1:1-4

6) Who is John writing about in v1-2? Which description of him most stands out to you? Why do you think John doesn't just use his name?

7) Why do you think there is so much emphasis on 'seeing,' 'hearing' & 'touching'?

8) Why does John want to share the news about the 'Word of life' with his readers?

Thinking it over

- Hopefully you've discovered that one of the reasons John is writing is to give his readers assurance of eternal life (cf. 5:13). How does the opening to the letter do this? What difference does having assurance of eternal life make to your life now? What difference should it make?

- 'Much of what often passes for Christian fellowship is no more than "good friendship."' To what extent do you think that's true generally? To what extent do you think that's true in church? What should distinguish Christian fellowship from simply "good friendship"? How can you make sure you're participating in Christian fellowship with others at church?

- What is the most important thing about Jesus you've personally discovered (or been reminded of) in these verses?

1 John 1:5-2:2

John started his letter with the encouragement that whoever receives the message about Jesus Christ enjoys rich fellowship with God and with each other. However it would seem not everyone is interested in receiving Jesus.

Read 1 John 1:5

1) What pictures and images come to mind from the phrase, 'God is light?'

2) John also talks a lot about 'light' in his gospel. In what way does this help us better understand what he means that 'God is light?' (see: John 1:1-9, 3:16-21, 8:12, 12:35-46)

It would seem that John uses the image of light to explain how God has revealed the way back to himself through Jesus. John now deals with three false claims by people who have rejected this revelation.

Read 1 John 1:6-7

3) What false claim does John deal with in v6?

4) What is the proper response to such a claim?

Read 1 John 1:8-9

5) What false claim does John deal with in v8?

6) What is the proper response to such a claim?

Read 1 John 1:10-2:2

7) What false claim does John deal with in v10?

8) What is the proper response to such a claim?

Thinking it over

- Look back over the flow of the whole passage. In what way does it give us assurance of eternal life (remember that's why John is writing his letter - cf. 5:13)?
- Can you think of any present day examples of the false claims that John has addressed in this passage?
- What is the most important thing about Jesus that you've personally discovered (or been reminded of) in these verses?

1 John 2:3-17

In this part of his letter, John begins to explain some of the characteristics of the person who genuinely knows God. His words are both a comfort & a challenge. The comfort comes because it's so easy to doubt our standing with God - it's good to be assured. The challenge comes because these verses prompt us to consider whether we are in fact living out authentic Christianity.

Read 1 John 2:3

1) According to this verse, how can we be sure that we know God?

2) Does this mean that Christians never sin? (hint: look back at the previous study)

Having laid the foundation that authentic followers of Jesus obey his commands, John now applies that lesson in two ways.

Read 1 John 2:4-6

3) What sort of person is being described in v4?

4) What sort of person is being described in v5-6?

5) What does it mean to 'walk as Jesus did?' (NIV) Try & give some specific examples (i.e. what would it look like for you to do this today?).

So far we've discovered that the person who truly knows Jesus obeys his commands. John now builds on this by focusing on one particular command which Jesus' followers are especially keen to obey.

Read 1 John 2:7-11

6) What do you think is this command which is both old & new? What lead you to your conclusion?

7) What do people living in light do (remember that 'light' is an image for God revealing his salvation of us through Jesus)? What do people living in darkness do?

Read 1 John 2:12-14

8) List out all the things Christians enjoy as the children of God. Why do you think John includes this list here?

Read 1 John 2:15-17

9) What reasons does John give for not loving the world? Which of these reasons do you personally find the most convicting? What practical steps can you take to remember these reasons?

Thinking it over

- Look back over the flow of the whole passage. In what way does it give us assurance of eternal life (remember that's why John is writing his letter - cf. 5:13)?
- How do these verses help us think rightly about obedience? What does it mean that those who know God 'obey his commands?' (NIV) Try & give some specific examples (i.e. what would it look like for you to do this today?).
- What is the most important thing about Jesus that you've personally discovered (or been reminded of) in these verses?

6) Congratulations, you are now an expert on antichrists because you have just read every verse in the bible that mentions them by name! Can you think of examples of these sorts of people in John's original context? Can you think of examples of these sorts of people in our context?

7) According to John, how do we 'remain in Christ'?

Thinking it over

- What problem can arise if we limit ourselves to talking about 'God' rather than specifically about Jesus? Why does it somehow feel 'safer'?

- What would you say to someone who claimed to know God, but wasn't interested in Jesus?

- What is the most important thing about Jesus that you've personally discovered (or been reminded of) in these verses?

1 John 2:28-3:18

Read 1 John 3:1

1) How does v1 describe Christians? From what you know of other parts of the Bible, how did we become this?

2) What does this show us about God? How?

Because followers of Jesus Christ are God's own children, we display certain family likeness along with Jesus. John now describes two such family traits?

Read 1 John 2:28-3:10

3) Verses 2-3 look into the future to the day of Christ' return. How do these verses describe Jesus as he will appear?

4) How do verses 2-3 describe us when we will appear with him?

5) How should we be acting now as a result of the above observations? (2:29, 3:3)

6) List out the differences between the children of God and the children of the devil

Read 1 John 3:11-18

7) Who are we *not* to be like? How and why?

8) Who *are* we to be like? How and why?

9) What does it mean to love in action and in truth?

Think it over

- In this section John describes how followers of Jesus are God's children and therefore they do what is right and love each other. Do you find this a comforting or a challenging lesson? Why?

- What are some helpful ways to practice righteousness? Try to be specific and practical.

- What will it mean for you to love the others in our church family "with actions and in truth"? Try & give some specific examples.
 - what would it look like for you to love others in your small group?

 - what would it look like for you to love others during the week?

 - what would it look like for you to love others at our Sunday meetings?

1 John 3:19-4:6

Read 1 John 3:18-24

1) What does the "this" refer to at the beginning of v19?

2) According to these verses, how can we be "at rest" at those times when our hearts condemn us"?

3) What does the person who has confidence before God do? (v21-23)

4) In what way is v24 a good summary of v21-23?

Read 1 John 3:24-4:6

5) What do you think it means to have God "live in us"?

6) According to these verses, how do we know when God lives in us?

7) What is the role of God's Spirit in helping us know that God lives in us?

8) What new things do we now discover about antichrists in these verses?

9) List as many differences as you can between those who testify that Jesus is the Christ and those who don't?

Think it over

- In this section John describes how followers of Jesus have confidence with God. Do you find this a comforting or a challenging lesson? Why?

- What difference should assurance with God make in our day to day life?

- What are some of the "viewpoints of the world" which you find particularly alluring? How does this passage help you resist them?

- Do you have a "heart" that more easily condemns or assures you? How is this section helpful for you?

1 John 4:7-21

Read 1 John 4:7-10

1. What connections are made between God and love in these verses?
2. What do you think is the difference between God being love and God being loving?
3. What connections are made between God's people and love in these verse?
4. How is the way God has loved us both similar and different to the way the world usually thinks about love?
5. Verse 10 is a good summary of the gospel. Try and write it out in your own words.

Read 1 John 4:11-21

6. According to v12, what two things are on display when we do love one another?
7. In the middle of this section about love, John starts saying things about the Spirit (v13-15). What's the connection between God's Spirit, us and love?

8. Why does loving one another give us confidence on "the day of judgement"? (v17-18)

9. Look back over the whole section (v7-21). List as many reasons as you can for why we should love one another?

Think it over

- What things make it hard to believe that "God is love"? What are some practical ways we can help each other remember this truth?
- In this section John describes how followers of Jesus love each other because they have God's Spirit within them. Do you find this a comforting or a challenging lesson? Why?
- Why is it so hard to love others at times? What practical things can we do to help each other do it?
- "Love is more than simply making meals and being nice to each other." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- Can you give examples of how and when you have felt well loved by brothers and sisters in Christ?

1 John 5:1-12

Read 1 John 5:1-5

1. What does the statement, "Jesus is the Christ" mean?
2. What does believing the statement, "Jesus is the Christ" involve?
3. A belief that "Jesus is the Christ" shows that a person is born of God (cf v1). Why? (you might like to look back at 1 Jn 4:2)
4. According to v2-4, what others things are associated with being born of God?
5. What does it mean to "overcome the world"?

Read 1 John 5:6-12

These are notoriously difficult verses. John seems to be wanting to explain how a belief in Jesus as the Christ is well founded.

6. What do you think it means that Jesus came by "water and blood"?

7. John's gospel can often be a help in understanding what John's letters are about. How might the following verses help us understand Jesus coming by "water and blood?"
John 19:31-37

8. List all the differences you can between those who believe that Jesus is the Christ and those who don't.

Think it over

- In this section John describes how a belief in Jesus as Christ is both important and reasonable. Do you find this a comforting or a challenging lesson? Why?
- Why do God's commands sometimes feel "burdensome"? How can we help each other avoid this perception.
- "Jesus isn't the Christ. That's silly!!" What would you say in response? What reasons could you offer to try and convince someone that Jesus is the Christ?
- What implications do these verses have for evangelism?

1 John 5:13-21

Read 1 John 5:13-21

1. Is it important for Christians to be certain of their faith? Why or why not?
2. In these verses, John lists certain things which he wants his readers to know with certainty. What are they?
 - verse 13
 - verse 15
 - verse 18
 - verse 19
 - verse 20
3. Do any of the above truths stand out to you as being especially important? Why?
4. Do any of the above truths stand out to you as being especially hard to believe? Why?
5. Do any of the above truths stand out to you as being surprising? Why?
6. What do you think is the "sin that leads to death" in v16. Why do you think John mentions it here?

7. Do you think v21 is a good ending to 1 John? Why or why not?

Think it over

- If John was writing his letter now, do you think there any other truths which he might have listed as being important for Christians to know?

- What do you think are particularly dangerous idols in our present culture and society? What are practical steps in keeping ourselves from them?

- We've now reached the end of a sometimes difficult to follow letter. Congratulations, you made it! Skim back over the letter. Are there any lessons that have especially impacted you? Why?

- Overall, have you been comforted or challenged by 1 John? Why?

- What is the most important thing about Jesus you've personally discovered (or been reminded of) in 1 John?