

Some notes on 1 John for homegroup leaders

I hope these notes prove a helpful resource. There are different ways of tackling these passages so please use the notes selectively alongside any of your own preparation that you're able to do.

Introduction to 1 John

It seems likely that the Apostle John (who also wrote John's gospel) wrote this letter, maybe from Ephesus to the churches of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) at the end of the first century.

John says why he is writing in 1:4, 2:1 and 5:13. Our study should go along with this main thrust of the letter and should contribute to our joy, holiness and assurance.

False prophets (4:1) or antichrists (2:18) seem to be troubling John's readers (2:26; 3:7). These false teachers seem to deny that Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh (4:2; 5:1, 5). John repeatedly helps us to distinguish between true and false believers, beliefs and teachers.

John's statements that "God is light" (1:5) and "God is love" (4:8, 16) are foundational. John encourages us to both right believing and right behaviour, holding together doctrine and experience, mind and heart, Word and Spirit, truth and love.

Homegroup Leaders Notes (1) 1 John 1:1-10

Some of the themes of this section are repeated at the beginning of chapter 2, so that might give you a chance to re-visit things you don't have time for in this study.

The "we" here (vv1-4) seems to be John and his fellow apostles who were the appointed eye-witnesses of Jesus. It may well be that John is writing (at least in part) for those who (like us) have not seen Jesus for themselves (perhaps mainly second-generation Christians) that they too might know God with the same confidence the eye-witnesses have. Cf. John 20:29-31.

What does John say he proclaims?

The Word of life (v1) / eternal life (v2)

What (or who!) do you think John means by the Word of life? What makes you think that?

John is speaking of Jesus, the Word, who gives us (eternal) life. It is clear that John is talking about more than just a message since it / He(!) can be touched and seen.

You may also wish to refer to John 1 which speaks of the Word becoming flesh and similar themes of light and life. Jesus called himself "the life" (John 14:6).

On what basis does John say he proclaims this? Why / how is John able to proclaim this with confidence? (How has John encountered / experienced the Word of life?)

John has heard, seen and touched this Word of life (v1, v3). He can proclaim the Word of life with confidence because he is an eye-witness who has personally encountered Jesus.

How do we encounter / experience this Word of life? (How / why can we have confidence in John's message?)

Through the preaching of John and the other apostolic eyewitnesses we have real access to Jesus and life in him, though we're never met Jesus physically.

Why does John say he proclaims this Word of life in verse 3?

So that we may have fellowship with him and with the Father and the Son.

Who does John want us to have fellowship with? (v3, 6, 7)

With him – the "us" is probably with the apostles –, one another and with the Father and the Son.

(How do we sometimes use the word "fellowship" in Christian circles?) What do you think "fellowship" (vv3, 6, 7) means?

It's about having things in common, partnership, shared-life, deep relationships. It's more than a cup of coffee together (sometimes called a "time of fellowship") after church.

What is the basis of our fellowship as Christians? How do we have fellowship with one another?

It is fellowship with God himself, through Jesus by accepting the apostolic message.

So by implication, with whom / which people should we have fellowship?

All those who accept the apostles' teaching. We should have fellowship with all those who have fellowship with the apostles and with God himself by believing the Bible's message.

Can you think of things that might hinder our fellowship that ought not to?

Matters of personal taste, social class or background, education, denominations, musical preferences, differences of opinion on secondary matters etc. should not be allowed to divide Bible-believing Christians.

Can you think of things that *aren't* a sound basis for Christian fellowship?

Our basic unity comes from our common faith in the Bible's message about Jesus – nothing else. Christian unity / fellowship is not the same as fellowship of regulars down the pub or in a sports club.

Why does John say he is writing? (v4)

“To make our joy complete”.

John also says why he is writing in 2:1 and 5:13.

What causes for joy (v4) can we find in this passage?

(You could use this question towards the end as a way of summing up / consolidating what you've seen). (Eternal) life. Fellowship with other Christians and with God himself. Forgiveness of sin.

What are the false claims that John counters in this passage?

Notice the repeated “if we claim” of vv6, 8, 10. The Christian can neither claim to be without sin nor go on living in unrepented-of sin.

What do you think this imagery of light and darkness is meant to convey?

The light seems to suggest purity and holiness (and perhaps knowledge / enlightenment) and the darkness wickedness and sin (and maybe ignorance).

What would it mean to “walk in darkness” in verse 6? Does verse 6 mean that if we commit a sin, that shows we've no fellowship with God? What does it mean, then?

The phrase “walk in darkness” is also used in 2:11 and John 8:12; 12:35.

“Walking” suggests an ongoing way of life – a lifestyle. The Christian may slip up often and wander off in wrong directions from time to time, but their fundamental orientation is towards the light, not the darkness.

Why can't a Christian “walk in the darkness”?

Ongoing unrepented-of sin is inconsistent with the claim to be a Christian since the Christian is claiming fellowship with God who is light, in whom there is no darkness at all (v5). John is saying light and darkness can't mix.

How can we tell from the passage that John expects Christians to continue to sin?

Verse 7 suggests we need Jesus' blood to go on purifying us (from ongoing sin?). Verses 8 and 10 clearly exclude any claims to sinless perfection.

How are we cleansed from our sins? Vv7 & 9.

By Jesus' blood – his violent sacrificial death (in our place).

What do we have to do to be cleansed? V9

Confess our sins. That is, to God. There is no hint of getting forgiveness from a human priest here.

How can God be “faithful and just” and “forgive us our sins” (v9)? Surely it is unjust for God to let people off the just punishment they deserve for their sins?

God is faithful to his promises in forgiving sin: he keeps his word. God is just in forgiving sins because the sins of all those who put their trust in Jesus have been punished in Him (see 2:1-2; Romans 3:25-26).

What encouragements or comforts are there for us in this passage if we are conscious of sin?

Notice that Jesus' blood purifies us from "all" sin (vv7, 9). God promises full forgiveness.

In the light of this passage, what should our attitudes to sin be? What should we do about sin?

Neither deny it nor accept it but confess it. Take it seriously but don't be crushed by it.

Summary Points / Prayer / Praise / Application

Praise God for our fellowship with other Christians and above all with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (v3). Remember that faith in the Jesus of the Bible is the only sound basis for fellowship.

Trust in Jesus for full forgiveness. Thank him for complete cleansing.

Don't pretend to sinless perfection.

Don't claim to be a Christian yet be content to go on living in sin. Pray for God's help not to sin.

Homegroup Leaders Notes (2) 1 John 2:1-14

“Dear children” (vv1, 12, 13) seems to be John’s way of referring to all his readers.

How do these verses encourage or comfort those who are fearfully conscious of their sins?

If we sin, Jesus speaks to the Father in our defence (v1). He turns aside God’s wrath from us (v2). See also v12.

What reassurances are there in verses 12-14?

They genuinely know God, have already been forgiven, overcome the evil one (Satan) etc.

Why is Jesus such a good advocate for us?

He is the Righteous One (v1). He has no sin of his own. God delights to hear him. (As the God-man he is also our ideal mediator / go-between). He is able to plead his own all-sufficient sacrifice (v2).

What do you think Jesus says in our defence?

Jesus doesn’t pretend we’re innocent (1:8, 10) or make excuses / pleas in mitigation / extenuating circumstances. Verse 2 might give the content of the defence Jesus makes of us: he died on our behalf and satisfied God’s just wrath. “Atoning sacrifice” (v2) is “propitiation”: the turning aside of God’s wrath.

How do these verses support the claim in 1:9 that God is “just” to forgive sin? Has God simply turned a blind eye to sin?

God has punished our sins in Jesus. Justice has been done. It would be unjust for God to punish Christians since our sins have already been punished when Jesus died in our place.

Of course v2 does not mean that Jesus actually paid the price for every individual (which would mean that everyone would be saved). But Jesus died for our wicked world and his death is infinitely valuable. It is effective for anyone who puts their trust in Him.

If we’re forgiven by trusting in Jesus, does that mean sin doesn’t matter / we can live as we like?

John is writing that we might not sin (v1). Sin is totally inconsistent and inappropriate for the Christian (1:5-6; 2:3ff)

What false claims do these verses counter?

V4 – the claim to know God, but not obey his commands. V9 – the claim to be in the light but hate fellow Christians.

How do these verses suggest we can know if we are true Christians?

If we obey God’s commands (v3) and walk as Jesus did (vv5b-6). And if we love our fellow Christians (v10). It is clear from what John has already said (e.g. 1:7, 9, 2:1-2; see also e.g. 2:22) that trusting in Jesus is essential (it is how we become Christians) but our faith must also impact our lives.

How do these verses challenge those who are complacent about their sins?

Genuine Christians will / must obey God's commands (v3; cf. John 14:15), walk as Jesus did (v5b-6) and love fellow Christians (v10).

V5 – “God's love is made complete in him” probably in the sense that it fulfils its purposes.

What guidance about how to live does verse 6 give us?

What Did Jesus Do (v6) is a good ethical test for what we should do.

Can you think of examples of ways in which we should “walk as Jesus did”? What might this look like in practice?

Loving one another. Humility. (See John 13:1, 15). Obedience to God's word and will. Obviously Jesus was unique – we are not meant to be like him in every respect – e.g. we don't give our lives as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world!

What commandment does John seem to have in mind? (v7)

It involves being like Jesus (v6) and loving our brothers in Christ (v10) Cf. 3:11; 2 John 4-6.

The command to love is a very old one. See Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:14.

In what sense is John writing a new commandment? (v8)

The commandment is newly demonstrated in Jesus (see John 13:34), and indeed by other Christians. Jesus shows a new standard (“as I have loved you”). The commandment is also lived out in the new context of Jesus the Light having come. The command is for us to take up anew for the whole new age which Jesus has brought.

Are there practical ways we could demonstrate love for one another?

“Fathers” (vv13, 14) may refer to literal fathers, those who are older, more mature Christians or perhaps Elders. They may include those who knew Jesus in his earthly ministry. Likewise “young men” may be newer Christians / the next generation. Women should probably be included too!

Summary Points / Prayer / Praise / Application

Praise God for Jesus' atoning death. Give thanks that Jesus perfectly meets our needs, that we know God, that we have overcome the evil one.

Pray for God's help to obey God's commands, walk as Jesus did and love fellow Christians.

Homegroup Leaders Notes (3) 1 John 2:15-27

In this section John contrasts the world and the Christian (vv15-17) and antichrists and the Christian (vv18-27).

What does John mean when he tells us not to “love the world” (v15)? (How does this fit with verses such as John 3:16, which speak of God’s love for the world?)

“World” here is society and culture organised without and in opposition to God. We are to love the good world God has created, but we are not to be “worldly” in our thinking. See James 4:4. Neither are we to be engrossed in this passing world. Above all we are to love God.

How does John describe “the world”? How would you put these attitudes and activities in your own words? Can you think of examples of worldly thinking or behaviour?

V16. It seems to involve our sinful nature within and temptations from outside, as well as pride – ways our world might celebrate or justify sin.

Why is worldly thinking inappropriate for the Christian? How does John encourage us to avoid it?

Love of the world is opposed to love of the Father (v15) and does not come from God (v16). The world is passing away (v17).

The term “antichrist” is unique to John’s letters (see also 4:3; 2 John 7). The man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2) may be the same figure. The antichrists are probably the same people as the false prophets on 4:1.

Specifically what do the false teachers seem to have been denying?

V22 – “that Jesus is the Christ”, that is, the anointed one / Messiah, the promised rescuer king of the Old Testament. (See also 4:2-3; and 2 John 7 for what they might have taught). This is *the* lie (cf. v4).

How does verse 19 suggest we can spot false teachers / teaching? What do false teachers characteristically do?

False teachers do not remain with the Apostles’ teaching, which is preserved in the New Testament.

Can you spot a repeated word or idea in vv19, 24 and 27? What is the contrast here?

The false teachers did not **remain** with the apostolic church (v19) but John’s readers are to make sure the truth they have heard from the beginning **remains** in them that they may **remain** in the Son and in the Father (v24) as the anointing **remains** in them and teaches them to **remain** in Jesus (v27).

Why is it important that what we have heard from the beginning remains in us? (v24)

If it does, we will remain in the Father and the Son and have the eternal life he has promised. Remember that believing in Jesus brings real fellowship with the Father and the Son (1:3).

How can we make sure what we have heard from the beginning remains in us? (v24)

Don't put up with false teaching. Seek out and pay attention to good Bible teaching – books / other resources. Group Bible study! We'll need the Spirit's help...

What helps us to remain in the truth? V27

The anointing we have received from God (v20), presumably the Holy Spirit. Maybe the false teachers were claiming some special kind of anointing. John reassures his readers that as Christians they all have the Spirit's anointing.

Notice how these verses hold together the Word (the apostles' message) and the Spirit (this anointing), who helps us to understand and receive the Word.

Does v27 mean we don't need Bible teachers?

John can't mean that as he is teaching them himself! Perhaps the point is that we don't need any teaching other than the Apostles', recorded for us in the Bible. Teachers who explain and apply God's word to us will help us but we are not to seek after new / esoteric revelation. We have the truth publicly preserved for us in the Bible.

Summary Points / Prayer / Praise / Application

Don't love "the world" / think in worldly ways.

Stick with the Jesus of the Bible and the Apostles' teaching about him. Don't be lead astray by false teaching.

Homegroup Leaders Notes (4) 1 John 2:28-3:10

What does John tell his readers to do in this passage? What does that mean?

“continue in him” (v28). “Him” = Jesus. Cf. 2:24. We remain in Jesus by seeing that the apostle’s message remains in us.

Why should we do it (v28)?

So that we might have confidence and be unashamed before Jesus at his appearing = the Second Coming.

What categories does our passage divide people into? (v10).

Children of God and children of the devil. Our passage shows us how to tell them apart. It is striking that no third category is suggested.

How does the passage characterise / describe real Christians? How can real Christians be known / identified? What do real Christians do?

Christians are children of God (vv1-2). They bear the family likeness of godliness..

They do what is right and love their brothers (fellow Christians) (v29, v10).

The same questions can be asked negatively: **how does the passage suggest false believers or teachers can be identified?**

Remember the context of false teaching that John is addressing (v7). One way to spot false teachers is by their ungodly lifestyle (v8) or the ungodliness their teaching encourages.

What incentives / reasons / arguments for godly living does the passage give?

(This would be a very open question that requires people to pick out the implications of a number of points in the passage. Some are drawn out by the questions below).

V3: the hope of seeing Jesus and being like Him. As children of God we are to bear the family likeness (2v29, 3vv2-3). Jesus’ purpose to destroy sin and the work of the devil means his people should have nothing to do with it (v5, v8). Sin is incompatible with our new God-given life (v9).

How does verse 2 describe the Christian hope?

When Jesus returns we will see him as he is and will be made like him. We will be made sinless, like Jesus. (We will also be given glorified resurrection bodies like Jesus now has).

How does verse 3 suggest that hope should affect us now? What’s the logic?

We purify ourselves as Jesus is pure. If we want to be like Jesus in the future, surely we want to be like him now. We are to live in the light of our destiny.

How / why do vv5-6 suggest that continuing to live in sin is incompatible with Christian faith? What was the purpose of Jesus’ coming? Vv5, 8.

Jesus came to take away sins (v5) and to destroy the work of the devil (v8) so it makes no sense to profess faith in Jesus and want to hold on to your sins (v5), which are works of the devil which are to be destroyed. There is no sin in Jesus (v5) so it is incompatible with living in Jesus to live in sin (v6).

Do Christians in fact continue to sin?

Yes! Cf. 1:8.

So what does John mean when he says that “no-one who continues to sin” knows Jesus (vv6, 9)?

John is talking about a consistent pattern of life. Just because someone does some things that seem good, that doesn't necessarily make them a Christian! Similarly, a genuine believer won't be continually complacent about his sin and unrepentant. Real Christians are sinful and far from perfect but they strive to be godly and we should expect some progress.

You might ask group members to think on their own about whether there are particular sins they are continuing to live with / are cherishing / have ceased to fight against etc. You could allow sometime for silent reflection and prayer.

Summary points / applications / for prayer & praise:

Praise God for the confidence we have in Christ (v28).

Praise God for his great love and for the privilege of being his children (v1), and our glorious future (v2).

Pray that we would remain in Jesus (v28) and not be lead astray (v7).

Pray that we would never be satisfied with our sin but that we would repent of it and seek to be more like the Lord Jesus. Confess any known sins to God and repent of them.

Praise God that Jesus has taken away our sins (v5) and destroyed the work of the devil (v8).

Homegroup Leaders Notes (5) 1 John 3:11-24

Though we included it last time, I suggest you also read verse 10 this week!

How does the passage say we can know if we are genuine believers? What ways of distinguishing true and false believers does it give?

(If you really followed up on everything that came out of this question, it might give you a way in to the whole passage! You will probably need to point people to some of the specific verses mentioned below. For a brave alternative way of doing the study (!) you could try making lists on big sheets of paper of everything that belongs to the devil / Cain / evil one / murderer / world / hatred / death / words tongue only etc. side on the one hand and the child of God / love / righteous / life / hated / cross / actions / rest / confidence / obedience etc. side on the other and discuss John's arguments as you go along. To get the most out of this approach the leader would need to have a firm grasp of the logic of all the elements and how they fit together and be ready to think on his feet! Why does each of those things belong where it is? Etc.) v10: that if someone does not love his brother (a fellow-Christian) he shows himself not to be a true child of God. V14: love for the brothers. Cf. v15. Love is characteristic of God and his children; hatred is characteristic of the devil and his children (v10).

Vv16 & 19.

V24 – real believers obey God's command, explained in v23.

We know by the Spirit that Jesus lives in us v24. Perhaps we know that Jesus lives in us (v24) by the love, righteousness and faith which the Spirit works in us and also perhaps by the Spirit's inner witness in our hearts.

What are the two "examples" given in this passage? What is it about them John wants us to learn from (to copy or to avoid)?

Cain v12 (Genesis 4). Jesus v16. Cain took his brother's life; Jesus gave his life for his brothers.

V15 on hatred and murder see Matthew 5:21-22.

Why might the world hate us? (v13 – see also v12) Why did Cain hate Abel?

Remember what John has said about the world as in rebellion against God e.g. 2:15-17; 3:1. Non-Christians might act like Cain (v11-12) and hate Christians because the Christian's righteous actions expose their unrighteousness.

What does our culture mean by "love"? What might people say "love" is? How would people finish the sentence "love is..."?

? A feeling. ? sentimental. ? confused with lust / sex.

What does verse 16 suggest real love is? How does the passage challenge our culture's view of love?

The cross defines real love. It is to do with purposeful self-sacrifice, acting in a way that's costly to self for the good of others. (Jesus' love for us was not because we are attractive or loveable.)

How should we lay down our lives for our brothers (v16)? What might it mean in practice do this / love one another? What practical ways of doing this are suggested in the passage? (vv17-18)

Purposeful self-sacrificial costly servant-hearted love in action for the undeserving like Jesus showed. V17: it may involve practical or financial help. V18: real love will involve actions, not just words

In what ways could you / your group / our church show love like this?

How does v19 suggest that Christians can have a clear conscience?

Genuine acts of love (v18) are a sign of being a real believer. Only believers will be genuinely and self-sacrificial in their love of others. Such love is God's supernatural work in us.

If our hearts condemn us (v20), does that necessarily mean we are not genuine believers? Why? What reassurance does John have for someone whose heart condemns him?

John seems to expect that from time to time our hearts may (wrongly) condemn us. It's reassuring simply to know that guilty feelings don't mean we're condemned. God is greater than our hearts – and God has loved us and sent Jesus to die for all those who will trust in him.

What promise and conditions does v22 give?

We receive whatever we ask in prayer if we obey God's commands and do what pleases him. We must do this in what we ask for too. The verse seems to imply that we pray according to God's will. Cf. 5:14-15.

How does v23 sum up what God commands of the Christian?

Believe in Jesus and love one another.
Jesus' command to love: John 13:34; 15:12, 17.

Summary points / applications / for prayer & praise:

John Stott's summary of vv11-18: "Hatred characterizes the world, whose prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil, issues in murder and is evidence of spiritual death. Love characterizes the Church, whose prototype is Christ. It originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice and is evidence of eternal life." (*Epistles of John*, Tyndale NT Comm., IVP, 1964, p144)

Praise God for his love for us and the death of the Lord Jesus for us.

Pray that we would love one another sincerely and follow Jesus' example, demonstrating self-sacrificial love in action. Look out for opportunities to do this.

Thank God that he hears our prayers.

Homegroup Leaders Notes (6) 1 John 4:1-21

You might like to read and deal with vv1-6 separately first.

Why do these verses suggest Christians need to be discerning? Why is it necessary to “test the spirits”? (v1)

Because there are many false prophets / teachers. (v1)

How do these suggest that we should “test the spirits” / recognise true and false teaching / the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood?

John gives us a doctrinal test: do they acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (vv2-3). Of course true prophets / teachers / spirits will always acknowledge this, but John probably fixes on this here as it is something the false teachers are denying.

V6: the “us” is probably the Apostles cf. 1:1-4, 19. Those who are from God accept the Apostle’s teaching. This is preserved for us in the New Testament. (What is said in the verse would still be true if we included all the apostolic churches in the “us” of v6. All those who are from God receive true teaching).

What comfort does verse 4 give us in the face of false teaching?

God is greater than the spirit of the antichrist.

Can you think of ways in which we might be tempted to accommodate our teaching to the “viewpoint of the world” so that people might listen to us (v5)?

Maybe saying that all religions are ways to God, downplaying sin and judgement, assigning the same roles to men and women, affirming practicing homosexuality, prosperity gospel promises of health and wealth etc.

Why should we love one another?

V7 because love comes from God and we have been born of God. Similarly, v16b.

V11. Because of God’s love for us we ought to love one another. Similarly, v19.

God has commanded it (v21).

(If you didn’t use the “what do people in our culture think love is” etc. question last time, you could use it here in contrast to vv9&10)

How should we love one another? What should our love be like?

Our love should be like God’s love for us, supremely demonstrated in Jesus (v9-10).

God’s love is costly (he gave his Son) and undeserved (“not that we loved God”, v10).

Since God is unseen (v12), how can we know he loves us?

We have seen (v14) that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. See also vv9-10.

How can we know that we are Christians? Vv13-16.

Because he has given us the Spirit (v13). Notice that all believers have the Spirit. If we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in us (v15)

Why can the Christian be without fear? What does the Christian not fear? (vv17-18)

We have confidence on the day of judgement (v17). Perfect love drives out fear of punishment (v18), though of course we fear God in the sense of being in awe of him, showing reverence, respect and honour for him.

Why do verses 20 and 21 suggest it's incredible to say we love God if we do not love fellow Christians?

Love of God and love of fellow Christians go together. God has commanded us to love fellow Christians and if we love him we'll obey his commands (5:3). In some ways it is easier to love a Christian we have seen than God whom we cannot see – easier to show our love in practice. Our love for the unseen God is seen in our love for his family, the church. Loving fellow Christians is a way of expressing our love for God.

You could encourage members to re-read the whole letter in time for next week's study and think about: What does John say about why he's written? (2:1, 16; 5:13) How has what we've read helped to fulfil those aims? What has struck you from the letter / would you like to hold on to from it? And use some time next week to review and consolidate.

Summary points / applications / for prayer & praise:

Pray for true teachers and teaching in the church and that we might recognise and reject false teachers and teaching, not seeking to accommodate our teaching to what people want to hear.

Give thanks for God's love for us and the confidence it gives us.

Pray for God's help to love fellow Christians – especially any you find difficult.

Homegroup Leaders Notes (7) 1 John 5:1-21

What characteristics of the children of God does verse 1 give us?

Those born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ and love other Christians (v1).

What does it mean / look like in practice to love God? (vv2-3)

If we love God, we'll obey his commands (including the command to love our fellow Christians).

What encouragements do verses 3-5 give us?

God's commands are not burdensome (v3). Everyone born of God overcomes the world by faith in Jesus (4-5).

From 2:15-17 and the context here, what might it mean to "overcome the world"?

Overcoming our sinful desires and temptations, believing in Jesus, obeying God's commands, loving other Christians. In 4:4 language of "overcoming the world" seems to be tied up with rejecting the antichrist-ish false teachers.

There are various theories about what John means by "the water and the blood" (v6). Some see it as a reference to John 19:34-35, where water and blood flow from Jesus' side. According to John Stott, it is most satisfactory to take "*water* as referring to the baptism of Jesus, at which He was declared the Son and commissioned and empowered for his work, and *blood* to His death, in which His work was finished." (Tyndale Commentary, IVP, p178). The false teachers may have held that Jesus was an ordinary man on whom the "Christ" descended at his baptism and departed before the cross.

What reasons does John give us for believing (vv7-10) that Jesus is the Son of God (v5)?

If we rightly accept (much) human testimony, how much more should we accept God's? (v9) We don't want to make God out to be a liar by not believing him (v10). We have this testimony in our hearts (v10) – perhaps by the inner witness of the Spirit (v6-7). Dt 19:15 gives a legal rule that for a conviction "a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." John gives us 3 witnesses in v7-8.

What confidence do we have in prayer? Vv14-15.

When we ask according to God's will he hears us.

What condition does verse 14 give for God hearing our prayers? What does that mean?

We should pray according to God's revealed will: asking for those things God says he desires or which he has promised to give. We always bow to God's sovereign will ("not my will, but yours be done" - Mk 14:36; Cf. Lord's Prayer), even if we don't know God's plans for the future in a particular situation. Cf. 3:21-22.

How should we react if we see a Christian fall into sin? v16

Pray for God to bring him to repentance and forgive him. Not e.g. gossip!

The “sin that leads to death” is probably continued rejection of Christ. The false teachers are committing such apostasy (2:18-19; Cf. Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-29; Mk 3:29). John has already told us that if we are trusting in Jesus all sins are forgiven (1:9).

What does John say that “we know” in vv18-20?

Christians do not continue to live in unrepentant sin and Jesus keeps us safe from the devil (v18). We know that we are children of God, not of the devil or the world (v19). We know that what we believe is true: Jesus has given us understanding and we know him. (v20).

How should this knowledge affect our lives?

We should turn from our sin and not become complacent / tolerant of our failures since we are born of God (v18). We can be confident that God will keep us safe, not terrified of the devil or the hostile world.

How does John describe the purpose of his letter in verse 13?

So that his readers who are believers may know that they have eternal life. John wants his readers to have assurance and confidence (especially in the face of false teaching).

How has his letter served that purpose? How has the letter helped you to know that as a believer you have eternal life?

John has given us a number of ways to recognise true believers: they believe in Jesus (4:15; 5:1), love other Christians (2:10; 3:10, 14, 18-19); obey God’s commands (2:3-6) and know the testimony of the Spirit (3:24; 4:13).

God’s promises e.g. of forgiveness (1:9; 2:1-2), of his love (4:9-10) and of answered prayer (5:14-15) reassure us.

What have we learnt / been reminded of by 1 John?

(see summary points from previous studies for some examples)

Summary points / for prayer & praise:

Pray that we would love God and his children and obey his commandments.

Give thanks to God for the victory over the world that he gives to all who trust in Jesus.

Give thanks for the assurance and confidence that we can have because of God’s testimony.

Give thanks that God hears our prayers.

Pray (perhaps on your own at home?) for any Christians you know who have fallen into sin.

Give thanks for all that we’ve learnt from 1 John and pray that we’d live in the light of it.