

Outline of  
1, 2 & 3  
John



# 1 John

## Authorship

The style of 1 John is so close to that of the author of the Gospel of John that no one questioned that they were written by the same person until the twentieth century. Some writers have pointed to minor stylistic differences and have proposed that 1 John was written by a different member of the “Johannine school.” Sometimes disciples of famous teachers would seek to imitate their teachers’ works (often even their style), so this proposal cannot be ruled out on a priori literary grounds.

One can account for the minor stylistic differences, however, simply by recognizing the difference between an epistle and a Gospel; the latter genre is literarily related to ancient biography, which went through several stages in the writing process before it was complete. Conversely, this epistle probably does not represent a major literary production (although literary epistles did exist).

One can explain the purported differences in theology and outlook by the different situation each addressed; by the standards used to suggest that the same person did not write both, different sermons of the average preacher today would often have to be attributed to different authors as well! Most important, the author claims to be an eyewitness (1:1) but does not claim to write in another’s name (he provides no pseudepigraphic preface).

## Situation

If the setting of 1 John is the same as that of the Fourth Gospel, it is meant to encourage Christians expelled from the synagogues, some of whose colleagues have returned to the synagogue by denying Jesus’ messiahship (2:19, 22; 4:2-3). The letter can be read in this way and makes sense on these terms.

But John was concerned about situations in cities other than those addressed in his Gospel. While Christians apparently were expelled from synagogues and betrayed by the Jewish community in Smyrna (Rev 2:9-10) and Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-9), they were tempted with the heresy of compromise elsewhere, including compromise with idolatry advocated by false prophets (Rev 2:14-15, 20-23; cf. 1 Jn 4:1; 5:21). One form of idolatry of particular concern may have been the imperial cult, to which people in the East needed to show their loyalty or, in some cities, pay serious consequences (cf. Rev 13:14-15), possibly including death (1 Jn 3:16). First John could address a community like Ephesus, where the church had expelled the false teachers but needed love for one another (Rev 2:2-4).

On the one hand, the issue in view might be simply some false prophets (1 Jn 4:1-6) advocating compromises, perhaps even with the imperial cult to save one’s life. On the other hand, the issue might be one of the movements of false teaching that was developing toward full-blown second-century Gnosticism. Docetists believed that Christ was divine but only seemed to become human (cf. 4:2); Cerinthians (followers of Cerinthus) believed that the Christ-Spirit merely came on Jesus, but denied that he was actually the one and only Christ (cf. 2:22). Gnostics also tended to define sin in various ways, hence some Gnostics believed that they were incapable of committing real sins, although their bodies could engage in behavior non-Gnostic Christians considered sinful. Any of the above backgrounds fits the letter itself; thus the commentary mentions all of them at relevant points below. But one point is beyond dispute: the primary troublemakers are clearly “secessionists,” people who had been part of the Christian community John addresses but who had withdrawn from that community. John advocates testing the spirits by two main tests: a moral-ethical test (keeping the commandments, especially love of the Christian community) and a faith test (the right view of Jesus).

**Source:** Keener, Craig S. (2014). *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Second Edition*. InterVarsity Press.

## ABSOLUTE CONTRASTS

<p>LIFE LIGHT TRUTH LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS CHILDREN OF GOD LOVE OF THE FATHER</p>	<p>DEATH DARKNESS LIES HATE LAWLESSNESS CHILDREN OF SATAN LOVE OF THE WORLD</p>
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### WHO? (2. 12-14)

<p>'LITTLE CHILDREN' Know forgiveness Know fatherhood</p>	<p>'YOUNG MEN' Developed strength Digested scripture Defeated Satan</p>	<p>'FATHERS' Length of experience Depth of experience</p>
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### WHY?

<p>That they may be</p>	<p><b>SATISFIED</b> (1.4) <b>SINLESS</b> (2.1) <b>SAFE</b> (2.26) <b>SURE</b> (5.13)</p>	<p>To promote <b>HARMONY</b> (1.3) To produce <b>HAPPINESS</b> (1.4) To protect <b>HOLINESS</b> (2.1) To prevent <b>HERESY</b> (2.26) To provide <b>HOPE</b> (5.13)</p>
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## THE WORD



## THE WORLD

SANDWICH —

<p>LIFE (1. 1-4) LIGHT (1.5 - 2. 11)  LOVE (3.11 - 4.21) LIFE (5. 1-21)</p>	<p>positive negative positive</p>	<p>DO DON'T DO</p>
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LUST  
LIES  
LAWLESSNESS } (2.15 - 3.10)

**FATHER**  
GOD IS LIGHT  
GOD IS LOVE  
GOD IS LIFE

**CHILDREN**  
EMBRACE LIGHT  
EXPRESS LOVE  
ENJOY LIFE

**TESTS OF 'TRUE' CHRISTIANS**

- 1. DOCTRINAL: PERSON OF CHRIST  
**HERESY**
- 2. SPIRITUAL: RECEPTION OF SPIRIT  
**DEVIL**
- 3. MORAL: PRACTICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS  
**LAWLESSNESS**
- 4. SOCIAL: LOVE OF BRETHREN  
**HATRED**

ASSURANCE → CONFIDENCE  
*WITHIN OURSELVES  
BEFORE OTHERS  
TOWARDS GOD*

Chapter  
**1**

- 1Jo 1:1-4** He describes the person of Christ, in whom we have eternal life, by a communion with God;  
**1Jo 1:5-10** to which we must adjoin holiness of life, to testify the truth of that our communion and profession of faith, as also to assure us of the forgiveness of our sins by Christ's death.

Chapter  
**2**

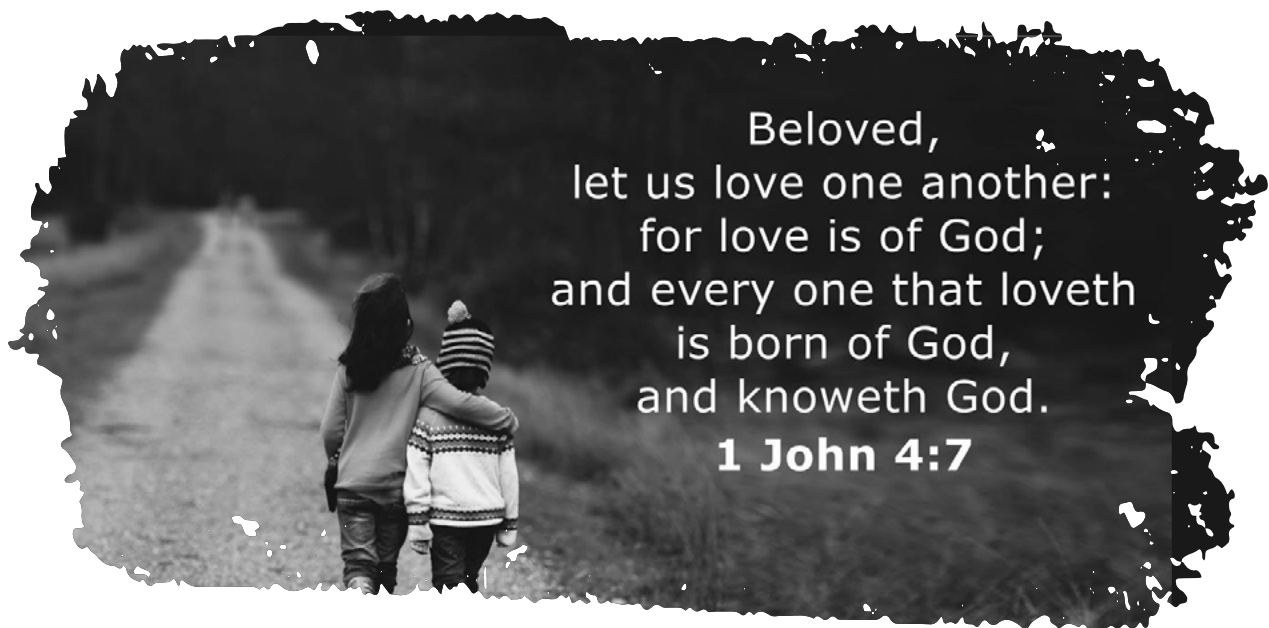
- 1Jo 2:1-2** He comforts them against the sins of infirmity.  
**1Jo 2:3-8** Rightly to know God is to keep his commandments;  
**1Jo 2:9-14** to love our brethren;  
**1Jo 2:15-17** and not to love the world.  
**1Jo 2:18-19** We must beware of seducers;  
**1Jo 2:20-29** from whose deceits the godly are safe, preserved by perseverance in faith, and holiness of life.

Chapter  
**3**

- 1Jo 3:1-2** He declares the singular love of God towards us, in making us his sons;  
**1Jo 3:3-10** who therefore ought obediently to keep his commandments;  
**1Jo 3:11-24** as also to love one another as brethren.

Chapter  
**4**

- 1Jo 4:1-6** He warns them not to believe all who boast of the Spirit;  
**1Jo 4:7-21** and exhorts to brotherly love.

Chapter  
**5**

- 1Jo 5:1-2** He that loves God loves his children, and keeps his commandments;  
**1Jo 5:3-8** which to the faithful are not grievous.  
**1Jo 5:9-13** Jesus is the Son of God;  
**1Jo 5:14-21** and able to hear our prayers.

# 2 John

## Authorship and Date

See the introduction to 1 John and to the Gospel of John; there is little stylistic difference between 1 and 2 John. Although John himself might send a shorter personal letter resembling a longer one he had previously written, it is unlikely that a forger would try to produce such a short document that added so little to the case found in 1 John. Further, a later forgery of 2 John (or 3 John) would have drained it of its authority for the audience, since the contents of 2 and 3 John indicate that the hearers knew the writer personally.

## Nature of the Letter

Second John may function as an official letter, the sort that high priests could send to Jewish leaders outside Palestine. The length is the same as that of 3 John; both were probably limited to this length by the single sheet of papyrus on which they were written. In contrast to most New Testament letters, most other ancient letters were of this length.

## Situation

Second John addresses the problem of the same secessionists that 1 John addressed. The secessionists' inadequate view of Christ was probably either a compromise with synagogue pressure (see the introduction to Gospel of John) or a relativization of Jesus to allow more compromise with paganism (see the introduction to Revelation)—probably the latter. For the secessionists, Jesus was a great prophet like John the Baptist and their own leaders, but he was not the supreme Lord in the flesh (cf. 1 Jn 4:1-6; Rev 2:14, 20). Some propose that they may have been affiliated with or forerunners of Cerinthus (who distinguished the divine Christ and the human Jesus, like some modern theologians) or the Docetists (who claimed that Jesus only seemed to be human). All these compromises helped the false teaching's followers better adapt to their culture's values what remained of Christianity after their adjustments, but led them away from the truth proclaimed by the eyewitnesses who had known Jesus first-hand.

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## SIN IN BELIEVERS (3.9)

*Is it:*

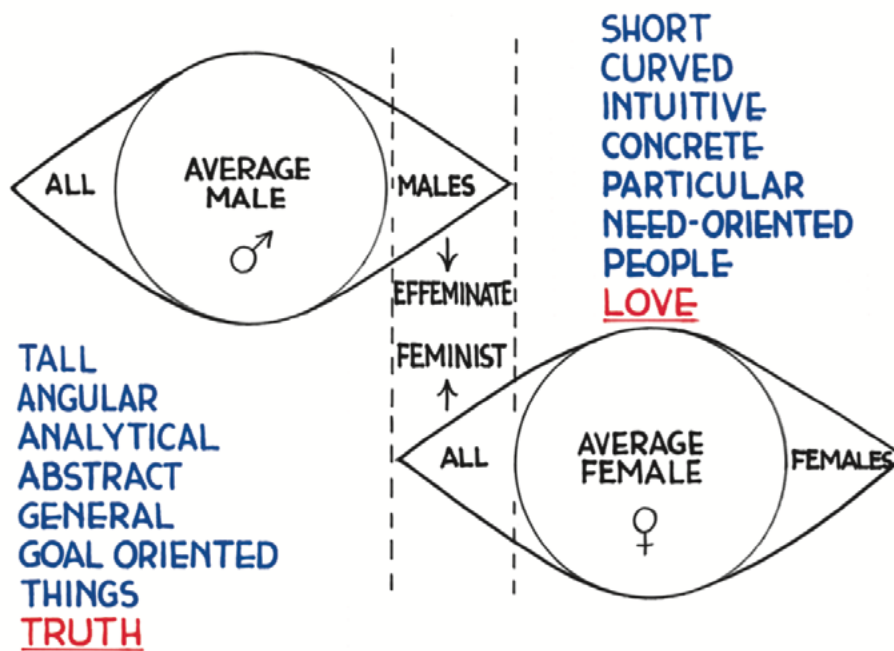
- INDUBITABLE ~ we do sin?
- INEVITABLE ~ we will sin?
- INCOMPATIBLE ~ we should not sin?
- INTOLERABLE ~ we must not sin?
- INEXCUSABLE ~ we need not sin?
- INAPPLICABLE ~ we do not sin?
- INCONCEIVABLE ~ we cannot sin?

- i. Means exactly what it says.
- ii. 'Sin' only means blatant vices and crimes.
- iii. God doesn't call it 'sin' in believers.
- iv. Refers to our new nature, not old.
- v. This is the ideal, not the actual.
- vi. Only refers to habitual, persistent sin.

Applies to those who are:

**BORN of GOD** (have his seed/sperm in them)  
**ABIDING in CHRIST**

Not discussing security of believers (5.16) but sinfulness in believers.



♀
**II and III JOHN**
♂

**HOSPITALITY ~ TRUTH AND LOVE**

TO A LADY  
 DANGER ~  
     TOO MUCH LOVE  
 ATTITUDE ~  
     TOO SOFT-HEARTED  
 DOOR OPEN TOO WIDE  
 WELCOME WRONG PEOPLE  
 NEGLECT TRUTH  
 WRONG BELIEF

TO A MAN  
 DANGER ~  
     TOO MUCH TRUTH  
 ATTITUDE ~  
     TOO HARD-HEARTED  
 DOOR SHUT TOO TIGHTLY  
 REFUSE RIGHT PEOPLE  
 NEGLECT LOVE  
 WRONG BEHAVIOUR

*NEED*
*BOTH*  
*Love and truth in woman*
*Truth and love in men*

**II JOHN** ♀

- 1-3. LOVE IN TRUTH
- 4. FOLLOWING TRUTH
- 5-6. FOLLOWING LOVE
- 7-9. SOME REJECT TRUTH
- 10-11. DON'T INVITE THEM
- 12-13. OUR JOY

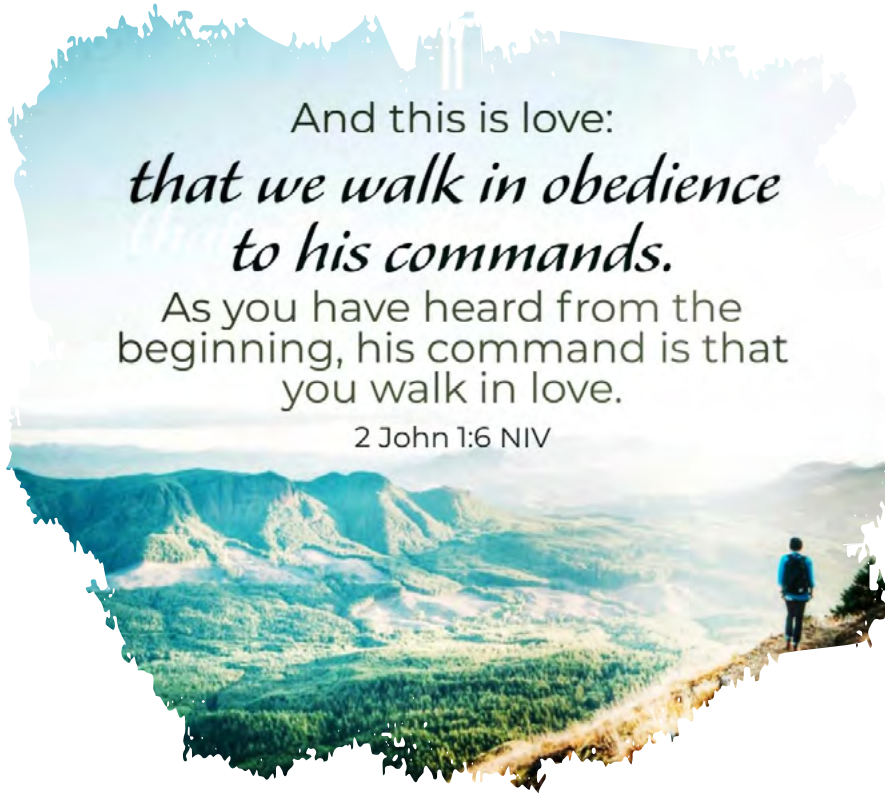
**III JOHN** ♂

- I. LOVE IN TRUTH
- 2-4. FOLLOWING TRUTH
- 5-8. FOLLOWING LOVE
- 9-10. SOME REFUSE LOVE
- 11-12. DON'T IMITATE THEM
- 13-15. YOUR PEACE





- 2Jo 1-7** He exhorts a certain honourable matron, with her children, to persevere in Christian love and belief,  
**2Jo 8-9** lest they lose the reward of their former profession;  
**2Jo 10-13** and to have nothing to do with those seducers that bring not the true doctrine of Christ Jesus.



And this is love:  
*that we walk in obedience  
to his commands.*

As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

2 John 1:6 NIV

# 3 John

This is a “letter of recommendation” for Demetrius, a traveling missionary (vv. 7-8) who needs to be put up by a local church while he is evangelizing in their area (cf. comment on Mt 10:11-13, 40-42). For authorship and date, see the introduction to 2 John. For the first three centuries of the church’s existence, congregations usually met in homes; for further details on this practice, see Romans 16:5. In this letter to Gaius, a house-church leader, John is apparently attempting to counter the opposing influences of Diotrephes, a different house-church leader who is asserting his own authority and rejecting emissaries backed by John’s apostolic authority.

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- 3Jo 1-4** He commends Gaius for his piety,
- 3Jo 5-6** and hospitality,
- 3Jo 7-8** to true preachers;
- 3Jo 9-10** complaining of the unkind dealing of ambitious Diotrephes on the contrary side;
- 3Jo 11** whose evil example is not to be followed;
- 3Jo 12-14** and gives special testimony to the good report of Demetrius.



# Quiz on 1, 2 and 3 John

1. What cleanseth us from all sin, as described in 1 John Chapter 1?

2. What is it that, through His love, God has allowed Christians to be called, according to 1 John Chapter 3?

3. In 1 John Chapter 4, a true Prophet will confess that Jesus is what?

4. The world does not recognize that we are God's children, because they do not know who?

5. Perfect love casts out what, according to John?

6. In 2 John Chapter 1, anyone that remains in the teachings of Christ, has what?

7. John talks of a commandment from God which is not new, but has been there from the beginning. What is this commandment

8. As well as being liars, according to John, what else are those who deny that Jesus is Christ?

9. To whom was 3 John written?

10. In 3 John, what did John hear that brought him great joy?

GENEVA  
BIBLE SCHOOL

