

STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES IN SMALL GROUPS

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN ***By Don Krow***

A Three Step Approach

STEP ONE: Read the verses from the various translations and stop and discuss them among your group.

STEP TWO: Insights from the Greek. Go behind the English language by reading from Greek Lexicons (Dictionaries), and looking at the Greek tenses as well as some short commentary. Then discuss among your group.

STEP THREE: Questions are provided that will take you directly to the Scriptures to again discuss what you have already seen and understood.

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Discipleship Evangelism
P.O. Box 17007
Colorado Springs, CO 80935-7007 U.S.A.

www.delessons.org

www.krowtracts.com

A Three Step Approach To Understanding

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

STEP ONE:

STEP ONE: Read the verses from the various translations and stop and discuss them among your group.

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek and copied many times. It was then translated into many languages of the world. Many different translations have been made and used throughout church history. The word “translate” carries the idea of “expressing in another language but retaining the original message of the author.” The Bible has a message and a context. What did the Apostles mean when they wrote these letters? What does the passage actually say? Do we read our own meaning into these letters? Or do we listen to what the text actually says and draw out its meaning? These questions must be asked to every honest Bible student who is seeking the truth.

Jesus and the Apostles quoted and trusted Bible translation as being God’s Word. The earliest Bible translation used by the early Christians was the Greek Septuagint. The reason for Bible translation is to help others understand God’s Word. Contrary to popular opinion, no one Bible translation can ever hope to reproduce completely all the shades of meaning found in the original Greek. One Greek word may require several or even several dozen words to translate it completely.

You have a tool in front of you that is life changing. I say “life changing” because I know as a full-time professor in a Bible College for many years just what this tool has done for me and others. Like an optometrist (a doctor treating visual defects) who puts before his patients many corrective lenses until their sight is perfect, the multiple Bible translations are the spiritual corrective lenses that gives spiritual sight by the aid of God’s Spirit (Jn. 17:17). Remember, **good translations carry the same message in different styles**. This is why I believe a person will acquire a fuller and richer understanding of thought and content (of the original Greek) by reading and comparing several Bible translations.

It is important that you commit yourself to the truthfulness of the Scripture before you consider someone else’s option. As important as pastor’s and teachers are in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-14), I have seen over and over people interpret Scripture from preconceived ideas, out of their own hurt and trials, from their own doctrines or from a teacher that says the things they want to hear (See 2 Tim. 4:3-4), etc. This is a day when people are following men and they use the Bible as a proof text for their own ideas. This is why I have adopted the following guidelines as a basis for our study. .

(1) God speaks through the Bible. The Bible is the record of God's self-revelation. Let the Bible change you, don't try to change the Bible (Heb. 13:9).

(2) What did the first-century church understand when they first heard these New Testament letters read to them (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27)?

(3) As a student of Scripture one should never read into a passage or take away from the passage that which it actually states (Revelation 22:18-19).

(4) Scripture has a "context." "Context" is that which proceeds and follows any verse or set of verses. The "context" will affect the meaning of a verse or verses.

(5) "Words" mean something. What does the passage actually say? Do we read our own meaning or doctrine into a verse or do we listen to what the text actually says and draw out its meaning? Usually the Scriptures mean what they say and say what they mean. When someone writes you a letter do you change its meaning by reading into the letter mystical interpretations that do not even exist within the letter?

(6) What is the Apostle's doctrine? (Acts 2:42) that is, what teachings did the Apostle's bring forth when they wrote these letters? What message or warnings do they carry?

(7) Look for a revelation of God and Jesus Christ behind the Scriptures. Scripture is to be used in such a way that quoting or reading Scripture is understood to be the same as quoting or hearing from God. The message of Scripture involves communication of truth about God and a revelation of God Himself (Luke 24:27). *Don W. Krow*

PREPARING TO STUDY 1 JOHN

(1) Read the entire Epistle of 1 John several times before you come together as a group.

(2) In your group read aloud the chapter in 1 John that you are about to study. As a group discuss the general content of that chapter.

(3) Read and Discuss each verse and translation among your group.

1 JOHN CHAPTER I

General Information: A reasonable date for 1 John is A.D. 90-95. It was likely written from Ephesus to the churches of Asia Minor over which John exercised apostolic leadership. Although he was greatly advanced in age when he penned this epistle, John was still actively ministering to churches. He was the sole remaining apostolic

survivor who had intimate, eyewitness association with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension (M. Study Bible, p. 1961).

The very person who wrote John 3:16, “whosoever believeth in him should not perish” is the very same person who reveals in this epistle what believing really involves. “Most magazine articles and newspaper columns proceed from point A to point B to point C to conclusion D. Our way of thinking, of reasoning from premises to conclusions, has come down to us from the ancient Greeks. It is typically Western in approach. As we read the Holy Scriptures, most of us tend to assume the writer will take this approach. Most of the holy writers came out of an Eastern, specifically Jewish, culture. Their reasoning was often different than what we are used to. In 1 John, the apostle weaves doctrine and practice together. As a result, we see the intricate connections between “believing right” and “doing right.” Despite what false teachers have done, John is not creating new doctrine. Everything he writes to them in this letter is, or should be, familiar. It is the same truth they have always heard from him (Lutheran Study Bible, p. 2171).

“Theologians debate the precise nature of the false teacher’s beliefs in 1 John, because, John does not directly specify their beliefs, but rather combats the heretics mainly through a positive restatement of the fundamentals of the faith. 1 John present truths in black and white rather than shades of gray, often through a stark contrast, that is, “light” vs. “darkness” (1 Jn. 1:5, 7; 2:8-11); “truth” vs. “lies” (1 Jn. 2:21-22; 4:1); “children of God” vs. “children of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:10). Those who have been given a new nature must give evidence. The issues center on basic tests in one’s life that confirm that salvation has truly occurred” (MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1663). “Because the letter addresses such broad moral topics, it is clear that John’s goal was to provide direction for those Christians who faced new challenges to their faith. At this time, there was an emergence of various groups whose teachings opposed Christianity. These people infiltrated the church, and there were many who gave in to their denial of the key fundamentals of Christianity. As opposition to the believers’ faith arose, they were encouraged to continue walking in fellowship with Christ so as to not be drawn into false beliefs (1 Jn. 1:5-2:2). An examination of the focus of John’s epistle makes it obvious that he is instructing believers concerning the heresies that were being spread among them, not concerning some disaster that had come as a result of political events. Hence, the infiltration of these corrupt ideas that the church was experiencing was most likely from Gentile influences, not Jewish opposition” (Word Study NT, p. 784).

“It has been suggested that this Book of 1 John is divided into four major sections. John seeks first to warn believers concerning indifference to morality and sin (1 Jn. 1:1 -2:11). Next, he admonishes concerning a love for the things of the world as opposed to a love for the things of Christ (1 Jn. 2:12-28). A third section deals with the importance of the believer exhibiting a pure and righteous love, especially when relating to another brother in Christ (1 Jn. 2:29-3:22). Finally, John reveals that a true faith in Christ as the Son of God is the foundation on which all of Christianity is based (1 Jn. 3:23-4:21)” (Ibid., pgs. 784-785).

1 John is the 62th book of the Bible and has 5 chapters, 105 verses, and 2,523 words.

In your group read 1 John chapter 1 aloud. As a group discuss the general content of the chapter.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GROUP: *Read and Discuss each verse and translation.*

**1 JOHN CHAPTER 1
VERSES 1-4**

.....> READ THE FOLLOWING: ¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; ²(For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) ³That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. **(King James Version)**

¹ We announce to you the Word of Life. *He was there* at the beginning, yet we have heard *Him speak* and seen *Him* with our *own* eyes, scrutinized *Him*, and touched *Him* with our *own* hands! ² And the Life was revealed and we saw and testify and proclaim to you the eternal Life that was with the Father and was made known to us. ³ We are telling you what we have seen and heard so that you also can join with us in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things so that your joy may be complete. **(The New Translation)**

¹ The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life. ² This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and announce to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was shown to us. ³ We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete. **(New Living Translation)**

¹ We write you now about what has always existed, which we have heard, we have seen with our own eyes, we have looked at, and we have touched with our hands. We write to you about the Word that gives life. ² He who gives life was shown to us. We saw him and can give proof about it. And now we announce to you that he has life that continues forever. He was with God the Father and was shown to us. ³ We announce to you what we have seen and heard, because we want you also to have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with God the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to you so you can be full of joy with us. **(New Century Version)**

¹ The Word that gives life was from the beginning, and this is the one our message is about. Our ears have heard, our own eyes have seen, and our hands touched this Word. ² The one who gives life appeared! We saw it happen, and we are witnesses to what we have seen. Now we are telling you about this eternal life that was with the Father and appeared to us. ³ We are telling you what we have seen and heard,

so that you may share in this life with us. And we share in it with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing to tell you these things, because this makes us truly happy. **(Contemporary English Version)**

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. 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! (verses 1-4) **(The Message)**

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. **(The Living Bible)**

1 Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life – this is our subject. **2** That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. **3** What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete. **(Jerusalem Bible)**

1 I'm writing to you about the Word who has been living since the very beginning, the Word who gives Life. We heard Him speak, and we saw Him with our own eyes. We looked at Him and touched Him with our own hands. **2** Yes, this Life appeared so that people could see Him, and we saw Him. And now we're telling others what we know, as we bring them the news about this eternal Life, who was living with His Father, and has made Himself known to us. **3** Now we're bringing the news about what we saw and heard to you people also, so that you too can be members of our group, which includes our Father and His Son Jesus Christ! **4** And we're writing all this down so that our hearts will be filled with joy. **(New Testament in Everyday American English)**

1 We tell you now about something that has existed (lived) since before the world began: This we heard, we saw with our own eyes, we watched, we touched with our hands. We write to you about the Word (Christ) that gives life. **2** That life was shown to us. We saw it. We can give proof about it. Now we tell you about that Life. It is Life that continues forever. This is the Life that was with God the Father. God showed this Life to us. **3** Now we tell you the things that we have seen and heard. Why? Because we want you to have fellowship together with us. The fellowship we share together is with God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. **4** We write these things to you so that you can be full of joy with us. **(Easy-to-Read New Testament) <:::::::::: STOP AND DISCUSS.**

1 JOHN CHAPTER 1
VERSES 5-7

.....> **READ THE FOLLOWING:** ⁵This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. **(King James Version)**

⁵This is the message he has given us to announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness. We are not living in the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. **(New Living Translation)**

⁵Here is the message we have heard from Christ and now announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶So if we say we have fellowship with God, but we continue living in darkness, we are liars and do not follow the truth. ⁷But if we live in the light, as God is in the light, we can share fellowship with each other. Then the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin. **(New Century Version)**

⁵Jesus told us that God is light and doesn't have any darkness in him. Now we are telling you. ⁶If we say that we share in life with God and keep on living in the dark, we are lying and are not living by the truth. ⁷But if we live in the light, as God does, we share in life with each other. And the blood of his Son Jesus washes all our sins away. **(Contemporary English Version)**

This, in essence, is the message we heard from Christ and are passing on to you: God is light, pure light; there's not a trace of darkness in him. If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we're obviously lying through our teeth – we're not *living* what we claim. But if we walk in the light, God himself being the light, we also experience a shared life with one another, as the sacrificed blood of Jesus, God's Son, purges all our sin. (verses 5-7) **(The Message)**

⁵This is the message God has given us to pass on to you: that God is Light and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶So if we say we are his friends but go on living in spiritual darkness and sin, we are lying. ⁷But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. **(The Living Bible)**

Here is the message we learned from him and announce to you: 'God is light and in him there is no darkness, none.' If we say, 'We have fellowship with him, when we live and move in darkness, then we are lying, we are not practicing the truth; but if we live and move within the light, as he is within the light, then we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. (verses 5-7) **(Moffatt Translation)**

5 Now this is the message that we have heard from his Son and announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness at all in him. **6** If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions. **7** But if we live in the light – just as he is in the light – then we

have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, makes us clean from every sin. **(Today's English Version)**

Here is the message we heard from him and pass on to you: that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to be sharing in his life while we walk in the dark, our words and our lives are a lie; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, then we share together a common life, and we are being cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus his Son. (verses 5-7) **(New English Bible)**

This is the message that I heard from Him and now hand on to you, that 'God is light and in Him is no darkness at all'. If we say that we are in partnership with Him and yet choose to live in darkness, we are telling an untruth and not being sincere. But if we choose to live in the light, as He is in the light, we share a real partnership, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, washes us clean from every sin. (verses 5-7) **(The New Testament Letters)**

5 Here is the message we have heard from him and announce to you. God is light. There is no darkness in him at all. **6** Suppose we say that we share life with God but still walk in the darkness. Then we are lying. We are not living by the truth. **7** But suppose we walk in the light, just as he is in the light. Then we share life with one another. And the blood of Jesus, his Son, makes us pure from all sin. **(New International Reader's Version)** <::::::::::: **STOP AND DISCUSS.**

1 JOHN CHAPTER 1 VERSES 8-10

::::::::::> **READ THE FOLLOWING:** ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. **(King James Version)**

[8] If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **[9]** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **[10]** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. **(New International Version)**

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and we do not accept God's teaching. **(New Century Version)**

If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins – make a clean breast of them – he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we've never sinned, we out and out contradict God – make a liar out of him. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God. (verses 8-10) **(The Message)**

If we refuse to admit that we are sinners, then we live in a world of illusion and truth becomes a stranger to us. But if we freely admit that we have sinned, we find him

reliable and just – he forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil. For if we say “we have not sinned”, we are making him a liar and cut ourselves off from what he has to say to us. (verses 8-10) **(Phillips Translation)**

8 If we say that we are not sinful, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He will keep His promise and do what He obligated Himself to do: He will forgive our sins and wash away all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. **(God’s Word to the Nations)**

8 Suppose we claim we are without sin. Then we are fooling ourselves. The truth is not in us. **9** But God is faithful and fair. If we admit that we have sinned, he will forgive us our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar. His word has no place in our lives. **(New International Reader’s Version)**

8 If we say we never sin, we’re only fooling ourselves, and there’s no truth whatever in our claim. **9** But, if we humbly and sincerely make a practice of confessing our sins to God (“confess” is in the present tense in the Greek) when we have failed Him, He will be faithful and true to His promise to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all the selfish and immoral things we have done. **10** If we claim we never sin, we’re calling God a liar, and have refused to accept what He has so plainly told us about ourselves. **(The Last Days Bible)**

8 If we say we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are sinners], we delude *and* lead ourselves astray, and the Truth [which the Gospel presents] is not in us [does not dwell in our hearts]. **9** If we [freely] admit that we have sinned *and* confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action]. **10** If we say (claim) we have not sinned, we contradict His Word *and* make Him out to be false *and* a liar, and His Word is not in us [the divine message of the Gospel is not in our hearts]. **(Amplified New Testament) <:::::::::: STOP AND DISCUSS.**

**Discipleship Evangelism
P.O. Box 17007
Colorado Springs, CO 80935-7007 U.S.A.**

www.delessons.org

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STEP TWO:
INSIGHTS FROM THE GREEK

STEP TWO: Insights from the Greek goes behind the English language by reading from Greek Lexicons (Dictionaries), and looking at the Greek tenses as well as some short commentary. After reading then discuss among your group.

I JOHN CHAPTER I

A KEY TO UNDERSTAND GREEK TENSES

PRESENT TENSE: A present tense in Greek conveys continuous or habitual action.

AORIST TENSE: An aorist tense means the action is viewed as a complete whole or one-time action.

PERFECT TENSE: A completed action that has lingering effects.

FUTURE TENSE: Indicates a contemplated event which has not yet occurred.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 1
VERSES 1-4

.....> READ THE FOLLOWING: ¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (aorist tense), and our hands have handled (aorist tense), of the Word of life; ²(For the life was manifested (aorist tense), and we have seen *it*, and bear witness (present tense), and shew (present tense) unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) ³That which we have seen (perfect tense) and heard declare we (present tense) unto you, that ye also may have (present tense) fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And these things write we (present tense) unto you, that your joy may be (present tense) full. (King James Version)

(Verses 1-4) – After Jerusalem was destroyed John, who was probably the only apostle still alive, went to Ephesus and lived there for another 25 years, writing the last 5 books there (Julian G. Anderson NT, p. 860). Unlike most other New Testament epistles this one has no salutation at the beginning and no benediction at the conclusion. These four verses of introduction correspond to the opening eighteen verses of the Gospel (of John) and three verses of the Revelation. They tell us the writer's subject, namely, the Word, who is life. The author is saying that in this letter, "We are declaring Jesus the Christ." (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1005).

(Verse 1) – First John was written by John, one of Jesus' original 12 disciples. He was probably "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20) and, along with Peter and James, he had a special relationship with Jesus. This letter was written between A.D. 90-95 from Ephesus, before John's exile to the island of Patmos. Jerusalem had been destroyed in A.D. 70, and Christians were scattered throughout the empire. By the time John wrote this letter, Christianity had been around for more than a generation. It had faced and survived severe persecution. The main problem confronting the church at this time was declining commitment: many believers were conforming to the world's standards, failing to stand up for Christ, and compromising their faith. False teachers were plentiful, and they were accelerating the church's downward slide away from the Christian faith.

John wrote this letter to put believers back on track, to show the difference between light and darkness (truth and error), and to encourage the church to grow in genuine love for God and for one another. He also wrote to assure true believers that they possessed eternal life and to help them know that their faith was genuine – so they could enjoy all the benefits of being God's children (Life Application Bible, p. 2274).

"Which was from the beginning." Meaning is always determined by the context. In this instance the phrase means a beginning prior to creation, and the meaning is determined by **"which was with the Father"** in verse 2 (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1005).

"The Word of Life." The Greek word for **"Word"** is *logos*, meaning any kind of communication. Here, it means Christ, who was the way God told people about himself (NCV, p. 1624).

(Verse 3) – **"Fellowship with us & with the Father and his Son."** "Fellowship" is the Greek word *koinonia*. It's a word of intimacy and means "communion; close relationship; participation and sharing" (The Teacher's Commentary, p. 1048). Fellowship is the spiritual union of the believer with the Father and His Son (Heb. 8:10-11) – as described in the figures of the vine and branches (Jn. 15:1-5) and the body and the head (1 Co. 12:12; Col. 1:18) as well as communion with fellow believers (Acts 2:42).

(Verse 4) – The apostles so shared the heart of Christ for His people that their own joy was bound up in the spiritual well-being of those to whom they ministered (Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 884). <::::::::::: **STOP, DISCUSS OR COMMENT.**

1 JOHN CHAPTER 1
VERSES 5-7

.....> READ THE FOLLOWING: ⁵This then is (present tense) the message which we have heard of him, and declare (present tense) unto you, that God is light, and in him is (present tense) no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have (present tense) fellowship with him, and walk (present tense) in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk (present tense) in the light, as he is in the light, we have (present tense) fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth (present tense) us from all sin. (King James Version)

(Verses 6-7) - The word “walk” used in verses 6 & 7 is in the present tense meaning “a continuous, uninterrupted, habitual action.” It is the Greek verb *peripateo* and means “to regulate one’s life, to conduct one’s self” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). We might sum up John’s teaching this way; if the direction of your life is toward the Source of light, you will find forgiveness for your failures and inadequacies. But if the direction of your life is toward the darkness, then you may be sure you have nothing in common with God (The Teacher’s Commentary, p. 1049). Again, it is direction, not perfection as the apostle Paul so amply shows in Romans 2:7-11. (See Rom. 2:7-11).

John is probably dealing with a real situation where there are those who claim that you can have fellowship with God and live any way you please. This situation had existed earlier, and occasioned the writing of 2 Peter and Jude. These false teachers showed signs of having the warped logic which would permit practicing known and willful sin (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p.764). In verse six, John tells his readers who does not have fellowship with God. In verse seven he tells them who does have fellowship with God (Wuest’s Word Studies in Greek, vol. 2, p. 102).

(Verse 6) – “If we say.” In Greek this is a third class condition that includes the writer and his readers. “Walk in darkness .. in the light (v. 7). Two lifestyles – one characterized by wickedness and error, the other by holiness and truth (NIV Study Bible, p. 1908). “Darkness” is the Greek word *scotia* and describes spiritual darkness, everything earthly or demonic that is at enmity with God (Spirit Filled Life Bible, p. 1599). Ten times John used “darkness” to refer to sin (John 1:5; 3:19; 12:35 [twice]; 1 John 1:5-6; 2:8-9, 11 [twice]) (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 885). “Do not the truth.” Truth is not only what one says but what he does (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1007).

(Verse 7) – “Cleanseth us.” Walking in the light shows up our sins and frailties; thus we need constant cleansing, and this is available on the basis on the death of Christ. The verb is in the present tense and it refers to the cleansing in sanctification (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1007). “From all sin.” “Sin” is singular, indicating the principle of sin, but the addition of “all” (or every) shows that it has many forms (Ibid., p. 1007). <.....: STOP, DISCUSS OR COMMENT.

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P.O. Box 17007
Colorado Springs, CO 80935-7007 U.S.A.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 1
VERSES 8-10

.....> READ THE FOLLOWING: ⁸If we say that we have (present tense) no sin, we deceive (present tense) ourselves, and the truth is (present tense) not in us. ⁹If we confess (present tense) our sins, he is (present tense) faithful and just to forgive (aorist tense) us *our* sins, and to cleanse (aorist tense) us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make (present tense) him a liar, and his word is (present tense) not in us. (King James Version)

(Verse 8, 9, 10) – John uses the word “we” five times in these three verses, identifying himself and his readers with this information. The words “ourselves” and “our” is also used which is the possessive form of the pronoun *we*.

(Verse 8) – “If we say that we have no sin.” John uses the noun “sin” rather than a verb to emphasize sin as a principle in human nature. John is probably arguing against those who affirm that sin does not exist as a principle or power in human nature, or those who say the evil actions they commit are not really sin. This heresy is with us today in those who deny the fact of sin and interpret evil in terms of psychological or **social causes**. Believers must be aware that the flesh is a constant threat in their lives and that they must ever be putting to death its evil deeds through the Holy Spirit who dwells within (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16-25) (Full Life Study Bible, p. 576).

“If we say that we have no sin.” The phrase to **have sin** is peculiar to John in the New Testament (cf. Jn. 9:41; 15:22, 24; 19:11). It refers to the nature, principle, or root of sin, rather than to the act. The consequences of not confessing that we have sin are: (1) we deceive ourselves, literally, lead ourselves astray. (2) the truth is not in us; we shut out the light (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1007).

(Verse 9) – “If we confess our sins.” In countering his opponents’ claim to be sinless John urges his readers to confess their specific sinful deeds, that is, the evil they have actually done. The pronoun “our” refers to the persons who commit the sins. Accordingly the phrase “our sins” may be rendered ‘the sinful deeds we have done’. (For an example of this See Acts 8:13, 18-22) (Help for Translators, p. 37).

The “we” includes John here, and it would seem that he is speaking of believers, for in other places he gives directions to the unsaved as to what they must do with relation to their sinful state and their sins. The sinner is to *believe* (Jn. 3:16). The saint is to *confess*. The word “confess” is *homologeō*, from *homos*, “the same,” and *legō*, “to say,” thus, “to say the same thing as another,” or, “to agree with another.” Confession of sin on the part of the saint means therefore to say the same thing that God does about that sin. The English word “confess” means “to admit the truth of an accusation, to own up to the fact that one is guilty of having committed the sin.” But the Greek word means far more than that. The verb is present subjunctive, speaking of continuous action. This teaches that the constant attitude of the saint toward sin should be one of a contrite heart, ever eager to have any sin in the life discovered for him by the Holy Spirit, and ever eager to confess it and put it out of the life by the power of that same Holy Spirit. (Wuest’s Word Studies in Greek, p. 104).

“To forgive our sins.” “To forgive” is *hina aphei*. *Aphei* is second aorist subjunctive, speaking, not of a process but of a single act here. In 1 John 1:7 we have action, “keeps on continually cleansing,” referring to the constant cleansing of the saint

from the defilement of sins. But sins we confess, as in 1 John 1:9 are isolated instances in the life of a believer. Therefore, the aorist tense is used here, speaking of a single act of forgiveness. All sin was remitted, paid for, on the Cross. The law was satisfied. All the sins the believer commits, past, those in his unsaved condition, and future, those in his saved state, were put away on a legal basis at the Cross, and are in that sense forgiven the believer the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, sin in a Christian's life is a matter, not between a lawbreaker and a judge, but between a child and his father (Jn. 13:8-10). Not only does God forgive the believer, but He cleanses him from the defilement which he incurred in committing that act of sin. Here the verb "to cleanse" is aorist subjunctive, speaking of a single act of cleansing, for known sin in the life of a saint is not habitual, but the out of the ordinary thing (Ibid., p. 106).

In modern times some have denied that a Christian needs to confess his sins and ask forgiveness. It is claimed that a believer already has forgiveness in Christ (Eph. 1:7). But this point of view confuses the perfect position which a Christian has in God's Son (by which he is even "seated ... With Him in heavenly realms" [Eph. 2:6] with his needs as a failing individual on earth. It is perfectly understandable how a son may need to ask his father to forgive him for his faults while at the same time having a position within the family. A Christian who never asks his heavenly Father for forgiveness for his sins can hardly have much sensitivity to the ways in which he grieves his Father. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Himself taught His followers to seek forgiveness of their sins in a prayer that was obviously intended for daily use (Matt. 6:11-12). 1 John 1:9 is not spoken to the unsaved, and the effort to turn it into a soteriological (salvation) affirmation is misguided. When a believer loses personal touch with the God of light, he begins to live in darkness. But confession of sin is the way back into the light (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 886).

(Verse 10) – In verse eight, we have the denial of the indwelling sin principle. In this verse we have the denial of specific acts of sin (Wuest's Word Studies in Greek, p. 106). After a believer sins, he should not deny that sin. 1 John 1:10 should be read in direct connection with verse 9. When a Christian is confronted by God's Word about his sins, he should admit them rather than deny them. To deny one's personal sin in the face of God's testimony to the contrary, is to "make" God "out to be a liar" (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 886). <:::::::::: **STOP, DISCUSS OR COMMENT.**

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**A Three Step Approach
To Understanding**

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

STEP THREE:

STEP THREE: Questions are provided that will take you directly to the Scriptures to again discuss what you have already seen and understood.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

(1 John Chapter 1)

Discover the answers by going to the appropriate Scriptures.

- 1. Read 1 John 1:1.** The Word of Life was in existence: a. only at the virgin birth of Jesus. b. after Jesus rose from the dead. c. from the beginning (Jn. 1:1).
- 2. Read 1 John 1:2.** The One who is Life and gives Life was: a. discussed among our group. b. thought about. c. shown to us.
- 3. Read 1 John 1:1-4.** The writer of 1 John is saying in these verses that he is declaring to us Jesus the Christ. True or False.
- 4. Read 1 John 1:2.** Jesus is Eternal Life. True or False.
- 5. Read 1 John 1:3.** John wanted others to have fellowship (communion, close relationship, participation and sharing) with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. True or False.
- 6. Read 1 John 1:4.** The apostles so shared the heart of Christ for his people that their own joy was bound up in the spiritual well-being of those to whom they ministered. True or False.
- 7. Read 1 John 1:5.** The message the apostles heard from Christ was: a. God is crafty and crude. b. you never know what God is like. c. God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.
- 8. Read 1 John 1:6.** We are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness. True or False.
- 9. Read 1 John 1:6-7.** The word “walk” used in verses 6 and 7 is in the present tense in Greek. This means continuous, uninterrupted and habitual action. True or False.

- 10. Read 1 John 1:7.** If we live and move within the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin. True or False.
- 11. Read 1 John 1:6-7.** In verse 6, John tells his readers who does not have fellowship with God. In verse 7 he tells them who does have fellowship with God. True or False.
- 12. Read 1 John 1:6-10.** The word “**we**” includes the writer and his readers. How many times does John use the word “**we**” in these verses? a. only once. b. twice. c. eleven times.
- 13. Read 1 John 1:6.** “**Darkness**” is the Greek word *scotia* and describes spiritual darkness characterized by sin, wickedness and error. True or False.
- 14. Read 1 John 1:8.** If we say “**we have no sin,**” that is, a principle of sin in our flesh (Rom. 7:23), we deceive ourselves. True or False.
- 15. Read 1 John 1:9.** *If “we” (which includes John and his readers) confess “our” sins.* The pronoun “our” refers to: a. believers. b. unbelievers. c. the Gnostics. d. false teachers. e. persons who commit the sins.
- 16. Read 1 John 1:9.** The word “**confess**” means “to admit the truth of an accusation, to own up to the fact that one is guilty of having committed the sin and to say the same thing that God does about that sin.” True or False.
- 17. Read 1 John 1:9.** In Greek the word “**confess**” is in the present tense meaning a continuous action, that is, an eager attitude to confess and put it out of one’s life thru Christ redeeming act and strength of His Spirit. True or False.
- 18. Read 1 John 1:9.** The verb “**to cleanse**” is aorist subjunctive, speaking of a single act of cleansing (between a child and his father). True or False.
- 19. Read 1 John 1:9.** When a believer loses personal touch with the God of Light, he begins to live in darkness. Repentance and confession of sin is the way back into the light. True or False. (See Acts 8:22).
- 20. Read 1 John 1:10.** To deny one’s personal sin in the light of God’s Word is to make God out to be a liar. True or False.