

1-3 JOHN

Study Guide

AUTHOR

These books do not declare who the author is, but early church tradition holds to John, the author of the fourth gospel, writing 1-3 John. Strong internal evidence within the text also points to John as the author, namely subject matter and similar language used between the gospel and the epistles. For example, the term *paraklētos* (helper) is only used 5 times in the Bible (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1). Additionally, the author of 1 John refers to himself as an eyewitness of the earthly Jesus and writes with an authoritative, fatherly tone, backing up that the “elder” writing 2-3 John are all John who wrote the gospel and Revelation.

DATE

Most evidence supports John writing the books from Ephesus near the end of his life. The subject matter covered places the books most likely to have been written around A.D. 90.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- **1 John** – This book holds none of the standard features found in an epistle – salutation, authorship, greetings, or references to places or events. That said, the personal tone of the book suggests that the sermon or treatise was intended for a more widespread audience probably in and around Ephesus who was both close to the author’s heart and experiencing crisis from false teachers.
- **2 John** – The second shortest book in the New Testament, it has only 245 words in the Greek text. With the purpose of moving people into action, this book holds to the more standard structure of an epistle containing an opening salutation, body, and closing. Pay attention to repeated words in this work, for they communicate major themes. The letter is addressed to “the elect lady and her children,” whom some believe may be either a hospitable Christian woman and her children or a broader reference to the church and its members.
- **3 John** – This is the shortest book in the whole Bible – truly a “postcard” epistle. It has many similarities in structure to 2 John, but also holds some differences. This book mentions Gaius, but that was a very common name in the Roman world during that time and there is no evidence supporting that the Gaius mentioned here is the same as others named throughout the New Testament.

In all 3 books, warnings against false teaching are strong. The falsehood which was spreading eventually led to 2nd century Gnosticism – a teaching that earthly matter is inherently evil and spirit is essentially good. This viewpoint caused denial of the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, for God

could never indwell that which was essentially evil. Therefore, these false teachers believed that Jesus' body was not real, only apparent. Eventually Gnosticism grew into an intellectual and philosophical basis for salvation, where only a select few who had achieved specific revelation could acquire salvation.

What is a particularly important aspect to note is that these false teachings and false teachers originated in the church! Though these teachers emphasized Jesus' divine nature, their denial of Christ's incarnation as a true human discarded a clear teaching of the gospel message. This highlights the importance of correct doctrine and the necessity of fellowship with other believers so false doctrines and the spirit of the Antichrist are quickly recognized and dealt with accordingly.

LITERARY STRUCTURE

- **1 John**
 - Part One: God Is Light (1:1-3:10)
 - Part Two: God Is Love (3:11-5:12)
 - Conclusion: The Child of God (5:13-21)

- **2 John**
 - Introduction: Salutation & Greeting (vs. 1-3)
 - Part One: Walking In God's Commandments (vs. 4-6)
 - Part Two: Guarding the Truth (vs. 7-11)
 - Conclusion (vs. 12-13)

- **3 John**
 - Introduction (vs. 1-4)
 - Part One: Gaius's Hospitality (vs. 5-8)
 - Part Two: Condemnation of Diotrephes (vs. 9-10)
 - Part Three: Consistency of Demetrius (vs. 11-12)
 - Conclusion (vs. 13-14)

THE REST OF THE STUDY

Consider this your "final exam" for this discipleship format. It is important that you have the tools for studying the Bible on your own and teaching it to others. So, now is the opportunity for you to do the work of study and evaluate what areas you need to strengthen and practice.

You are used to looking for observation words and answering summary questions for each book. Now YOU get to determine those things and answer them! More specific details about this are below.

THIS IS A WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT!! You will need to turn in at our next meeting for **1 JOHN, 2 JOHN, AND 3 JOHN:**

- Your observation words & what you learned about those words
- Your summary questions & answers to them
- 2 teaching points for each book – If you were leading the next session, what teaching points would you draw out that ARE NOT any your summary questions? In other words, find 2 points/short passages in each book which you bring teaching and life application for.

THIS IS ALSO A VERBAL ASSIGNMENT!! Be prepared to teach any and/or all of your teaching points to the group. It doesn't have to be a sermon, but pick out specific verses and teach on those with definite ideas for applying to real life.

OBSERVATION WORDS

Here are your first 3 observation words: **God, Jesus, Spirit**

Determine what other words you believe important for observing & learning about. Keep in mind that observation words are designed to help identify key themes, significant points, or flow of thought. Look for repeated words or words that point to the main theme(s) of the book.

1 John

2 John

3 John

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

The two questions below are standard that you need to answer for each book.

- **In each book, what did you learn about:**
 - God

 - Jesus

 - Holy Spirit

 - How the roles within the Trinity works separately & together

- **What is one thing from each book that stuck out to you and how will you apply that to your life?**
 - **1 John**

 - **2 John**

 - **3 John**

It's YOUR turn now! On the next page, **develop at least 3 questions PER BOOK** that would help guide someone reading or studying the book so they learn the main themes, teaching points, etc. Make sure to answer your own questions. 😊

1 John:

2 John:

3 John:

KEY WORD:

- 1 JOHN
- 2 JOHN
- 3 JOHN

KEY VERSE:

- 1 JOHN
- 2 JOHN
- 3 JOHN

KEY CHAPTER:

- 1 JOHN
- 2-3 JOHN -- I think we can all agree that chapter 1 in these books are key chapters! 😊

TEACHING POINTS

Now, come up with 2 teaching points PER BOOK and be ready to teach them to the group next time. You'll also need to turn these in to your group leader.

1 JOHN

- **Teaching Point #1**
 - Verses –

 - What does it say? (observation points)

 - Why is it important? (universal truths)

 - How do you apply this in real life today? (application)

- **Teaching Point #2**
 - Verses –

 - What does it say? (observation points)

 - Why is it important? (universal truths)

 - How do you apply this in real life today? (application)

2 JOHN

- **Teaching Point #1**
 - Verses –

 - What does it say? (observation points)

 - Why is it important? (universal truths)

- How do you apply this in real life today? (application)

- **Teaching Point #2**

- Verses –
- What does it say? (observation points)
- Why is it important? (universal truths)
- How do you apply this in real life today? (application)

3 JOHN

- **Teaching Point #1**

- Verses –
- What does it say? (observation points)
- Why is it important? (universal truths)
- How do you apply this in real life today? (application)

- **Teaching Point #2**

- Verses –
- What does it say? (observation points)
- Why is it important? (universal truths)
- How do you apply this in real life today? (application)