

## *Walking With the Father Through 1 John*

*Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.*

*I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through 1 John with me.*

*As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they must have longed for us to know Him as they did.*

*As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.*

*Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,*

*Margie Martin*

## *Walking With the Father Through 1 John*

John wrote the first of his letters that were included in the New Testament around A.D. 85-90 and includes the heresies that were creeping into the church: moral laxity and Gnosticism.

Historians tell us that John had left Jerusalem and was living in Ephesus during the latter part of his life. By this time he had become the elder statesman of the faith, overseeing the surrounding churches, since he outlived the other disciples and was reaching out to the Gentile believers.

By living in Ephesus, John would have had contact with the churches Paul had started and Timothy has shepherded, and John probably would have become Timothy's father in the faith after Paul's death.

John's descriptions of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 reflect his knowledge and concern for the spiritual life of these believers, whether their heritage was Jewish or Gentile.



**New Testament World**

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 1:1-4

*"We write this to make our joy complete"*

I became a Christian in the San Francisco area during the early 1970s as part of the Jesus Movement. It was a time when young people were disillusioned with the status quo and wanted a life that connected their heart and their head. What a time of spiritual awakening! The phrase often used was "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." We were taught to know the Jesus of the Gospels. We walked with Him and learned from Him. He was real and personal to us. When we met, we worshipped a risen Lord who really understood us because He had lived as we did. So when the writer of Hebrews says the following words, we took them literally.

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Hebrews 4:15-16

And when Paul writes these words, we took them literally as well:

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to men [and that Jesus faced]. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

John knew this Jesus: he heard Him, saw Him, touched Him, lived with Him, saw Him killed, saw the empty tomb, saw his risen Lord, saw Him raised up into the heavens, and had His risen life enter him at Pentecost.

And John wants us to know this Jesus who was with the Father and who appeared to the disciples and His other followers. Because when we know Jesus this way—not just as a body of knowledge or a life style—and grow in this knowledge of Him, we can have fellowship with the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and each other.

When we live this way with each other and the Father and His Son, John's joy will be complete. He can look at us through his eyes of love and delight in us as a father delights in his adult children.

Is this how you see Jesus? Our world does its best to keep us from this way of living. I pray it isn't being winnowed out in your life. I want to complete John's joy—you too?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 1:5-10

*“If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.”*

Did something or someone come to mind as you read today’s section? I clearly saw the face of a brother against whom I’m harboring resentment, anger, and criticalness—all because of how I perceive his words and tone of voice. Logically I know that I’m to respond to him through God’s love for me, but it’s not working, and hasn’t been for over a year. I need help. Sound familiar? Do you have someone like this in your life? Or perhaps you are this person in another’s life? Let’s see how John’s perspective of walking as a believer can help us:

### Positive

- God is light; in him there is *no* darkness *at all* (note the emphasis).
- If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.
- If we accept and acknowledge our sin, truth can live in us.
- If we confess the sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- If we want others to see God in our lives and be drawn to him, we need to own up to our sins.

### Negative

- If we claim to have fellowship with him but walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.
- If we don’t walk in the light, we can’t have fellowship and have to live with our sins.
- If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- If we don’t confess our sins, our sins won’t be forgiven, and we’ll keep living in unrighteousness.
- If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

What strikes you about what comes from choosing to ignore our sins or acknowledge them? I’m astounded by the last idea of God being seen as a liar to those around me if I don’t confess. Our choices—even choosing not to choose—have consequences.

So what changes do you want to make? I want to remember to walk in the light. When my brother seems to speak down to me, I am going to walk in the light. When my brother takes credit for my ideas, I am going to walk in the light. When my brother does whatever, I am going to walk in the light. I think I’ll put a light bulb by my computer at work as a reminder to walk in the light. What are you going to choose to do?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:1-2

*“But if anybody does sin . . .”*

In the past all I’ve known of John’s letters are the poem in this chapter that we’ll look at later and that we need to confess when we sin. But I’m beginning to get a whole different view of what John is saying. John is telling us that every time we speak, act, or interact with someone we make a choice. We can choose to:

1. Be unaware of both what God wants and what we’re doing so we “do what’s natural,” always a recipe for disaster.
2. Do the opposite of what God says, another recipe for disaster.
3. Know what God wants, depend on Christ’s life in us through the Spirit, and walk in His light.

John seems to be saying that the third option is really possible: we can walk in the light, it’s not impossible, and we shouldn’t give ourselves a loophole by assuming that we’ll sin. John says, “But if anybody sins,” not “When you sin.” (emphasis added)

So why don’t we take option 3 more often? What an important question; what do you think? I think it’s either because we don’t know it’s true or because we don’t believe it’s true. John says we can know it’s true because God wants us to know Him as our Father; we’re in His family, and He cares for us like He does His own Son. Jesus Christ—His Son—is the righteous One whose death was the sacrifice that satisfied God’s anger toward sin so that we can be God’s own sons and daughters. In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells us of the Spirit who is to come (John 16, 17) and then did come (Acts 2). Those people the Spirit of God came to turned the world upside down because of their own changed lives. (Acts 17:6)

If the Father, Son, and Spirit are for us and did so much to make this relationship available, how should we respond? You’re right, walk in the light! Believing it’s true means we have to choose to act as though it’s true: to walk in the light when we’d rather be critical, say truth harshly, be lazy, gossip, be critical of others, or ignore those around us. Believing it’s true means learning new ways of thinking, speaking, and acting—and then practicing them over and over, in every situation.

Easy to do? Of course not. If it were, Jesus wouldn’t have had to go to the cross, these statements wouldn’t have to be commands to do what’s right, and we wouldn’t have to walk by faith. For me, it’s a believing issue, but as this truth is washing over me, I’m realizing that I need to review what I know and then go to new depths with it—and with Him. Are some of these thoughts new for you too? If so, what are you going to do differently?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:3-6

*“Whoever claims to live in him [God] must walk as Jesus did.”*

If you remember back to 8<sup>th</sup> grade English, the last sentence in a paragraph usually sums up the idea of that paragraph or the paragraphs that come before it. So today’s verse has John’s conclusion: whoever claims to live in God must walk as Jesus did. To tell you the truth, I don’t ever remember reading this verse before! If this is the conclusion, I’m wondering how we got to this conclusion, and how *did* Jesus walk? Let’s take the first question first and answer it from what we’ve read so far.

- Jesus has been from the beginning, He came to earth in bodily form, He is the Word of life. 1:1
- We can choose to walk in the light with God or in the darkness without Him. 1:5
- If we walk in the light with Him, we can have fellowship with each other, and the blood of His Son Jesus purifies us from all sin as we continually own up to our sins. 1:7-10
- If we walk in the light, we will be obeying His commands and will come to know Him. 2:3
- If we obey what He says, God’s love (for us, through us, and for others) is truly made complete in us. 2:5
- When we choose to walk this way, we will be walking as Jesus did here on this earth, and then we will know that we are in Him. 2:6

*Where are you in this process?*

- Is Jesus your Word of life?
- Are you walking in lightness, with clarity and direction, or in darkness, fumbling around and stumbling over what’s in front of you?
- Are you having fellowship with other believers or only superficial acquaintances?
- Are you acknowledging that you sin and when you sin?
- Do you know His commands, and are you obeying them?
- Is God’s love for you, through you, and for others being made complete?

Tomorrow we’ll start looking at how Jesus walked to see how God wants us to walk.

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:3-6

*“Whoever claims to live in Him [God] must walk as Jesus did.”*

How do you think Jesus walked while here on earth? Can you picture Him walking and talking with His disciples as He went from town to town? Can you see and hear Him talking to a man here and to a woman there? Can you feel the shock as Jesus challenges the Pharisees and works on the Sabbath?

As I’ve said earlier, when I was a new Christian in the 1970s, we were taught to know Jesus as He was in the Gospels and as the disciples knew Him. As today’s verse has been rolling around in my head and heart, bringing up memories, I decided to get to know Jesus from John’s point of view, to see how Jesus walked through John’s eyes. I decided to work through John’s Gospel, section by section, just looking at how John told us that Jesus walked. Then I went back through my notes and made observations.

Today I’m going to share with you my conclusions of how John thought that Jesus walked. If you’d like to see my backup notes, please go to [www.WalksWithTheFather.com](http://www.WalksWithTheFather.com), and click on Bible Studies.

Margie’s conclusions:

- Jesus never acted the same way twice.
- Jesus didn’t live by how others spoke about Him, spoke to Him, or treated Him.
- Jesus treated adults as adults and expected adult responses.
- Jesus spoke truth rather than demand a response.
- Jesus only did and said what He heard from the Father.
- Jesus transitioned His relationship with His disciples from followers to friends.
- Jesus was so aware of what was happening to Him when He was on the cross that He cared more about His mother’s future than His own situation—He was always aware of others.
- Jesus came to His disciples in their fears and spoke peace and forgiveness into their situation.
- Jesus told Thomas to stop [the habit of] doubting and begin to believe.
- Jesus’ last words were to tell the disciples to stop worrying about what He’s doing with another believer and follow Him.

Which of these conclusions strikes you? Are you walking as Jesus walked? Anything need to change?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:7-11

*“This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command.”*

Old command, new command; darkness, light—this section is full of contrasts. I think John is saying that the old command that we have had since when Jesus came to earth was to obey the commands of Jesus and His Father, and that if we obey, God’s love will be truly made complete in us. This message is the one the first century Christians knew very well.

I think John’s new command takes this old command and makes it practical, real, and right where we live: it deals with how we think about and treat other believers. John says that if we claim to be in the light but hate another, we’re still in darkness. So what happens in the dark? We stumble, get lost, have no direction, feel isolated, and can’t see anything, much less see it clearly. So what does it mean to hate another? We think and speak negatively about another, we look for faults and magnify them, we’re spiteful and mean, and we think less of others so don’t view them as equals in the kingdom. Have any faces come to mind?

I have three stepsons who are now in their mid-to-late 30s. When Barney and I got married, the brothers were 10, 12, and 13. They were in the typical brother stage of one-up-man-ship. They tried to trip each other up, literally and figuratively. We always had to sort through the accusations to get to the truth. Now when they get together as adults, husbands, and fathers, they try to live differently, but old habits die hard.

I think it’s hard for all of us to consistently choose to think well of someone we’re close to. I think this is why John tells us to:

1. Choose to walk in the light, owning up to our own sins.
2. Let Jesus speak to the Father on our behalf when we sin and believe that He does so.
3. Let Jesus’ sacrifice of death atone for—make up for—our sins.
4. Know that we’re all in need of Jesus’ sacrifice.
5. Let truth live in us.
6. Obey Jesus’ commands.
7. Let God’s love be truly made complete in us.

When we buy into the option of hating another in any form, we’re the ones who suffer. Is it worth it to you to live differently?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:12-14

*“Dear children, young men, fathers”*

I have learned from and loved this short poem for more than 30 years. It has helped me know where I am at each phase of spiritual growth, as well as opened my eyes to what was coming, regardless of my chronological age.

As I’ve anticipated coming to this section, I’ve wondered what I would see that’s new to me. What I’m seeing is that John is writing about how we’ll be growing as believers as we walk in the light as Jesus did. First we’ll look at how new and young believers walk in the light.

*Dear children:* They know that their sins have been forgiven—past, present, and future—and they live in this forgiveness and freedom. This forgiveness is a done deal; they’re set free, and their chains of habits and addictions have been broken. They know that this life of freedom has been made possible because of what Jesus did for them on the cross, so they are humbled way down deep in their souls. They’ve owned up to who they *were* and what they’ve *done*, and they’ve stopped blaming others for anything. They know God as their Father, the One who knows everything and still loves, the One they can run to and be comforted by and who will protect them, the One they don’t hide anything from, the One they get direction from, and the One they obey completely and quickly because He loves them. They are dependent sons and daughters.

Have you been a Christian for years but find that today’s words don’t describe you? Then I bet you’ve been struggling in your Christian life with issues of worth, conflict with others, feeling like you never hear from God, and a lack of connection.

If John’s description does describe you, then you’re experiencing

*freedom    joy    satisfying relationships    direction    belonging*

Regardless of how long we’ve been Christians, or followers of Jesus, today’s words need to be our foundation; we need to return to them over and over, as an athlete continually practices the fundamentals.

Where are you today in your Christian life? Do you need to camp out in today’s words for a while and let them—Him—sink deep into your soul, or are you ready for the young men stage?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:12-14

*“Dear children, young men, fathers”*

As yesterday’s humble, connected, and free-of-sin believers and followers of Jesus begin to grow in their walk with Him, they enter the next stage:

*Young men:* overcome the evil one, strong, word of God lives in you, overcome the evil one

As a stepmom of three vigorous and active sons, I’ve experienced young men for many years. They are strong, confident, and love to take on new challenges. John says that when believers are at the young men stage of life they learn to overcome the evil one, they are strong, the word of God lives in them, and they have overcome the evil one. So what do we learn?

Spiritual warfare—learning that we do have an enemy, that he has tried-and-true tactics, and how to overcome his tactics—is a skill set we have to learn at the young men stage. Have you learned the truth described in Ephesians 6:10-18 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-6? While knowledge is the first step, putting this knowledge to work and practicing it time after time, year after year, is what makes us strong in Jesus because He won the war with the evil one at the cross. We don’t have the strength in ourselves to fight even a skirmish.

How do we become strong in Jesus? By letting the word of God live in us, chewing it like food, and letting it nourish and sustain us. This isn’t a one-time event; it’s a lifestyle that takes years to develop so that we can say with confidence and humility that we have overcome the evil one. This process forms our character and our thought life so we actually become like Jesus. We become fit for kingdom life and work. Then God can easily work through us to reach those who haven’t started walking with Him yet.

Are you being thrown around by the evil one’s lies? Identify these lies, search out God’s answer, and then stand on it. Run back to your Father and your Savior, and choose who you’re going to look at.

We are in a battle, and it is fierce. While Jesus has determined the outcome, He wants us to go through the process—with Him—so He can refine us and prepare us to be His bride. If He had to learn obedience by what He suffered (Hebrews 5:8), why should we be any different? At least we know that He’s walked our steps before us, He understands, and He can do something about the situation. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

What’s your battle today? What thoughts are running through your mind that shouldn’t be there? What thoughts does your Father want you to be thinking instead? Let’s stand firm on the Victor’s side.

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:12-14

“Dear children, young men, **fathers**”

According to John, *fathers* in the faith—men and women who have walked with Jesus for years—know “*Him who is from the beginning.*” What do you think John means when we know this side of God? Let’s break it down word by word.

*fathers*: In 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul described himself like a mother who cares and nurtures and like a father who encourages, comforts, and urges his own children to live lives worthy of God. Fathers prod us to take on new challenges because they get us ready for what is to come, while providing a foundation of safety and protection.

*know*: An in-depth connection with another that comes from a love-filled relationship over years and through numerous circumstances so that another’s character and motivations are known and valued.

*him*: The Creator of all that we know and can imagine, but the One who also loved us so much that He sent His Son to free us from whatever chains we carry; the One who acts in ways that aren’t our ways but that are always in our best interest; His ways grow us up and prepare us for His kingdom.

*is*: He is living NOW, active, involved, present, and very real

*from the beginning*: The One we know now is also the One who created the world, formed Adam and fashioned Eve, told Noah to build an ark, had Abram leave Ur with his family, created a family and then a nation, revealed Himself when He wished and to whom He wished, set a standard and has never deviated from it, offered His Son as the solution to our sin problem.

Are you a father in the faith for others? Do you know God way down deep in your soul through years of experiences? Do you know *Him*, not just about Him? Is He real and personal and current in your life? Do you let God act as He wishes in your life rather than demanding or even expecting that He follow your game plan?

If you answered *no* to any of these questions, I bet you’re realizing that you’re in the *dear children* or *young men* stages. Wherever you are, learn your lessons well, my friend because God is using your circumstances to prepare you for what He has in mind but hasn’t revealed yet. The hard work will be worth it!

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:15-17

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world.”*

This world has so much to offer: great places to visit, amazing scenery, delicious food, gorgeous homes, beautiful clothes, and exciting jobs. How can we not love all that this world has to offer?

But this world also has poverty, natural disasters and their aftermath, homelessness, contaminated food, abuse, anger, selfishness, and hopelessness. Sometimes it’s easy to be sad about all that this world has to offer.

If we concentrate on this world, it’s like being on a roller coaster: sometimes we’re up, and sometimes we’re down—or flung sideways or upside down. Do you feel this way?

So what is John telling us in this section? I think he’s giving us the opposite of walking in the light and walking as Jesus did, which is loving the here and now.

What do you find yourself thinking about? What attitudes do your words reveal? John says that if we love this world, we’ll be craving, or longing for, what we don’t have rather than being content and grateful.

- We’ll be looking at and wanting what God hasn’t given and letting our minds obsess on that instead of valuing the gifts of people and time He’s given us.
- We’ll be boasting that who we are, what we’ve obtained, and what we can do reflect our own greatness and abilities instead of acknowledging what God has built into us, what He’s allowed to happen, and what He can take away at any moment.

Perhaps it’s time to make a list of what we value and what we give our time and our hearts to. If John were to look at this list, would he say that we love the world or God? If we want our actions to last, we need to be doing the will of God. Period. The world and its desires will pass away.

John’s command of, “Do not love the world or anything in the world” has hit me hard today. He’s not messing around, and I’m not to either. His words aren’t to be taken lightly because they have the force (the power) of the resurrection behind them. Who has your heart today?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:18-27

*“But you have an anointing from the Holy One . . . “*

How sad it must have been for John to see people who had seemed to be part of the body of believers leave the faith and then begin teaching that his beloved Jesus wasn't the Messiah, the king and deliverer expected by the Jewish people for hundreds of years, the Christ (Greek for this Hebrew word). So here he is as an old man watching these people trying to lead believers astray and away from the truth—and at times being successful.

What were these liars and antichrists (John's words) teaching? John says they were claiming that Jesus wasn't the Christ and so were denying the Father and the Son. Bible scholars tell us that they (the Gnostics) were an intellectually elite group who proposed that nothing good resides in anything physical or material, such as our bodies. To them Jesus was never a real human person, but rather a phantom, a temporary appearance of God who only looked human. I have a hard time understanding their thinking, but the results of their theories are all too clear today:

- *Belief that matter (what we can see, feel, and hear) is evil but we can make our spirit become pure* means that it doesn't matter if I over eat, over drink, take too many drugs of any kind, or have sex with whomever because all that matters are my intentions, not what I do.
- *Desire for “super-spirituality”* means I can talk a good game but also cheat, lie, gossip, be critical of others, allow anger to simmer, be caustic, demand, expect. All that matters are my intentions and my words, never my actions because what I do comes from my physical body.

Do you find yourself excusing your own behavior because you know truth? I think John would say that we're acting like first century Gnostics; he called one-time believers who followed and taught this way of thinking—even if it's only teaching by example—liars and antichrists.

John says that we have been anointed by the Holy One way down deep in our redeemed souls. This anointing teaches us about all things and is real. This anointing reminds us that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and we are to remain in him, in Jesus. When we acknowledge that the Son also has the Father, we receive what He promised us—including eternal life.

So here's our choice: do whatever we want, with all of the natural consequences OR remain in Jesus and live in this world the way He wants us to live, with no exceptions or rationalizations. By your actions, what choice have you made?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 2:28-3:10

*“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”*

I love exclamation points! A writer can tell his audience when to get excited by using them. In John’s letter he expresses this intensity twice, and both are in this section. He is excited about us being children of God. Does this truth excite you, or are you yawning? Let’s look at what John says.

1. If we continue in Him, we’ll be confident and unashamed when we stand before Him at His coming. 2:28
2. If we do what is right, we’ll know that we are born of Him because He is righteous. 2:29
3. Sonship is a gift from God because of the love He has lavished on us. 3:1
4. The world does not know us or understand us because it doesn’t know Him. 3:1
5. When He appears we will be like Him for we’ll see Him as He is. 3:2
6. If we have this hope in Him (#5), we’ll purify ourselves just as He is pure. 3:3
7. He came to take away our sins. He has no sin Himself. No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him. 3:5-6
8. We can be led astray if we’re not careful. 3:7
9. He who does what is right is righteous. (He who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God came to destroy the devil’s work.) 3:8
10. No one who is born of God will continue to sin because God’s seed [Jesus] remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God. 3:9
11. This is how we know who the children of God are: they do what is right and they love their brothers [and sisters]. 3:10

If this list were your annual performance review, how would you do? Would you be eligible for a huge raise or be placed on probation? How do you speak to those closest to you? How honest are you with your church small group—or with yourself?

I don’t want to be ashamed when I face Jesus. I want Him to be glorified by what He did through me because I got out of the way and He could be seen through me. What we do now determines what will happen then. What is your final review time looking like?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 3:11-24

*“This then is . . . how we set our hearts at rest in [God’s] presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”*

I think we all know that when our hearts condemn us and we feel guilty about something we’ve done or said, we need to take these feelings seriously. But I have friends who always feel guilty; they don’t seem to be able to distinguish between truth and their feelings. With today’s words, however, we discover how we can set our hearts at rest in God’s presence whenever they condemn us.

But this sense of rest doesn’t come easily or quickly; it comes from a lifestyle of living God’s way by the Spirit He has given us who is the power source for living this way. Let’s explore our part in this resting.

- Love one another with an AGAPE love, love that is willing to do what’s best for another regardless of the cost.
- Don’t be like Cain who stomped his feet in jealous anger when God didn’t accept his sacrifice. [Note: The only sacrifice this first family had known came when God made coverings from animal skins so the parents could cover their shame.] Anger comes from a hard heart that won’t accept responsibility for its own actions and its end result is murder. What a difference humility and self-awareness would have made for Cain.
- Be willing to give up whatever is necessary for the sake of someone in need because Jesus laid down His life for us.
- Let love be seen in our actions and in truth (not one or the other), but in balance, in honor and respect, and with what the other person *really* needs.
- If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive whatever we ask because we have been obeying his commands and doing what pleases him.
- His command is to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us.

So when we have a lifestyle of living this way, if our hearts condemn us but we know we haven’t done anything wrong or haven’t ignored His promptings, we can set our hearts at rest in His presence because God is greater than our hearts and He knows everything. If He doesn’t say something is wrong, why should we?

Is your heart at rest? If you say no, is your source of unrest coming from God or unfounded feelings? What do you need to do next?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 4:1-6

*“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

What—or who—are the spirits John is talking about? He connects them to false prophets and the antichrist and then contrasts them to God and the Spirit of truth. Commentators tell us that John is specifically refuting the cult called Gnosticism (from the Greek word for knowledge, GNOSIS) that disregarded physical bodies and encouraged super-spirituality and a lack of morals. So we have both a philosophy and those who promote it. Who—or what—is John warning us about?

John is telling us to be aware of and to test what’s behind what we hear. Don’t just look at who’s promoting an idea, but rather search out the thinking it’s based on. He’s telling us that the spirit of the antichrist is active in our world and uses false prophets to spread its message.

How can we determine the source of a message? John tells to ask these two questions:

1. What does it say about Jesus—is He God, and did He come to the earth in bodily form?
2. What lifestyles come from following the message—super-spirituality and lack of morals *OR* humility and personal holiness (honesty, thoughtfulness, sexual purity, self-control in all areas, acting as though all thoughts and actions are being seen in the heavenlies since they are)?

One of the TV series we’ve enjoyed is Stargate on the SyFy channel. One of its plot lines had people and other beings that could ascend to a higher plane of living and not have to deal with physical bodies, but they also could take on a human form if they needed or wanted to. While their knowledge wasn’t limited by time or space, they couldn’t get involved even though they had supernatural powers. What they did in a human form didn’t really matter; in fact, they didn’t even have to be moral. They were subject to the totality of the ascended beings but could—and did—act independently. They could “live” forever in this state. These ascended beings are following the spirit of the Gnostics: no regard/need for physical bodies, super-spirituality, and no morals—an old theme in a new setting.

So what are you hearing around you on TV, in the movies, in the music you listen to—even Christian music? What’s the source of their themes? Do any of these themes have a negative affect in how you think, speak, or act? Any changes you need to make?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 4:7-21

*“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*

I think love is the point of this section, don't you? Of its 319 words, 25 of them are some form of the word *love*—almost 10%. So what is John saying, especially as we remember the group of deceivers he was warning his readers (and us!) about in the last section?

John tells us that the deceivers' emphasis was *me me me, I I I, my my my*; they were proud of their intelligence and abilities; and they concentrated on their own wants and needs, ignoring others around them and their needs.

So what does John want for us? He wants us to love each other and look out for each other's needs because this type of love reflects God's love for us. John wants us to know that we have sins we need to deal with and that these sins separate us from God. Jesus' act of love for us on the cross was a sacrifice that took care of the sin problem so that we are now free to receive God's love and pass it on. John wants us to live in this humility, need, and dependence.

How does this information strike you? Do you love those around you that you live and work with? I realized that recently I've taken a client's statement as an attack instead of as a question, and I've been harboring harsh feelings toward him instead of being humble. However, now I want Jesus to love him through me, and I need to depend on Him to make this happen. So how do I know if I'm depending on myself instead of depending on Jesus? My keys are if I'm critical, judgmental, distant, aloof, or quiet—and don't want to talk with Jesus about the situation.

At this moment I feel no confidence about facing Jesus on the day of judgment because I know I'm wrong and I deserve punishment for how I've been thinking and acting. But John says we don't need to live in this fear because perfect love—God's love—casts out all fear because the issue of punishment has been resolved.

Are you walking in fear in any relationship or situation? John says the solution is easy: humble yourself and own up to your neediness, depend on Jesus' life in you through the Spirit, and keep your eyes only on Jesus—not the situation or the person. What—who—are you looking at today?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 5:1-5

“ . . . love the father . . . love his child . . . love the children of God.”

As I've read and reread and reread this paragraph, no one verse popped into my heart. In fact, John's thinking seems disjointed but connected. So I thought back to the main issue John was trying to combat: trying to ignore Jesus as the Son of God.

Do you try to ignore Him too? Our world sure does. We have people following Allah, Buddha, their own inner worth, the Great White Spirit, spirits of animals, the occult, angels, and so on. They want spirituality without Jesus; they want to do religion in their own way. But John says that no other way works because no one else has overcome the world.

Isn't that interesting? We can try to love the Father by what we do and we can concentrate on loving others by however we define loving, but John says that if we ignore the Son, God's child, we miss out on everything.

So how does God want us to live? John says:

1. If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the one sent by God to take care of our sin problem, we will be born of God into a new family and have a whole new way of living.
2. If we love the Father, we'll love the Son. Conversely, if we ignore the Son, we're really ignoring, or disregarding, the Father.
3. When we love God by following what He says, we will be loving the children of God—other believers. (Wonder what it means to love other believers? See the study on *each others* and *one anothers* on our website [www.WalksWithTheFather.com](http://www.WalksWithTheFather.com), by clicking on *Bible Studies*.)
4. God's commands for us aren't a burden—hard to do but not burdensome—because we have the innate ability to overcome the desire to do the opposite (to sin) that comes from this world. This “innate ability” comes from our faith in Jesus as God's Son. By faith in Him (not *our* faith, but our faith *in* Him), we have been born into God's family and have God's life in us because of the Son's sacrifice on the cross and the Spirit of Jesus' resurrected life living in us.

How are you doing with living life with Jesus? The world says to ignore Him, but John tells us that the only way to overcome the world is to believe that He is the Son of God and live life with Him. Are you being overcome by anything, or are you an overcomer? John says the difference is Jesus.

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 5:6-12

*“We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.”*

On Saturday we went to a grand opening of a friend’s business, and a vendor at this event was selling energy bars. He spoke with such confidence and knowledge about his product that I started believing that he really knew what he was talking about and that he had the training and education in health and nutrition that I needed. Then I looked at the label and realized that we had access to the same company that sold the bars.

It’s so easy to believe a good salesman, isn’t it? Whether it’s about energy bars or religion, it’s easy to accept man’s testimony. John tells us, however, that God’s testimony about His Son is far greater than any sales job man can deliver. So what is God’s testimony, why is it greater, and why would we ever want to accept anything else? Let’s start with God’s testimony: water, blood, the Spirit.

*Water:* John is probably referring to Jesus’ water baptism by John the Baptist. Why is this event so important? Because it came at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. In this one act, Jesus fully embraced His humanity in a very public way. He chose to become as we are so we would know that He thoroughly understands what we face and what we go through in this world. He’s approachable and understands.

*Blood:* At the cross, Jesus willingly gave his life by shedding His blood to resolve the sin issue that kept us from the Father. He became like we are and then did what we never could do.

*water and blood*

*humanity and divinity*

*beginning and end*

*the Spirit:* By the Spirit coming after Jesus returned to heaven, the divine life and power were made available to live at home in us by faith so we’re not left on our own. By the *water* we know that Jesus understands all that we go through. By the *blood* we know that Jesus can do something about our condition. And by the *Spirit* we know that Jesus can and wants to live in us to change us so we can respond to our condition differently and actually affect it for the sake of His kingdom.

Why is God’s testimony greater? It’s based on actions, not just words. So why would we ever want to accept anything else? Could it be a lack of knowledge, pride that we think we know better, or a refusal to humble ourselves and change? Whose testimony are you listening to and living by?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 5:13-15

*“This is the confidence we have in approaching God . . .”*

Have you ever thought about how you approach God? Let’s think through some of the possibilities; we can:

- Talk at Him *or* with Him.
- Talk and then leave *or* wait to hear what He has to say.
- Take Him for granted *or* appreciate Him.
- Always be asking *or* have real conversations.
- Use stilted or formal words and phrasing *or* talk from our hearts.

When you approach God, are you in a hurry, or do you look forward to the conversation? Somehow I think that a heartfelt “Help!” or “Thank You!” means more to God than a lot of words. Sometimes I think I deliver a sermon rather than come to God. What’s your mindset when you come to Him, what words do you use, what do you ask for—or demand?

A series of books I’ve enjoyed over the years is the Mitford Series by Jan Karon. The main character, Father Tim, often refers to the prayer that never fails, “Thy will be done.” Is this the heart of your prayers?

So what does John tell us about approaching God? From this letter, he wants us to have a relationship with Jesus—a real, live, and active relationship that grows and deepens. He tells us to walk in the light of Jesus’ life rather than hide or rationalize sin. He tells us to walk in humility instead of depending on our intellect and abilities. He tells us to love each other deeply rather than superficially.

When we live this way, believing in the name of Jesus Christ, we will have eternal life—a quality of life that displays the power of the resurrection—and we can have absolute confidence that God hears us every time we speak to Him, either out loud or in our hearts. He listens and hears our words and our hearts. And then according to His will, He acts.

What is His will? I think it’s that men and women come to Him and become like His Son (Romans 8:29). Is it God’s will that we suffer with disease? Disease is part of this fallen world, and we’ll all die of something. But disease can bring us to His throne and allow us to know Him deeply through the process. Will He heal us? Maybe, if healing will reach others and bring glory to Him. But when we see Him face-to-face, we will be healed, and it will be a healing that will last forever. This is our confidence: God will make all things right, in His time and in eternity.

How are you going to approach God today?

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# Walking With the Father Through 1 John

## 1 John 5:13-21

*“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

So what is eternal life? Is it living forever or something else? In his Gospel account, John gives us Jesus’ definition of eternal life from one of Jesus’ last prayers here on earth. Jesus states that the Father has given Him the authority to give eternal life to all those the Father had given Him.

*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:2-3*

According to Jesus, eternal life is knowing Him and His Father. It’s a quality of life that comes from a relationship that They started and we can have the opportunity of joining. It’s living life Their way, not the way the world tells us to. From John’s concluding comments in this letter, he adds that eternal life will look like this:

- We will have confidence when we approach God (remember yesterday’s section?).
- We will be praying for other believers who sin—rather than be critical of, judge, or dismiss them. (Note: I don’t know what John means by *the sin that leads to death*; I wonder if it’s just a pattern of sin so that the person loses his or her conscience or sense of right and wrong.)
- We may sin but we don’t continue to sin.
- We know, and at times experience, that the evil one can create terror in our lives; but his end is certain, and Jesus *will* win.
- We know and experience in every situation that Jesus is present and involved and will bring good out of it for the sake of His kingdom in others’ lives.
- We know and experience that we are *in* Jesus; we’re not left on our own or to our own devices. We are safe in Him, regardless of what’s happening around us.
- We keep ourselves from idolizing anything—cars, kids, a job, recognition, lifestyle, ourselves. We only honor and worship Jesus Christ as Lord.

I find as I get older that the “treats” of the world only satisfy for a short time. What have you experienced from this world? Is John’s description of eternal life fit with how you’re living with Jesus?

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