



Letters
of John

MEDWAY GROUPS

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SUGGESTED READING PLAN

To Accompany Each Week's Discussion

Each week's reading should be done during the week following each small group gathering as a way of enhancing the reflection upon each small group discussion time.

WEEK 1 // Walking in the Light

- 1 John 1
- John 1:4–9
- Psalm 32:3–5

WEEK 2 // An Advocate & Command

- 1 John 2:1–11
- Hebrews 7:25
- John 13:34–35

WEEK 3 // Do Not Love the World

- 1 John 2:12–27
- Romans 12:1–2
- James 4:4

WEEK 4 – Children of God

- 1 John 2:28–3:10
- Romans 8:14–17
- Matthew 5:8–9

WEEK 5 – Love in Action

- 1 John 3:11–24
- John 15:12–13
- James 2:14–17

WEEK 6 – Testing the Spirits

- 1 John 4:1–6
- Acts 17:11
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22

WEEK 7 – God is Love

- 1 John 4:7–21
- Romans 5:8
- 1 Corinthians 13:4–8

WEEK 8 – Overcoming the World

- 1 John 5
- John 16:33
- Ephesians 2:8–9

WEEK 9 – Walking in Truth

- 2 John
- Ephesians 4:14–15
- Galatians 1:6–9

WEEK 10 – Faithful Leadership

- 3 John
- Philippians 2:3–4
- Hebrews 13:7

LETTERS OF JOHN // Intro

10-Week Small Group Discussion Guide

FOR THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

Did You Know?

The letters of John were likely written by the Apostle John, the same author traditionally associated with the Gospel of John and Revelation. Most scholars date these letters to the late first century (around A.D. 85–95), written from Ephesus to churches in Asia Minor. John writes as an aging spiritual father. His tone is intentionally pastoral, direct, and repetitive. He wants believers to be absolutely clear about what is true.

Audience & Situation:

The churches were facing internal division. False teachers had emerged, promoting early forms of what would later be called Gnosticism. These teachers denied that Jesus truly came in the flesh and claimed to possess secret spiritual knowledge. Some had already left the fellowship (1 John 2:19), creating confusion and doubt among remaining believers.

Purpose of the Letters:

John writes to:

- Strengthen assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13)
- Clarify true doctrine about Jesus
- Emphasize obedience as evidence of genuine faith
- Call believers to radical love for one another
- Warn against false teachers

Across all three letters, three major themes repeat:

1. Truth – Right belief about Jesus matters.
2. Love – Genuine faith produces sacrificial love.
3. Abiding – The Christian life is ongoing dependence on Christ.

John's aim is simple but profound: confident believers who walk in truth and love.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 1

Walking in the Light

Small Group Discussion Guide

FOR THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

Did You Know?

Unlike most New Testament letters, 1 John does not begin with a formal greeting. It reads more like a sermon or pastoral message. John writes with deep affection, using terms like “little children,” reflecting his role as a spiritual father.

One of his primary goals in 1 John is assurance. The word “know” appears repeatedly. John wants believers to have settled confidence (not shaky uncertainty) about their relationship with God.

INTRODUCTION

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “fellowship”?
- Have you ever experienced a season when your faith felt vibrant and alive? What made it feel that way?

John opens his letter with warmth and urgency. He wants believers to experience real joy and authentic fellowship rooted in truth. As we begin, consider how walking in the light shapes both our relationship with God and one another.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 1:1–4.

- What does John emphasize about what he has “seen” and “heard”?
- Why is it important that Jesus is described as tangible and real?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 1:5–7.

- What does it mean that “God is light”?
- What does walking in the light look like practically?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 1:8–10.

- What dangers come from denying sin?
- What promise is attached to confession and how have you seen it fulfilled?

John contrasts honesty with self-deception. Light exposes, but it also heals. Confession is not about shame; it is about restoration and fellowship with a faithful Savior. These opening verses establish the foundation for everything that follows in the letter.

APPLICATION

- Where might God be inviting you to greater honesty right now?
- Is there anything you have been tempted to hide from God or others?
- How can this group cultivate an environment of light rather than pretense?

PRAYER

Ask God to give you courage to walk honestly before Him and others. Pray that He would teach you to confess quickly, receive His forgiveness fully, and live in the joy of restored fellowship.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 2

An Advocate and a Command

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- How do you typically respond when you fail spiritually?
- What helps you feel confident in your relationship with God?
- Have you ever struggled to reconcile obedience and grace?

John reassures believers that failure is not final. We have an Advocate, and we have a clear calling. Grace and obedience belong together in a healthy Christian life.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:1–2.

- What does it mean that Jesus is our Advocate?
- What does “atoning” (or propitiation) communicate about His work?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:3–6.

- How does John connect knowing God with obedience?
- What does it mean to “walk as He walked”?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:7–11.

- Why is loving others described as both an old and a new command?
- How does hatred reveal spiritual darkness?

John keeps truth grounded in relationship. Right belief produces right living, and real love proves real faith. Assurance is not rooted in perfection but in a life that reflects Christ.

APPLICATION

- **How would you describe your current pattern of obedience?**
- **Is there a relationship where you need to move from irritation toward love?**
- **What does walking like Jesus look like in your daily context?**

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for advocating for us when we fall. Ask God to grow our obedience out of love, not fear. Pray that He would help us walk like Jesus walked and love like Jesus loved.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 3

Do Not Love the World

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- What competes most strongly for your affection and attention?
- How do you recognize when something good becomes ultimate?
- Without venturing into politics, why is discernment important in today's culture?

John reminds believers of who they are and warns them about misplaced love. Identity fuels endurance, and clarity protects the heart.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:12–14.

- How does John affirm different stages of spiritual maturity? What does your current stage look like?
- Why does identity matter in resisting temptation?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:15–17.

- What does John mean by “the world”?
- How do the desires of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life show up today?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:18–27.

- What warning does John give about antichrists?
- How does the anointing of the Holy Spirit help believers remain in truth?

John calls believers to abide. Love for the Father crowds out love for the world, and abiding guards us from deception. Spiritual maturity is not passive; it is intentional and rooted in truth.

APPLICATION

- **Where are you most vulnerable to loving the world?**
- **What habits help you abide in Christ consistently?**
- **How can you grow in spiritual discernment?**

PRAYER

Pray that God would anchor our hearts in His love so lesser loves will lose their grip. Ask Him to guard you from deception and teach you to draw closer to Him daily.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 4

Children of God

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- In what ways can being called someone's child hold a special significance?
- How does identity influence behavior?
- What difference does hope make in daily living?

John moves from warning to wonder. He invites believers to marvel at the love that makes us God's children and to live in light of that reality.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:28–29.

- How does “abiding” (or continuing) prepare us for Christ's return?
- What connection does John make between righteousness and new birth?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:1–3.

- What stands out about the Father's love?
- How does future hope purify present living?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:4–10.

- How does John describe the incompatibility of sin and God's nature?
- What does practicing righteousness reveal?

John reminds us that identity is not theoretical. Being born of God reshapes our patterns and desires over time. Hope in Christ's return motivates present faithfulness.

APPLICATION

- **Do you live more from shame or from sonship/daughtership?**
- **How might remembering your identity change a current struggle?**
- **What step of obedience reflects your new nature?**

PRAYER

Thank God for calling us His children. Pray that that truth would reshape our desires and actions. Ask Him to help us live in a way that reflects our new birth.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 5

Love in Action

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- How do you define love?
- Why is love sometimes harder in practice than in theory?
- What builds confidence before God?

John grounds assurance of relationships in tangible love. God wants to teach us that faith expresses itself in visible, sacrificial action.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:11–15.

- Why does John contrast Cain and Christ?
- What does hatred reveal about the heart?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:16–18.

- How does Jesus define love?
- What does loving “in deed and in truth” require?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:19–24.

- How does obedience relate to confidence in prayer?
- What role does the Spirit play?

Love is more than sentiment. It is sacrificial, visible, and Spirit-empowered. As love becomes active, assurance deepens and prayer grows more confident.

APPLICATION

- **Where can you move from words to action this week?**
- **Is there someone in need you can serve tangibly?**
- **How does love strengthen your assurance?**

PRAYER

Pray that God would teach us to love not just with words but with actions. Ask Him to quiet our condemning hearts and fill us with confidence rooted in obedience and faith.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 6

Testing the Spirits

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever believed something that later proved misleading?
- How do you evaluate what you hear spiritually?
- Why is discernment essential in a culture of many voices?

John calls believers to test teachings carefully. Truth matters deeply because error damages faith and distorts Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:1–3.

- What test does John provide for discerning truth?
- Why is confessing Christ central and what does that look like practically?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:4–6.

- What comfort does verse 4 give?
- How can we distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error?

John balances warning with reassurance. The Spirit within believers is greater than any false voice competing for influence. Discernment is both doctrinal clarity and spiritual confidence.

APPLICATION

- **What voices influence you most right now?**
- **How can you cultivate biblical discernment?**
- **Where do you need to be reminded that God within you is greater?**

PRAYER

Pray that the Holy Spirit would sharpen our discernment and steady our hearts. Ask God to help us cling to Christ and reject what distorts Him.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 7

God Is Love

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- When have you most clearly experienced God's love?
- How does receiving love change the way you give it?
- What fears tend to linger in your heart?

John reaches one of the most powerful themes in Scripture: God is love. His nature defines our calling and transforms our relationships.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:7–12.

- How does love originate with God?
- Why is Jesus' coming central to understanding love?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:13–16.

- What assurance does "living in Him" provide?
- How does testifying about and acknowledging who Jesus is, directly relate to our relationship with God and others?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:17–21.

- How does perfect love drive out fear?
- Why can't we claim to love God while hating others?

Love is both evidence and engine. As we receive it, fear loses ground and relationships transform. Confidence grows where love matures.

APPLICATION

- **Where is fear competing with trust in God's love?**
- **How can you intentionally reflect God's love this week?**
- **Is there someone difficult whom God is inviting you to love?**

PRAYER

Pray that God would anchor you in His affection so fear fades. Ask Him to make you a conduit of His love to the people around you.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 8

Overcoming the World

Small Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- What does winning at life look like to you?
- How have you defined winning at life differently than others in your life?
- On a scale of 1 - 10, how confident are you in eternal life?

John closes with assurance and confidence. Faith in Jesus produces overcoming strength that endures.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 5:1-5.

- How does faith connect to new birth?
- What does overcoming the world involve?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 5:6-12.

- What testimony does God give about His Son?
- Why is believing that testimony crucial?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 5:13-21.

- What assurances does John list?
- What does it mean to keep yourself from idols?

John ends where he began: confidence grounded in truth. Eternal life is rooted in the Son of God, not in fluctuating feelings. Assurance produces courage and perseverance.

APPLICATION

- Where do you need to trust God's testimony over your feelings?
- What idols subtly compete for your devotion?
- How can assurance shape your daily courage?

PRAYER

Pray that God would strengthen our faith and steady our confidence in Jesus. Ask Him to help us overcome by trusting Jesus and guarding our hearts from idols.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 9

Walking in Truth

Small Group Discussion Guide

FOR THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

Did You Know?

2 John is the shortest book in the New Testament by word count in Greek. It was likely written to a specific local church (“the elect lady and her children”), though some believe the phrase could symbolize a congregation collectively.

This brief letter emphasizes the inseparable connection between truth and love. John warns that supporting false teachers (even through hospitality) can unintentionally advance harmful doctrine.

INTRODUCTION

- Why does truth matter in relationships?
- How do you balance love and truth when it comes to Scripture?
- When is hospitality wise, and when is it unwise?

John’s second letter is brief but direct. Truth and love must travel together. As we explore this letter, consider how conviction and compassion can coexist in a healthy church.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 JOHN 1:1–3.

- What themes appear immediately and why is that important to our understanding?
- What appears to be the single most important thing God wants to communicate to us, through John, based on how he opens this letter?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 JOHN 1:4–6.

- **How are truth and love intertwined?**
- **Based on this section, what does walking in love look like?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 JOHN 1:7–11.

- **What warning does John give about deceivers?**
- **What is the defining characteristic of a false teacher, and why does he caution against supporting them?**

Truth guards love from distortion, and love keeps truth from becoming cold. John shows that real love does not ignore error; it protects what is true. Boundaries can be an expression of faithfulness.

APPLICATION

- **How can you hold truth firmly while remaining gracious?**
- **Are there boundaries you need to strengthen?**
- **What does faithful love require in your context?**

PRAYER

Pray that God would keep our hearts tender and our convictions strong. Ask Him to teach us to walk faithfully without compromise.

LETTERS OF JOHN // WEEK 10

Faithful Leadership and Imitation

Small Group Discussion Guide

FOR THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

Did You Know?

3 John is addressed to a specific individual, Gaius. It provides a rare window into early church dynamics, which includes conflict.

John commends Gaius for his hospitality and faithfulness while confronting Diotrephes, who loved prominence and rejected apostolic authority. The letter reminds leaders that character always outweighs position.

INTRODUCTION

- Who has modeled faithful leadership for you?
- Why is encouragement important in ministry?
- What happens when pride creeps into leadership?

John's final letter highlights faithfulness, hospitality, and the danger of self-centered ambition. As we study this final note, reflect on the kind of legacy your leadership is shaping.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 3 JOHN 1:1-4.

- What brings John joy and have you ever experienced joy for that same reason?
- If John calls them his children, what does your spiritual family tree look like? (i.e. your spiritual "parents" & and your spiritual "children")

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 3 JOHN 1:5–8.

- **Why is hospitality toward gospel workers important?**
- **What does partnership in the truth mean?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 3 JOHN 1:9–12.

- **What contrast does John draw between Diotrephes and Demetrius?**
- **What does imitation reveal about spiritual maturity?**

Healthy leadership reflects Christ’s character, not personal ambition. John shows that small acts of faithfulness either build up the truth or hinder it. The examples we follow shape the leaders we become.

APPLICATION

- **Who can you encourage this week who has ministered to you or alongside you?**
- **Where might pride be undermining unity in your heart of life?**
- **In your life, whose example should/could you imitate more closely?**

PRAYER

Ask God to form in us humility, generosity, and courage. Ask Him to help us support what is good and reject what is selfish, so that His truth advances through our lives.