

1 John 2:1-14

Spiritual Checkup

Scripture: 1 John 2:1-14

Memory Verse: 1 John 2:1 "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Lesson Focus: John both comforts and challenges believers in this passage. We hope that after this study the kids would both rest in the finished work of Jesus as their loving advocate but also strive to be spiritually healthy followers of Jesus!

Activities and Crafts: Jesus the Great Physician Coloring Page, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd - 5th.
Activity for 1st and 2nd Graders: Bridge Craft

Starter Activity: Let's Play Doctor

Consider kicking off the lesson by talking about unpopular places that kids often visit with their parents (i.e. doctor's office, dentist, principal's office, etc.). Add them to the whiteboard and ask them why they don't like them. (Hopefully they don't say church!) *

Afterwards shift the discussion towards the doctor's office (whether it comes up or not). Point out that while the doctor's office might not be your favorite place to go, everyone knows that it is **GOOD** to go there!

Q: What usually happens when you go to the doctor for a regular checkup?

A: They take you through several physical exams or tests.

Teachers: We will leave a stethoscope and thermometer in your class * and consider using them both in some way pretending to be a doctor. For example, take a couple of volunteers through some basic physical tests. * Maybe have them say "ahhh", take their temperature, have them jump up and down for 10 seconds, and then have them take deep breaths while you listen to their heart and lungs. These physical tests are important to confirm that you are in good physical health! And if the doctor finds something wrong, he/she prescribes medicine or some other get well plan to get you better! *

Well, as we continue our study of John's first letter, we're going to see that like a doctor, John takes believers through a "spiritual checkup" of sorts to assess their spiritual health. So, let's open up our Bibles and see what "Dr. John" has for us today!

Bible Study:

1 John 2:1a: John refers to them as his "children". He is not just writing as their spiritual doctor but also as their spiritual father who deeply loves them and wants what is best for them (and us). * And continuing from last chapter, what's best for us all is to stay away from sin. * Yet, what if we do sin? Are we then kicked out of God's family?

1 John 2:1b: NO...because Jesus stands as the believer's **advocate**!

Q: What is an **advocate**? A: Someone who defends or comes to the aid of someone else.

Teachers: Consider inviting a few volunteers up to illustrate this. Have one volunteer be a convicted criminal (we will provide handcuffs) * and the others be the enforcers of justice. Have the criminal stand before them with them ready to enforce "justice" by throwing wads of paper * at him/her. But then just before they start to throw have you or another volunteer jump in to take the punishment instead (as the **advocate**)! Discuss:
Q: Who was the advocate? How did the advocate show love for the convicted criminal?

In the same way, Jesus is the **advocate** who "takes the bullet" for sinners like us. How?

1 John 2:2: He propitiates or "satisfies" the payment that must be paid for our sins. Our holy God does not sweep sin under the rug. All sin must be paid for! Jesus's perfect life and death on the cross was adequate to pay for all sin. But His sacrifice will ONLY cover those who believe and trust in Him. Either Jesus pays or you will pay! *

Notice both the challenge and comfort in these two verses. John reminds believers that they mustn't sin (challenge). However, when they do, they're not without hope (comfort)! We see both the holiness and kindness of God in these first two verses.

1 John 2:3: Now Dr. John puts on his stethoscope and provides the first of two spiritual exams that assess our spiritual health. (**Teachers:** Consider using the stethoscope or thermometer again to represent each part of the "checkup")
Exam #1: Are you keeping Jesus's commandments? In other words, believer, are you **obeying** Jesus? While none of us are perfect (as we just read in v. 1), Dr. John would have us honestly assess whether His word actually matters to us. For the more we follow Jesus and walk in His ways, the "healthier" we will be. *

1 John 2:4: Many may say they "know Jesus" but then walk in disobedience.

Q: What does Dr. John call them?

A: Liars! Anyone can say "I know Jesus", but actions speak louder than words! *

Read Luke 6:46. Jesus Himself called out people who called Him "Lord" and yet lived in a way that showed they His word did not really matter to them!

Read John 14:15. Instead, Jesus says that if you truly love Him, you WILL follow Him. This all reminds me of the well-known phrase from the Mandalorian series: "This is the Way" * (**Teachers:** See picture we left in class you can use). In a similar way, Dr. John is encouraging believers to continue in "Jesus's Way" to stay spiritually healthy!

1 John 2:5: Notice that believers are to **lovingly** obey. * The more you love Jesus, the more you will follow Him. And the more you follow Him, the more you will love Him!

1 John 2:6: Dr. John wraps up this first part of the checkup with the ultimate goal: that the healthy believer would be walking more like Jesus walked. *

1 John 2:7-8: Dr. John now shifts to the second part of his spiritual checkup which revisits something Jesus Himself emphasized (see **John 13:34-35**).

Exam #2: Are you loving one another? The greatest commandments are to love God and to love others. Again, none of us are perfect (as we read in v. 1), but Dr. John would also have us examine how we love others to assess our spiritual health.

1 John 2:9: Again, compare the words of this person with his actions.

Q: What is he/she saying? A: "I'm in the light. I'm a believer in Jesus."

Q: But what is he/she doing? A: Hating his/her brother! Again, a liar! Actions speak louder than words!

1 John 2:10-11: Instead, Dr. John reminds them that the spiritually healthy believer practices loving others, especially brothers and sisters in the faith. Let's be clear that Dr. John is not talking about a hollow, squishy, romantic love, but a love that puts the needs of others before your own. This is how Jesus walked. "This is the way!"

Q: What are some examples of this kind of love for others? *

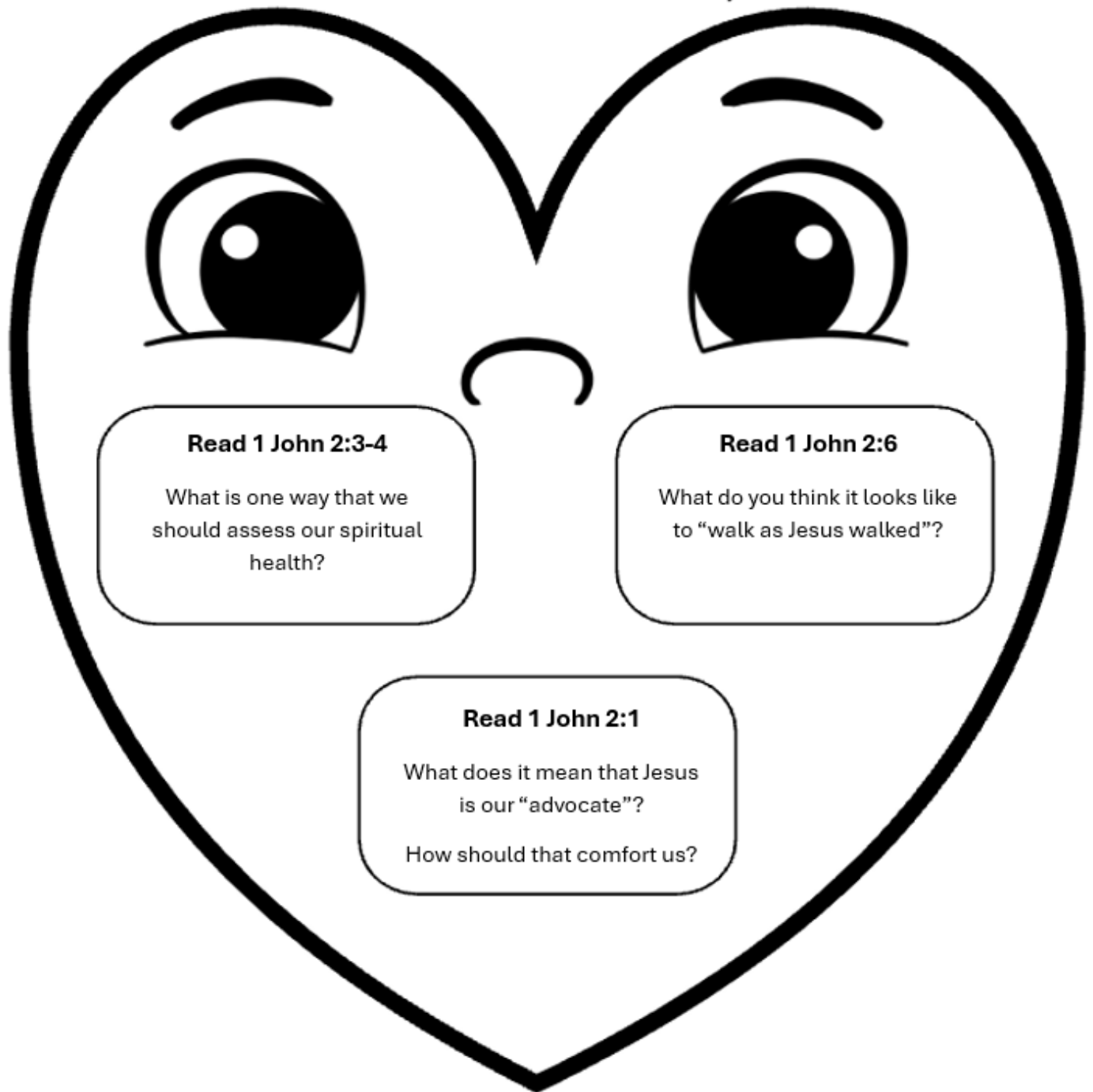
1 John 2:12-14: Dr. John wraps up this spiritual checkup with a strong encouragement to all believers, young and old! Maybe after going through this spiritual checkup, they learned that they had some health issues (just like at a doctor's visit). * And while that may be true, it doesn't change their family status. They may be a little spiritually sick, but they still belong to God! Again, John's checkup brings both comfort (confidence that they will be OK) * and challenge (here's what you must do to stay spiritually healthy).

Key Point: Hopefully you have been both challenged and comforted by this passage. If you are a believer, Dr. John's checkup has likely uncovered some areas where you may be spiritually unhealthy. Maybe you're not obeying Jesus or maybe you have hatred and bitterness in your heart towards someone else. Repent or turn away from these things and turn back towards Jesus remembering that He is your advocate! Walk in His ways! *This is the way: Doctor's orders!* * (For what happens if you ignore your good doctor's orders?)

If you are not a believer in Jesus, you need to understand that your sin has made you spiritually sick! Jesus offers to not only heal you *, but to be your advocate and take the punishment you deserve for all your sin! Remember, either Jesus pays or you will pay! Turn away from your sin and turn to Jesus in faith for the first time and become a child of God!

BRING IT HOME

BEHOLD what manner of **LOVE** the Father has bestowed on us,



that we should be called children of God!