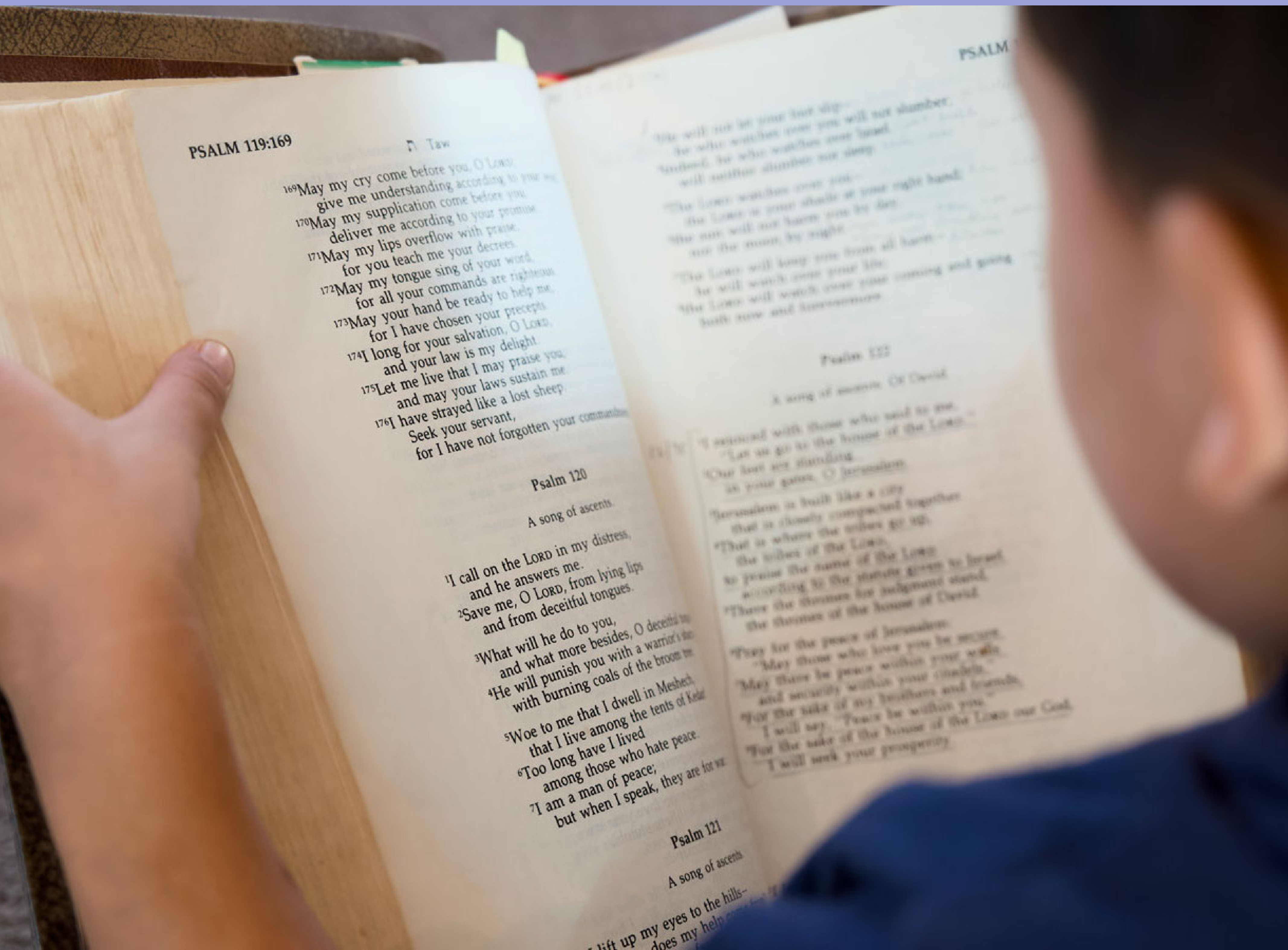




Into the Bible

**The purpose of into the Bible
is to get children into the Bible,
and to get the Bible into children.**

VOLUME 2 STEP 4: 1 JOHN 1-5



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General Introduction



INTO THE BIBLE is a way to help children and young people, and anyone for that matter, to understand the Bible better. It's a simple translation from the original languages of the Bible, together with explanations, to make the Bible more clear.

Each Step INTO THE BIBLE is made up of three parts:

- 1) A **translation**, so that children can understand the passage in order to be able to read it in their own Bible.
- 2) An **introduction** to the passage for Beginners, so that they can get to know the background to the passage they are reading. This includes the history, geography, the issues of the time, and people involved, the culture, etc.
- 3) A **Bible study** on the passage for young people, or for parents, or teachers to help them grasp what the point of each paragraph is, and what are the issues spoken about in the text .

The method of INTO THE BIBLE is to consult the Hebrew or Greek lexicons (dictionaries) to find out what meaning of the Hebrew/Greek word best fits the context of the passage, and will also make clear sense to a young reader. Where a word is difficult to understand I may turn it into a sentence to make sense of it. Where an issue is rather complicated, I use a footnote to explain it.

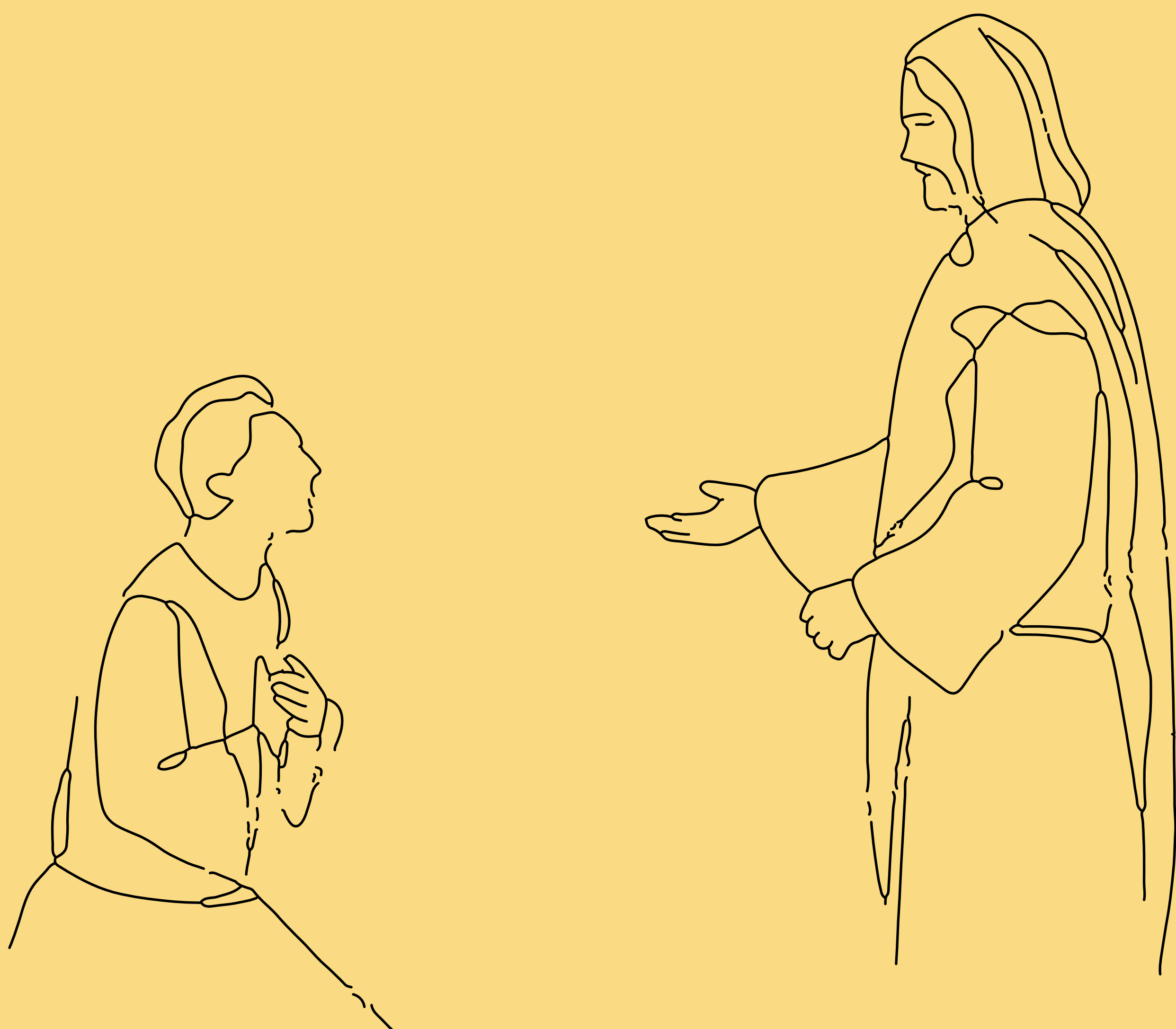
- INTO THE BIBLE is intended to prepare youngsters to be able to **read their own Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is planned to **introduce children to most of the Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is **educational.** It is meant to develop their reading skills as well as **their characters.** It can also be used by parents or teachers to teach their children. **The focus is on our children.**

Our children are our heritage from God, and the Bible is the heritage for our children, which is also from God. The purpose of Into the Bible is to get children into the Bible, and to get the Bible into children.

Yours in Christ,

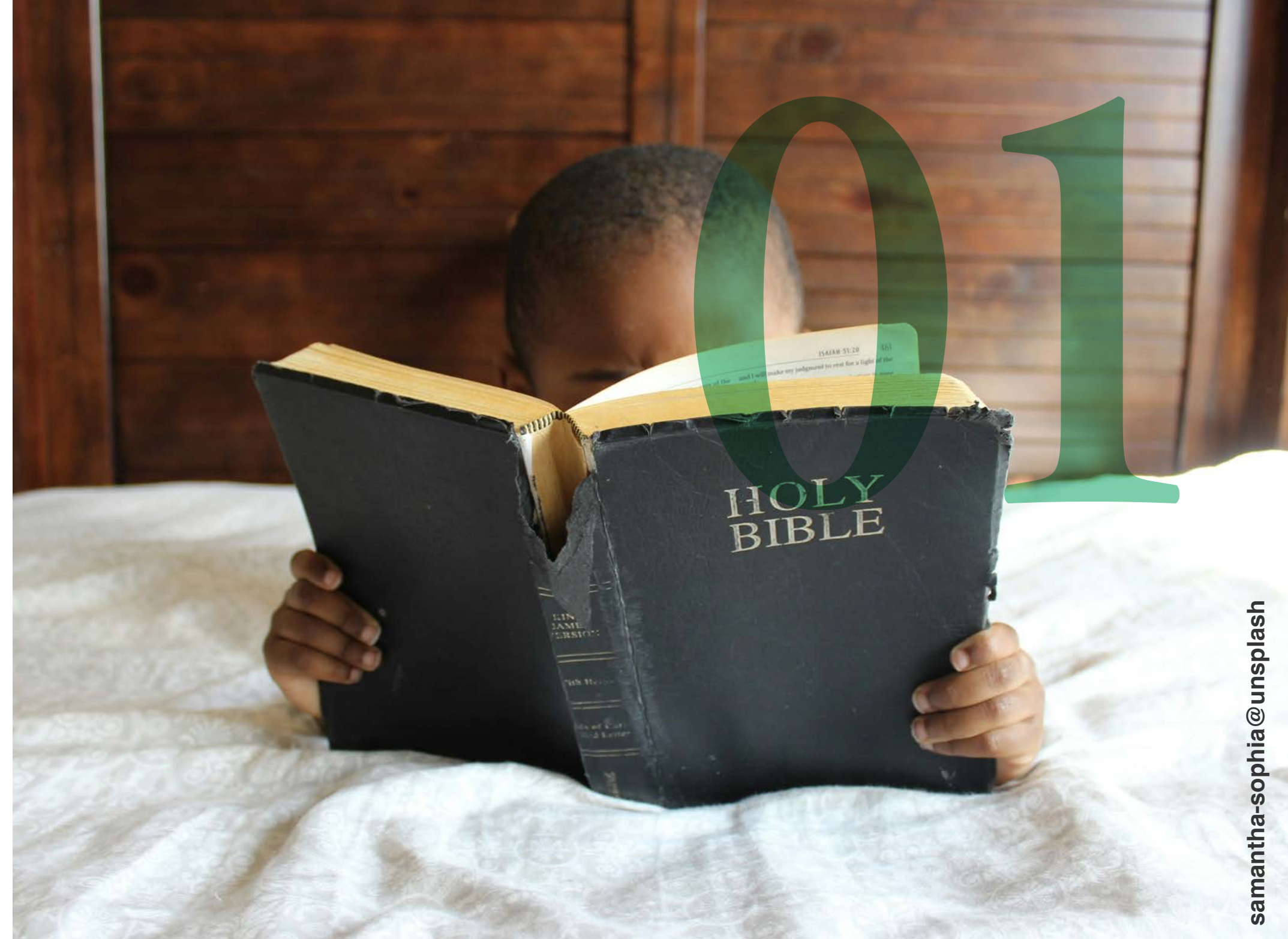
Peter Watson

1 John 1-5



1 John 1-5

A Simple Bible Translation



START HERE!

Read this simple translation to understand the passage, then read it in your own Bible.

CHAPTER ONE

1:1-4 JOHN SHARES JESUS WITH US

Listen, what we are telling you is what was true from the beginning. It is what we have heard because we were there. It is what we have seen with our own eyes. It is what we have experienced. We got to know him. We were even able to touch him. He was real!

I am talking about the person who has taught us the truth about life. He became a human being, one of us. We had the privilege of meeting him and getting to know him. So we can tell you about him. We are informing you that he has brought us eternal life. Just think of that: To live forever! He was originally with God the Father, and now he has appeared to us.

Let me say again, to make it absolutely clear: We are telling you about what we have seen and heard for ourselves. We were there! We got to know him! So we are sharing this with you so that you can share the privilege with us.

We have the privilege of having friendship with God the Father, as well as with his Son, Jesus Christ. So we are writing these things because it gives us so much satisfaction and pleasure. It fills us with joy to tell you about what we know and what we have experienced. It is so good to write this to you!

1:5-7 HOW TO BE GOD'S FRIEND

Now we have a message we can tell you about. It is the message that we got from the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The message is simple: GOD IS GOOD. God will never do anything wrong. God is absolutely good. He is pure and lovely and brilliant, like light.

He will never do anything ugly, such as some people do in the dark, when they think that no one is looking.

Therefore, if we make out that we are God's friends, but we do what is wrong or bad, we are lying. We are not sticking to the truth. But if we behave properly, and do what is right, as the Lord did, we shall get on well with one another.

The blood of Jesus, the Son of God, which he shed when he suffered and died, makes us good. It makes us clean from all sin. Without sin we can get on well with God, and also with other believers.

1:8-10 HOW TO FACE OUR SIN

If we think that we are not guilty of sin, and are therefore not sinners, we are fooling ourselves. If we claim that we do not need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we do not understand the truth. None of us can say that we have always behaved as Christians should towards others, and that we have never been nasty to anyone.

But if we admit our sins to God, that we have sinned against him and against other people, he will forgive us. God is faithful. He does what he promises. God is righteous. What he does is right, and he gets things right, even if we got them wrong. God will clean us up, and get rid of everything bad that has been in us.

However, if we are stubborn and so arrogant that we still refuse to admit that we have sinned, when the truth is that we HAVE sinned, then we are calling God a liar. God says we have sinned, and he knows better than we do. If we will not admit that we have ever sinned, then we have never listened to God, and have not learnt his laws. We have simply fooled ourselves.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1-6 WHAT FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD MEANS

My dear children, I am writing about this so that you don't get into sin. But if someone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ, who is righteous.

He is also a special offering and sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.

This is how we get to know that we have got to know God and ARE his friends: it is if we are true to God and carefully obey his rules.

Anyone who says, Yes, I know God and I am a Christian, but disobeys God's orders, is telling lies. He is actually a liar! He has not understood or accepted the truth about God. He cannot really be God's friend. It's all just talk!

But the person who sticks to what God has said, and lives by God's standards, is genuine. His love for God is what it should be. It's real; it's authentic!

If anyone claims that he has a good friendship with God, then he really should keep on living up to the standards by which Jesus lived. He must not give up living as a Christian. He ought to live by God's standards. That's what being faithful means.

2.7-11 GOD'S NEW COMMANDMENT

Dear Christians, I am not writing to tell you something different or better. I am just repeating the commandments of God that you have always believed in and obeyed. These were God's laws right from the beginning. God's good old-fashioned law is the message you learnt and obeyed.

On top of that, yes, I AM adding an even better law or commandment. It is one that we know is true in the life of Jesus and then also in you. The reason why there is this new commandment is because our ignorance of the things of God is disappearing. We no longer live a godless life. Now Christian truth and godly wisdom has become clear. So listen to this:

If anyone claims to be a Christian and yet hates his brother, then he is still ignorant of God and living a godless life.

The person who loves his or her brother or sister is the one who is living up to being a believer and a Christian. If you live like that you will do nothing to cause yourself or other people to go wrong.

But the person who hates his brother is not a real Christian. He is living just like an unbeliever. He does not know the truth; he does not know what is right. Sin has got such a grip on him that he does not even know how to behave as a Christian.

2.12-14 CHILDREN, FATHERS AND YOUNG LADS

I write to you, children, because your sins have been forgiven. You have been let off God's punishment by accepting the authority of Christ Jesus, and relying on him.

I write to you, fathers, because you have got to know Christ Jesus right from the beginning. You have lots of experience as Christians. I write to you, boys, because you have overcome trouble and hardships and what is wrong. You are real young men! I wrote to you, little children, because you really have got to know God our Father.

I wrote to you, fathers, because you have got to know Christ Jesus right from the beginning. You have lots of experience as Christians. I wrote to you, boys, because you are strong and sound in your mind and soul. You live by the Word of God and you

keep it up. You have won the battles against trouble and hardships and things that are wrong. Well done! Yes, boys, you have done very well!

2.15-17 CHOOSE GOD, NOT THE WORLD

Do not set your heart on the world, nor on worldly things. Don't choose or prefer that to God. Don't hang on to it, and then give up on God. If anyone prefers the world to God the Father, he does not love the Father at all.

This is because there are lots of things in this world that are not of God. There are things that people want, that give them pleasure, but then control them. That is not of God! People envy others who seem to have what they don't have. People also like to impress others with how well they are doing in life. All this is not of the Father. It is of the world.

But the world is on its way out. It is running out of steam; it's going to disappear! So is everything that people like and want and chase after, that they shouldn't. But the person who carries out the will of God by obeying him is going to live and get through life. He is going to live for a long, long time.

2.18-19 FALSE TEACHERS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

You young people, remember that there is a very little time left. As for this world, it is now unbelievably late in the day. You have learnt and understood that antichrist is going to arrive and influence people. Well, many antichrists can now be found as teachers in the churches. In fact, that is how we know that the time is now short.

These false teachers have left us. They left our churches, but they never truly belonged to us. For if they were part of us they would have kept up being with us. But they left, so that it might be clearly shown that not all of them truly belonged to us.

2.20-25 KEEP UP YOUR FAITH IN JESUS

But you have a special gift from God, which is the Holy Spirit. So you know the truth, all of you.

Don't think that I wrote to you because you DON'T know the truth. Of course you know it! You know the truth about God and you know what is right for us. You also know that every lie has nothing to do with the truth.

Do you know who the real liar is? It is the person who argues that Jesus was not really the same as Christ, the Messiah.

Everyone who refuses to accept the Son of God does not have any real friendship with God the Father. Anyone who admits that he believes in the Son of God also has a true

friendship with the Father.

But you people must keep to what you heard and learnt right from the beginning. Do not change your faith now. If you keep up with what you heard from the beginning, you are going to keep your friendship with both the Son and the Father.

This is the promise that God promised us. His promise is that we may have eternal life.

2.26-27 YOU CAN TELL WHAT'S TRUE OR FALSE

I wrote this to you about those who lead you into error and foolishness and sin. But you people have got the gift of the Holy Spirit that you received from God. The Holy Spirit lives in you. So, you don't need anyone to teach you anything. But you must just go on holding fast onto the Lord, because you have his Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches you about everything that you need to know. The Spirit shows you what is true, and never produces any lies. So, as he has taught you to believe, keep on living with the Lord.

2.28-29 STAY FAITHFUL TO JESUS, AS OTHERS DO

So now, children, you who are believers, hold fast onto Jesus. Keep it up, so that whenever he appears from heaven we may have boldness and complete confidence that we belong to God. Don't give up, so that when we have to face the Lord we may not be ashamed and confused in his glorious presence.

If you have come to see that Jesus is righteous, and kept God's commands, you then also know that everyone who does the same belongs to God. God has made him, or her, a Christian. Keep believing in Jesus, just as many other people do.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1-3 WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

Give some thought to how good the love is that the Father has poured out on us: We are called children of God, and that's exactly what we are! We are closely related to God, like children to their parents. He truly loves us and cares for us, and we trust him and love him too. That's why most people in the world don't understand us and don't want to know us. Their problem is that they did not get to know or understand God. They never loved him, which is why they won't love us.

Dear Christians, you must realise that in these times we live in, we ARE children of God. Also, it has not yet been made clear what we are going to turn out to be like. We don't yet realise what we are going to become. But we do know that it is going to be made clear one day, and that then we are going to be like the Lord. We know that we

shall see him as he is in his glory.

So, every Christian who has this good hope in him will keep himself innocent and keep his conscience clear. Anyone who does this makes himself, or herself, clean and pure, just as the Lord Jesus Christ is pure.

3.4-6 JESUS SOLVES THE PROBLEM OF SIN

Every single person who is guilty of sin is also guilty of breaking the law of God.

But what you now know is that the man Jesus was made known to us to solve this problem of sin. He was made known to us as the one to carry off our sins. He was able to do this because there is no sin in him.

Everyone who keeps up a proper friendship with Jesus does not still sin. The one who does go on sinning has not really come to see who Jesus is, nor has he truly got to know Jesus.

3.7-10 GOD AND THE DEVIL, AND US

Little children, don't allow anyone to lead you away from the truth and into error and sin. The truth is that it is the person who lives the right way who is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous. He has shown us the right way to live. That is what righteousness is.

The person who sins, who goes on breaking God's rules and doing what is wrong, gets his attitude from the devil. The devil has always been stirring up sin since the beginning of history. This is the reason why the Son of God appeared, and why he was made known.

Everyone whose life has been completely changed by God does not behave in a sinful way. He does not live by breaking God's rules. This is because something of God's character and influence lives on in him. It is like a planted seed that will grow in his life. That influence or persuasion does not leave him. That is why he or she cannot go on sinning as before. It's because he has been born of God. God has influenced and encouraged him and that has changed him. God is like a father to him.

This is how one can tell who has been taught and influenced by God, and who is influenced and controlled by the devil. Everyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God. Nor is anyone who does not love his brother. And that brings us to another very important point about Christianity.

3.11-15 WE MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER

You see, this is the command that you heard and understood right from the beginning: It is that we must love one another.

We must not be like Cain. Cain was controlled by the devil. So he murdered his brother without any mercy. And for what reason did he murder him like that? It was just because his attitude and behaviour was bad, but his brother's attitude was what it should be: his brother obeyed God and did what was right.

Don't be amazed or shocked, brothers, and don't even be worried if the whole world hates you.

We have the privilege of knowing that we are going to leave this life to go to a much better one. We do not live with the fear of death and with no hope. We have a wonderful, full life to look forward to. We have this blessing because we love our brothers. We love those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The person who does not love his brother remains in danger of punishment and death.

Everyone who dislikes or hates his brother wrongfully, in a way that is unfair or undeserved, is actually just like a murderer to God. And you surely must realise that no murderer is going to have eternal life. A murderer does not live with the hope of going to heaven.

3.16-18 WHAT TRUE LOVE IS

We Christians have learnt what love is. We have got to know and understand love from Jesus Christ. This is because he gave up his happiness and buried his feelings for our sake. He gave up his life on earth for us. So we also ought to do our duty by putting aside our own interests for the good of other Christians.

For example, someone is comfortably off in this world and then comes across his brother or sister who has got a need. If he then has no pity or care for that unfortunate person, how can the love of God be living in him? It can't be!

My dear young friends, our love must not just be empty promises or excuses, or just nice talk. What we must do is make the effort to be helpful and useful. That is genuine love! That's what true love is.

3.19-24 LOVE PLEASES GOD

By loving other Christians we shall know for sure that we are true Christians. By loving one another we can be confident when we get into the presence of God.

Even if we do feel guilty we know that what God thinks is more important than how we feel. God knows everything. He knows whether we have love in our heart.

Dear friends, if we have love, and don't feel guilty or bad about how we have treated other Christians, we can then have complete confidence before God. We shall feel good and unafraid, without any embarrassment.

Not only that, but we have the privilege that whatever we ask God for, we can get. The reason we have this privilege is because we obey God's commandments. By doing this we please God.

The whole point of God's commandment is that we should believe in the authority of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and that we should love one another. That's the command that God gave us.

The person who carefully keeps God's commandments will have a good relationship with God, and God will have a good relationship with him or her. The way we know for sure that God remains with us, and does not leave us, is this: We know it by the Spirit that he gave us.

CHAPTER FOUR

4:1-3 CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST

Dear friends, don't just believe everyone who claims to speak from God. What you need to do is to test whether he does genuinely speak from God. The problem is that lots of false prophets have sprung up all over the place, to attract people to their own ideas.

This is how you can know whether someone who calls himself a prophet is genuinely from God. Every religious person who clearly and openly says that Jesus Christ was a real man has truly come from God. He speaks with God's authority.

It also follows that every religious leader who does NOT clearly and openly say that Jesus is from God, does not speak from God. This is the sign of the antichrist, the enemy of Christ. You learnt that there is an antichrist coming. In fact, it is quite clear that he is already in the world.

4:4-6 CHRISTIANS LISTEN TO GOD

You people, little children, are from God. So you have defeated them. This is because God, who is in you, is more powerful and splendid than the devil who is busy in those who are not from God.

Those false teachers are from the world. The world does not believe in God, nor do the people of the world want God. Therefore they say things that come from the world. So people in the world like to listen to them. They don't say what God tells them to say.

But we are from God. The person who knows God listens to us. But the person who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know the difference between someone who wants what is true and someone who wants what is wrong. People who have the right spirit listen to us, and people with a godless spirit won't.

4:7-11 WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Dear friends, we should love one another because love is of God. So everyone who does love others has been given spiritual life by God. Therefore the person who loves other Christians is someone who has come to know God.

The person who does not love others does not know God. He does not realise that GOD IS LOVE. That means that God not only loves us, but he likes us to have love. God wants us to love others as well as love him.

The way the love of God was made clear to us was this: It is that God sent what is his only Son into our world and into our lives. He did this so that we might enjoy a better life, a blessed and endless life, in God's kingdom.

What is love, really? It's not that we loved God. No, it's that God loved us! Out of love he sent his Son to make up for our sins. His Son is a sacrifice for sin, a special way of restoring peace between God and us.

My dear friends, if God loved us so much then surely we ought to love one another. If God loves all Christians then shouldn't we also love all Christians?

4:12-16 KEEP UP YOUR LOVE

Of course, no one has ever seen God. But if we love one another God is with us. He continues to live in us, and his love has been fully developed in us. We don't need anything more.

The way we know that we are living with God and that he is living with us is because he has given us his Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit helps us to love God and love one another.

On top of this, we have seen and reported what God the Father has done. He has sent his Son who is the Saviour of the world. He came to rescue all of us.

Whoever admits that Jesus is the Son of God is God's friend. Anyone who is convinced of this has God in his life. Whoever stands up for Jesus belongs to God.

I promise you that we apostles have been able to get to know the love that God has for us. We have become utterly convinced of it. GOD IS LOVE! So whoever keeps up their love for others keeps up their love for God, and God keeps up his love for them.

4:17-21 LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

What we need is that we love God and God loves us. And God loves us when we love one another. And our love for God is genuine when we love one another. When our friendship with God is genuine and good then we can face the Day of Judgement. We

can face it with confidence. We can feel completely safe and free and happy. We have this great advantage because we are like Jesus. We have learnt from him to love people the way he did.

If one lives with love, one doesn't have anything to fear from God's judgement. If one keeps the law of love, and loves properly and genuinely, one gets rid of one's fear of God and judgement. What brings on fear is the fear of punishment. So if someone is frightened about meeting God it means that he does not love the way he should.

The reason why we love is because it was God who first loved us.

If anyone makes the claim: "I love God," and then hates his brother believer, he's a liar! He is faithless and false. The one who won't love his brother or sister, whom he has seen, cannot possibly love God whom he has not seen.

This then is the commandment we have from God. It is given in order that the one who loves God should also love his brother.

CHAPTER FIVE

5:1-5 WHAT THE LOVE OF GOD IS ABOUT

Everyone who believes that Jesus is Christ, the Messiah, has been born of God. Everyone who loves God, who produced Jesus, shall of course love Jesus who was produced by God.

The way we know that we really do love God's children is this: Every time we keep God's laws out of love for him, we automatically love God's people. All God's laws and rules are designed to train us to love people.

That is what the love of God is about. The love of God is that we keep God's rules and laws. God's laws and commands are not difficult to obey. God is not a strict and hard boss.

No, rather, whatever has been produced by God achieves victory over the world. We can be sure of that and rely on it. So our faith and faithfulness is the thing that overcomes and conquers the problems that people produce. Obeying and trusting God is the way to succeed and win in this life.

Who is the person who wins, who beats the world and its troubles, and overcomes all the odds? It is only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

5:6 WATER, BLOOD AND SPIRIT

Jesus Christ is the one who came from heaven to earth to help us. He helps us by means of water and blood. He does not wash us just with water, but he purifies us with water

and by his blood. Then the Spirit tells our conscience that we are clean. We know that it is true because the Spirit is the truth.

5:7-12 GOD'S WITNESS ABOUT HIS SON

We know that this is the truth because there are three signs as witnesses that prove it.

There's the **Spirit** and the **water** and the **blood**. They all say exactly the same thing. All three are about making us better people, clean and pure and good.

We accept the report of people about what they have seen or heard. Well, then we need to realise that what God says is much more important. It has greater authority because this is the witness of God. It is what he has informed us about his Son. According to God it is his Son who can get us right.

The person who believes in the Son of God has accepted God's word. The person who does not believe God makes him out to be false and unreliable. That's because he has not believed in the witness that God has given us concerning his Son.

The witness that God has given us is this: It is that God gave us eternal life, life that will last forever. And this gift of living eternally is by means of God's Son.

Whoever has the Son of God in his heart has true life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

5:13-15 WE CAN CONFIDENTLY RELY ON GOD'S SON

I have written all this to you so that you may know that you have permanent life, that is, eternal life. You will live forever! This is for those people who believe in the Son of God, and rely on him. They believe in his authority and rely on his power. His authority and his power come from God.

So we have the utmost confidence in him. Our confidence in him is such that we can ask him for anything. He listens to us, whatever we ask, as long as it fits in with his will.

So we know that he listens to us, whatever we ask. Because of that we know for sure that we have whatever we asked him for.

5:16-17 WE SHOULD PRAY FOR SINNERS

If anyone is worried about his brother who is committing sin he will likely ask God about that. He can ask as long as the person's sin is not a serious one. God will then give that person who sins the gift of life. God will do this to people who sin in a way that is not very serious. But there is such a thing as serious sin, sin that leads to death. I am not saying that one should question the Lord about that or beg him for such a person.

All wrong-doing or cheating is sin. All injustice or unrighteousness is sin. But there is sin that is not punishable by ruin or death. Pray for those people who sin like that.

5:18-21 WHAT GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT GOD

We know very well that everyone who has been born of God does not sin. Rather, the person who is born of God keeps a firm hold on himself. He is careful to do what is right. That way no one who is bad can get hold of him to get him to do what's wrong.

We know that we belong to God. We also know that the whole world is dragged down together under the grip of sin.

We also know that the Son of God has come into our lives. He has given us an understanding and feeling so that we might know what is real and true. Through him we can get to know what is genuine about God. Indeed, we are now connected to the true God. We are connected to him by our connection with his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the genuine God, and this is the way to eternal life.

Dear children, watch out that you protect yourselves from idols. Avoid them!



NOW YOU CAN READ 1 JOHN 1-5 IN YOUR OWN BIBLE.

1 John 1-5

Passage background & introduction



priscilla-du-preez@unsplash

Read this part to get to know the background of the chapters you read in section 01.



This letter was written by John the apostle. Actually, it is an epistle. A letter is written to one person, or a family. An epistle is written to a lot of people to share. If someone writes to the people in a church it is an epistle. But let's call it a letter.

John the apostle wrote this letter when he was a very old man. He might even have been 90 years old. It is very likely that he was the last of the twelve apostles left alive. Even Paul had died over twenty years before. Peter had also died. Both Peter and Paul had been put to death, or executed, for spreading the Christian faith. They are now known as Saint Peter and Saint Paul. They were not only apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ; they were also martyrs for him.

This letter was written to Christians who were living in the western part of what is now Turkiye [tur-kee-ya] (that used to be called Turkey.) It is rather different from all the other letters, or epistles, written in the New Testament. John is worried that some Christians believed things that were not true about Jesus Christ.

Many people wanted to believe in Jesus,
but they would not accept THE TRUTH about him.

Most people believe in God, even if they do so secretly. Many people like to believe in Jesus because he was such a good man. But the trouble is that when people believe in God or Jesus they so often believe only what they **want** to believe, and will not believe

what they **should** believe. This is what the apostle John was worried about.

In about 90 AD the Apostle John was the greatest authority on Jesus then living in the world.

John had been one of the first disciples that Jesus chose, and had worked with Jesus throughout his whole ministry.

An apostle and a disciple:

- The word “disciple” means a learner or student.
- The word “apostle” means a teacher or trainer.
- A disciple was someone who wanted to learn from Jesus.
- An apostle was trained by Jesus to be an expert on what he had done and taught.

AD 90 means 90 years after Jesus was born. But there is a little problem here. When the experts first started to work out when Jesus was born, they made a small mistake. Actually, he was born a few years earlier than was first thought. He was born about three or four or maybe even five years before the year he was supposed to have been born. We do not know exactly when that was.

John was Jesus’ best friend. When Jesus was dying, he had asked John to look after his mother Mary for him, even though Jesus had a number of step-brothers and step-sisters who were Mary’s children. Now, over 50 years later, John was a very wise man. He had had lots of experiences with people. He knew what the truth was, and he knew what people were like.

For many years he had been listening to what people said, and watching what people did. He realised that what people really needed was the truth. People like to make things up, even things about God. People were keen to make up great stories about this amazing man Jesus. There are many people who are willing to listen to anything, and believe anything. John now felt that he must do something about this. He must save people from believing stories made up about Jesus, and get them to believe the truth about Jesus.

People wanted to believe in Jesus in a way that suited them. That is how most people like to think about God. God is just there to help them when they have problems, and to make them feel better.

Once people want to believe whatever suits them, there will always be preachers who teach what people want to hear. This was the problem that John was facing. That is why he wrote this letter.

There are two wonderful things about Jesus that people do not understand, and do not want to believe.

The first was that Jesus was **the Son of God**. This means that Jesus is really and truly God.

The second is that Jesus was actually **the Son of Man**. That means that Jesus was really and truly a man, a human being, like us.

For many people this is a problem. They think that if Jesus is God then he is not like us. Or if Jesus is a man like us then he cannot really be God.

The marvellous truth is that he is both God and man. He is a real **man** as well as really **God**. Or, as the great teachers have taught us, Jesus Christ is truly man and truly God. He is fully man and fully God.

This is what John and the other disciples discovered as they lived with him, travelled with him, listened to him and worked for him. Once these disciples were absolutely sure that Jesus was fully and perfectly God AND fully and perfectly man, he then appointed them as his apostles.

If Jesus is the Son of God then he knows exactly what God is like. That means that we must listen to what he says about God, and also believe what he teaches about God. If anyone disagrees in any way with Jesus, about God, that person is not telling the truth.

Jesus came to make us more like God. God is righteous. He always does what is right. He never does anything wrong. Jesus was also like that. God sent Jesus because he wants us to come right too. Heaven is for people who come right by believing in God and listening to Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, if Jesus is like us then he understands us and can help us. He knows what we are like, and what problems we have. It also means that we can understand him. He is our brother and our friend. No one has ever seen God, but John and the other disciples got to know Jesus very well. Jesus taught them that once they had got to know him, they had automatically got to know God.

Jesus is the only person who can get us to heaven. Our two great problems are **Sin** and **Death**. Jesus never sinned, and he died to cancel out our sins forever. He died to destroy death's grip on our lives. Then, miraculously, Death lost its grip on him when he came alive again. He promised that he would also make us come alive again if we are faithful to him. Then we too, like him, shall be able to live forever.

SIN, like death, is a terrible problem for us.

First, we cannot undo what we have done in the past. We shall always be guilty. Jesus became a man to take our punishment. That is what frees us from guilt forever.

Secondly, we cannot stop sinning. It has got such a grip on us. Even grown-ups cannot stop sinning. Even great people, and famous people, clever people and lovely people, have a huge problem with sin. Jesus, because he is God, has the power to break the grip that sin has on our lives. He then also has the power to bring us back to life after we have died. Once we know that Jesus Christ has freed us from the grip of sin, we know that he will also free us from the grip of death. If he can get us to stop sinning, he can get us to come alive after we die. If we are able to live now with the truth of God and the love of God in our hearts, it will be possible for us to live forever.

Jesus came to make us righteous.

How can Jesus be exactly like God AND just like us? We do not know. It is a miracle! That is how he was born. That is what the name Emmanuel means. **Emmanuel** means:

God is with us.

Yes, indeed: God really is with us! Emmanuel is a Hebrew word. “Im” means “with.” “Immanu” [im-mah-noo] means “with us.” “El” [el] means God. So Immanuel, or Emmanuel, means “With-us-God.”

If we want Jesus to save us from sin and death, we must listen to him. If we want to find God and go to heaven, we must believe the truth that God has told us through his prophets and apostles.

If people change the truth into a lie, they will not get to know God and will not be able to go to heaven. Anyone who thinks that Jesus is not really God, or that he is not really man, has got it wrong. This is what John the Apostle is writing about.

JOHN’S MESSAGE TO US

John was a disciple and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He met Jesus and knew him well. So he wanted to share what he knew about Jesus with us. By listening to John we can also get to know Jesus. If we get to know and trust Jesus, we shall get to know and trust God, so that we shall be able to obey and love him.

***Jesus taught his disciples that GOD IS GOOD,
and that GOD CAN ALSO MAKE US GOOD.***

Even though we have failed, and sinned, God can still make us good.

God can do whatever we need, because God can perform miracles.

Jesus showed us that.

However, to become good we must first of all face the fact that we have been bad. We have sinned. We have done what is wrong and bad. We need Jesus to forgive us. We need Jesus to get us right. To become God's friends we need Jesus. We need Jesus to get us to heaven. All of us need Jesus Christ. We can never come right by denying that we have done wrong. We can never get to heaven by bluffing ourselves, by pretending to be good, or by making up ideas about God that suit us.

The apostle John wrote this letter, or epistle, so that we could all get to know the truth about Jesus Christ, and about God, and about ourselves. John wrote this letter to guide us to the truth, and to help us understand it and benefit from it.

We thank God for this letter that John wrote.

1 John 1-5

A Bible study on our passage



Now let's grasp the points of each paragraph and the issues being spoken about, and together we can grow in our knowledge and love of God.



Chapter 1

1:1-4 JOHN SHARES JESUS WITH US

Listen, what we are telling you is what was true from the beginning. It is what we have heard because we were there. It is what we have seen with our own eyes. It is what we have experienced. We got to know him. We were even able to touch him. He was real!

I am talking about the person who has taught us the truth about life. He became a human being, one of us. We had the privilege of meeting him and getting to know him. So we can tell you about him. We are informing you that he has brought us eternal life. Just think of that: To live forever! He was originally with God the Father, and now he has appeared to us.

Let me say again, to make it absolutely clear: We are telling you about what we have seen and heard for ourselves. We were there! We got to know him! So we are sharing this with you so that you can share the privilege with us.

We have the privilege of having friendship with God the Father, as well as with his Son, Jesus Christ. So we are writing these things because it gives us so much satisfaction and pleasure. ¹It fills us with joy to tell you about what we know and what we have experienced. It is so good to write this to you!

¹**It fills us with joy:** What is JOY? First of all, joy is happiness. God allows all of us to get some happiness out of life. From time to time we enjoy being happy, because God wants us to know how nice happiness is. God wants us to be happy. In heaven we shall be perfectly happy. We shall always be happy. All of us shall be happy together. Nothing will ever turn our happiness into sadness and unhappiness.

But when the Bible talks about joy, it is talking about something that is even better than simple happiness. Happiness is how we feel when something good happens to us. But joy is a good feeling in us no matter what happens, and even when things go wrong. Good news puts happiness into our feelings, but God's Spirit puts joy into our heart and our soul. We get joy from heaven, not just from getting something we like. Happiness can be upset by something going wrong. Joy comes from friendship with God, and it stays with us even if we get disappointed by something unfortunate that happens to us. Joy is when our soul enjoys God and his perfect goodness even when things go badly with us, or when we suffer. We have joy when we enjoy friendship with God even though we may be sick in body or upset in our mind.

You get an idea of this sort of thing if you hurt your ankle playing an important or exciting game. You have to pull out of the game because of your injury, but your side goes on to win the game and you all celebrate that. Your ankle is sore, and you are disappointed that you missed the last part of the game, but all your spirits are high. You limp home with a big smile on your face and a bright look in your eyes.

Joy is feeling good because of God.

John is writing to people to tell them the truth about Jesus. If they will listen to him, it will fill him with joy, even if things go badly for him, or if they should go wrong for the people he is writing to. The truth about Jesus is more important than anything else in life. If people will believe the truth, nothing else really matters. Whatever may go wrong for a while will eventually come right in the end. This fills John with joy. It fills him with joy to bring joy to us. By giving us the truth about Jesus we can find that joy too.

We can get God's joy

if we believe in Jesus Christ,

who is both the Son of God as well as the son of man.

1:5-7 HOW TO BE GOD'S FRIEND

Now we have a message we can tell you about. It is the message that we got from the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The message is simple: ¹GOD IS GOOD. God will never do anything wrong. God is absolutely good. He is pure and lovely and brilliant, like light. He will never do anything ugly, such as some people do in the dark, when they think that no one is looking.

Therefore, if we make out that we are God's friends, but we do what is wrong or bad, we are lying. We are not sticking to the truth. But if we behave properly, and do what is right, as the Lord did, we shall get on well with one another.

²The blood of Jesus, the Son of God, which he shed when he suffered and died, makes us good. It makes us clean from all sin. Without sin we can get on well with God, and also with other believers.

¹GOD IS GOOD: The words that John uses are, **God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.** What that means is that God is wonderful, perfect, and excellent. No one can ever find any fault with God. He never does anything wrong, nor ever makes any mistakes. He is awesome! Yes, he IS good; God is truly and absolutely good! The reason why John says this is because if we say we believe in God, yet behave badly, then what we say is not true. It is false. It's a lie!

²The blood of Jesus: The blood of Jesus makes us right with God. We know that his blood has made us clean when we believe in him and what he sacrificed for us. We know that we have been saved from sin by his blood when we obey God and treat one another well.

How does Jesus Christ make us clean by his blood?

When the Bible talks about the blood of Jesus Christ, it means two things:

First, it means that when Jesus suffered and died, his body was torn open so that it bled. He was beaten with sticks and thorns, and then nailed to a wooden cross. When he died, the soldiers who executed him checked that he was dead by stabbing him in his side. There was blood everywhere. He was badly hurt, and then killed. This was his punishment.

Secondly, it means that this type of punishment, suffering and death was for a purpose. He allowed God to use him as a sacrifice. God then used his enemies to make him a sacrifice for our sake. Jesus did not deserve what they did to him.

This sacrifice was necessary because we have all sinned. Sin is disobeying God and doing what is wrong to other people. We are all guilty of both these sins.

The huge problem with sin is that we cannot be God's friend if we sin, just as we cannot be someone's friend if we are nasty to that person.

The problem we face is this:

How can we get back to God if we have sinned?

How can we become God's friend?

(1) That is what Jesus' sacrifice was for. God punished him for our sins.

This is why it is so important that we admit what we have done wrong. We confess to God that we have sinned against him, and also against others. It is like saying sorry when you have done something wrong to someone. Confessing is like apologising.

We ask God to forgive us,

to forgive us because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

Other people may or may not forgive us. We may or may not be able to forgive ourselves. But one thing is sure: If we ask God to forgive us because of his Son's sacrifice and blood and death, we know that we shall definitely be forgiven. We shall be pardoned because that is what Jesus wanted to do for us. He came into our world, and he comes into our lives, to make us God's friends, and also so that we would be friends with one another. That is why he suffered and sacrificed his precious life.

Jesus is utterly truthful and reliable. He promised that he would forgive our sins in the same way that he promised that he would rise up from the dead within three days. Just as he conquered death for us, so he has triumphed over our sin for us. It is our sin that causes death. When you discover that Jesus Christ has taken away your guilt and sin, you will be able to be sure that he is going to raise you from the dead at the end of your life.

Jesus came to destroy sin and death.

(2) The blood of Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, has another meaning or significance.

Jesus became like us in every way except one: he never sinned. He never broke a single law of God at any time in his life. He was absolutely perfect. But we are not perfect. None of us are.

When he lost his blood it was a sign that he had sacrificed his sinlessness. What really happened was that his blood was poured out for us. We receive the sinlessness and goodness that had always been in him. Not only were our sins wiped out, but his good standing with God now became ours – if we believe in him.

So, when we go to stand before God one day, we shall have all the benefits of his righteousness to support us.

Jesus has justified us.

He has got us right with God.

By his blood Jesus has justified us. We can look forward to meeting God with confidence!

(3) Blood also means that we have a close relationship. As there is a blood-relationship between children and their parents, so we have a relationship with God our Father through the blood of his Son. Jesus had a very good and close relationship with his Father in heaven. He sacrificed that relationship for us, so that we could get a good relationship with God.

When he lost his blood it meant that he lost his friendship with God. But since his sacrifice was for us, it meant that the good relationship that he had with his Father also becomes our relationship with God.

To become God's friends

we put our faith in Jesus and his sacrifice.

That is how we become God's true children. The sign that we are really God's children is that we treat others the way God has told us to. He has told us to love him and to love one another.

So Jesus' blood means three great things for us:

First, his blood is a sacrifice that cancels out our **sins**. He was punished for the wrongs we have done.

Secondly, by his blood we are made **righteous** enough so that we can be interviewed by God and accepted by him. By Jesus' blood we become good enough to go to heaven.

Thirdly, the blood of Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, creates for us a very close relationship with God. We become his **family**, his children, forever.

What we need to do is to believe in Jesus. That is not difficult, but nor is it easy. It means that we have to trust him and obey him. If we trust him we can obey him. We obey him and then trust God to look after us as we do what he says.

1:8-10 HOW TO FACE OUR SIN

If we think that we are not guilty of sin, and are therefore not sinners, we are fooling ourselves. If we claim that we do not need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we do not understand the truth. None of us can say that we have always behaved as Christians should towards others, and that we have never been nasty to anyone.

But if we admit our sins to God, that we have sinned against him and against other people, he will forgive us. God is faithful. He does what he promises. God is righteous. What he does is right, and he gets things right, even if we got them wrong. God will clean us up, and get rid of everything bad that has been in us.

However, if we are stubborn and so arrogant that we still refuse to admit that we have sinned, when the truth is that we HAVE sinned, then we are calling God a liar. God says we have sinned, and he knows better than we do. If we will not admit that we have ever sinned, then we have never listened to God, and have not learnt his laws. We have simply fooled ourselves.

Chapter 2

2.1-6 WHAT FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD MEANS

¹My dear children, I am writing about this so that you don't get into sin. But if someone does ²sin, ³we have an advocate with ⁴the Father: Jesus Christ, who is ⁵righteous.

He is also ⁶a special offering and sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.

This is how we get to know that we have got to know God and ARE his friends: it is if we are true to God and carefully obey his rules.

Anyone who says, Yes, I know God and I am a Christian, but disobeys God's orders, is telling lies. He is actually a liar! He has not understood or accepted the truth about God. He cannot really be God's friend. It's all just talk!

But the person who sticks to what God has said, and lives by God's standards, is genuine. His love for God is what it should be. It's real; it's authentic!

If anyone claims that he has a good friendship with God, then he really should keep on living up to the standards by which Jesus lived. He must not give up living as a Christian. He ought to live by God's standards. That's what being faithful means.

¹**My dear children**: This is how God our Father, and Jesus our King, and John the Apostle, like to talk to people who believe. “My dear children” means that God loves us. We are precious to him. My ‘dear children’ means all Christians. Of course, it especially means little children or young children who believe in God and love him.

²**sin**: If we want to be friends with God it is very important to understand what sin is. Sin is what God does not like, and does not want us to do.

The basic idea of sin is to fail. It is to fail to do what is right. It is to do something ugly or nasty. It is to be guilty of breaking God's commands. Things like lying or stealing are sins. Treating people badly is a bad sin. Of course, some sins are more serious than others, but all sins are sins.

God wants us to get rid of them. If we go on sinning we cannot be God's friends. We cannot even be real friends with other Christians. God's people must stop sinning.

³**we have an advocate**: People who work with the law are called lawyers. They are there to help people who have problems, or who need to be defended against criminal charges. Senior lawyers are called advocates. They are the legal specialists who argue the case for people before the judges. An advocate is someone to get us out of trouble. He is trained to be able to explain to a judge why the law says that we are NOT guilty.

It is amazing, and it is wonderful, that God, who does not like sin, should send us an advocate to get us out of trouble, and even right out of sin.

When an advocate gets us off the hook, and the judge finds us “NOT guilty!” it is a tremendous relief. We are free.

⁴**the Father**: The most important thing for us to remember about God is the truth that he is Our Father.

A university professor, an expert with the highest qualifications, once asked the question, “What is a father?” With all his years and years of studying and teaching, he had no idea what a father is. The reason for this was that he had never had a father. He never knew who his father had been. There are also lots of people, and many children, who have never had a good and decent father.

A father is someone to look after us and care for us when we are young. He is someone to provide for what we need when we cannot get it for ourselves. A father is someone

who loves us. He is someone we respect and can be proud of. He is someone who is proud of us, and wants to be proud of us. He is our teacher and trainer and coach. A father is someone who has the experience and the strength to look after us well.

Father is an honourable person, a very special man. He is someone who inspires us and encourages us, and comforts us. He is our leader, and he wants the best for us. He is our hero! He is our very own Dad! He is our dearest Daddy!

God is the Father of all believers. God is also, in fact, the Father of all mankind. Most important of all, he is the Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. So if we become believers and followers of Jesus, we get very close to his Father. If we love God as our Father, we shall be proud of him. We shall worship him and want to take after him or become like him.

There is one father that the Bible warns us against. The devil is the father of all bad people. That is why they are so bad! They take after their father: they have no pride and they have no shame.

⁵**righteous**: To God this is a very important word. Righteousness is what heaven is made of. Righteous is what God wants all of us to be. He wants us to be righteous forever. What is righteous? It means to do what is right. It means to keep the rules, to keep the laws, especially God's commandments. It means to do our duty, to do what we should do. Righteous means that one behaves well. One is fair to others, and treats them properly and well. One listens to God and does his will. A righteous person knows what God wants and does it. God likes a righteous person.

⁶**a special offering and sacrifice**: In the Greek, which is the language the apostle John wrote in, "a-special-offering-and-sacrifice" is just one word.

It means A-SOLUTION-TO-THE-PROBLEM-OF-SIN.

Sin is far more complicated than people think. Most people think that if they have done something wrong all they need to do is say sorry and that's the end of it. But if we have hurt someone, and he has to go to hospital, sorry is not the end of it. If we have broken the law and get caught by the police, saying sorry is not the end of it. If someone did something foolish and lost his job, saying sorry will not be the end of his problems. The same sorts of problems apply to sin.

Sin has three main complications:

First, at the end of our lives we are going to be judged by God. This is something none of us can avoid. The big complication about that is that God has a record of everything we have ever done. No one can argue with God.

If we try to say we have never done anything bad, we are going to look very foolish when the truth comes out. The first thing we have to do to get out of sin is to admit that we HAVE sinned. We have to face it! This is called **confession**.

Jesus came to make us face up to our sins. That was why he preached and taught about the laws of God. Without the teaching of Jesus we cannot properly see how sinful we are. What we tend to do is to make excuses for ourselves. Only faith in Jesus can get us to be honest with ourselves.

Only the **sacrifice of Christ** can get us clean from our sins. Nothing else can.

Secondly, God has told us that if he steps in and sorts out our sin, we shall know that he has forgiven us. We shall know it because we shall have changed. This is called **repentance**.

That is what God wants to do with us and our sin: he wants us to stop sinning. He wants us to change our attitude and behaviour. He wants us to become better people.

Jesus came to show us what is right, by his example. He also changes us as we accept him into our life and our heart. Only our contact with Jesus can convert us from our poor past behaviour, to become someone who fully agrees with God's standards and lives by them. Without faith in Jesus we can NOT make ourselves better people.

The only thing that will change God's attitude toward us is **Christ's offering** of his life to God for us.

*Once God's attitude toward us changes,
then our attitude toward him changes.*

Thirdly, the most important thing is actually not about us. It's about God. The most important thing is our **friendship with God**.

The big problem with sin is that it makes God either sad or angry. To have a friendship with God means that he is happy with us. When we truly want his friendship, he will then want our friendship.

Friendship with God means that we love to do what pleases him. We want to be his friend, and we want his friendship more than anything else in life.

*When we want God,
God will want us.*

It is **friendship with God** that puts life and warmth and a sparkle into our lives. To become God's friend is to start to live **a better life**, a life that even others benefit from. Jesus is the secret to our friendship with God. What God likes is not the way we lived, but the perfect way Jesus lived. If we follow Jesus then God accepts us along with Jesus.

A friend of Jesus is a friend of God.

Without faith in Jesus' blood and his death for us, we cannot love God the way we should. Only **Christ's perfect blood** can please God for us. Christ's pure innocence and brilliant love for us is the key to God's love for us, as well as to our love for God - if we love his dear Son.

This is what Jesus came to do:

- He came to get us to admit that we have sinned.
- He came to get us to change, and stop sinning, and do what is right.
- He came to make us friends with God, and get us to listen to God.

2.7-11 GOD'S NEW COMMANDMENT

Dear Christians, I am not writing to tell you something different or better. I am just repeating the commandments of God that you have always believed in and obeyed. These were God's laws right from the beginning. God's good old- fashioned law is the message you learnt and obeyed.

On top of that, yes, I AM adding an even better law or commandment. It is one that we know is true in the life of Jesus and then also in you. The reason why there is this new commandment is because our ignorance of the things of God is disappearing. We no longer live a godless life. Now Christian truth and godly wisdom has become clear. So listen to this:

If anyone claims to be a Christian ¹and yet hates his brother, then he is still ignorant of God and living a godless life.

²The person who loves his or her brother or sister is the one who is living up to being a believer and a Christian. If you live like that you will do nothing to cause yourself or other people to go wrong.

But the person who hates his brother is not a real Christian. He is living just like an unbeliever. He does not know the truth; he does not know what is right. Sin has got such a grip on him that he does not even know how to behave as a Christian.

¹and yet hates his brother: The biggest problem in the world is people hating one another, and therefore harming one another.

The word "hate" means to dislike or resent people for the wrong reason. It is to dislike them unfairly. It is to be biased against them, or prejudiced against them. Having a

wrong attitude toward them will result in treating them badly in some way.

Don't let hatred get hold of you!

The word “brother” has all sorts of meanings. Here, first of all, it means another believer or Christian. We have to be very careful how we think about other Christians, how we talk about them, or to them, and what we do to them. This is the new commandment that John is talking about. We are to treat all Christians well. This is not easy, but that is why it is a command and an order of God. It is one of God's important principles. God, our Father, does not like Christians getting nasty with one another. They are all his children, so they are all brothers or sisters. Brothers fighting or hating one another is a particularly nasty experience.

Another meaning of “brother” could be anyone we live with or work with. Even if they cause us trouble we must be careful to treat them fairly and properly, and respectfully. Getting involved in an unnecessary or ugly fight with them is NOT Christian.

The word “brother” could even mean anyone, anyone at all, any other human being. We are to do what we can to live at peace with everyone. We are to try to do what good we can to anyone. We must keep our conscience clear about the way we treat all people. We must never be guilty of doing anything wrong to anybody.

²**The person who loves:** Truth and love are the two most important needs for people to be happy. Where there is **truth** there can be trust. Where there is trust there is peace.

Love is what makes life worth living. The best forms of happiness depend on love.

God's “new commandment” is love.

Love is only possible when we keep the other ‘old’ commandments; the commandments that go right back to the beginning. When we love people properly we shall find that we have kept all of God's laws. If we disobey any of God's rules or orders it is going to mean that we cannot love people the way we should. Love is a duty we have toward other people. If I lie to people I do not love them. If I steal from people I do not love them.

To love people means to have good intentions toward them. We want what is good for them. We care about them. To love them means to treat them with respect, to treat them well, to be fair, kind, decent, friendly and reliable. Love requires us to be honest at all times. Love means that we want to be their friend, if that is possible.

Sometimes it is just not possible, but then the fault must be the other person's, and not ours.

Love is what pleases God.

2.12-14 CHILDREN, FATHERS AND YOUNG LADS

Now we see that the apostle John is proud of the people he is writing to. They are true Christians, all of them. From the seniors and leaders, and those who are teachers, whom John calls “fathers,” right down to the little children, they are all Christians. They all believe in Jesus, and they believe the truth about Jesus. It shows in the way they think and in the way they live.

It is quite possible for little children to believe the truth about Jesus and God. Even young men, known as ‘the boys,’ or as lads, have decided to follow Jesus, instead of concentrating on just enjoying themselves, or playing the fool, or showing off.

I write to you, children, because ¹your sins have been forgiven. You have been let off God’s punishment by accepting the authority of Christ Jesus, and relying on him.

²I write to you, fathers, because you have got to know Christ Jesus right from the beginning. You have lots of experience as Christians. ³I write to you, boys, because you have overcome trouble and hardships and what is wrong. You are real young men! I wrote to you, little children, because you really have got to know God our Father.

I wrote to you, fathers, because you have got to know Christ Jesus right from the beginning. You have lots of experience as Christians. I wrote to you, boys, because you are strong and sound in your mind and soul. You live by the Word of God and you keep it up. You have won the battles against trouble and hardships and things that are wrong. Well done! Yes, boys, you have done very well!

John says three times: **I write to you.** This is because what he is saying is so important.

John says three times: **I wrote to you.** John had also written to them before this. But now he is writing again to remind them because this is so very important.

To know God properly we must keep our eyes on our children and our young people, so that they also get to know God properly.

¹your sins have been forgiven: Since your sins have been forgiven, they are forgiven. And if they are forgiven, we do not have to worry about them anymore. Jesus said that it is as if they are buried deep down at the bottom of the ocean. Nobody worries about what lies at the bottom of the sea because one cannot see it.

This is also telling us that children do sin. Of course, most adults sin even more than children, but even children sin. We all need God's forgiveness, and God's forgiveness means that our conscience can be at peace. If we are at peace inside, in our mind and in our spirit, we can better face all the problems and struggles and disappointments in life.

²I write to you, fathers: The apostle John has a special message for those who are leaders and teachers in the church, the seniors. They are the ones who have lived the Christian life. They have made Christianity work; they have proved that Christianity works. They have been faithful for years. They have a lot of experience and have learnt a lot.

Now John urges them to teach the young ones about Jesus Christ and God, and the Scriptures, which are the Bible. They must teach and train the children, encourage them and correct them. They must carefully teach even the little children.

God, the Father, loves little children. And even little children are able to believe in God, and listen to him, and obey him, and love him. It is so important that little children learn about God and the Bible. The reason why Jesus left heaven and became a child was so that he could become all the children's Uncle King Jesus. That's the way for children to go to heaven. Children will be deeply loved in heaven. They will help to make everybody happy. Children can give us a very special kind of happiness.

³I write to you, boys: John is also urging the leaders to concentrate on training the big boys. These are our young men. They need encouraging and disciplining. They need good examples among the older men, and especially their own fathers. These lads are very important to any home or community. They are able to cause a lot of trouble if they go wrong. They can make big mistakes that will ruin their future lives if they are unstable and stupid.

On the other hand, they are especially important to us all. They are the future leaders. They will one day be fathers, leaders, teachers and decision-makers. If they can be taught to respect the Lord, and to listen to him and learn from him, we are all going to be so proud of them. There is nothing more important to a family or a church or a community than a good, well-behaved, decent, kind, honest and strong young man. Our greatest asset and future hope in the family and in the church is a young Christian gentleman with a good and strong character.

It is so important that Christianity is strong, and that Christians are strong. It is vital that those who are strong are good.

The apostle John says that fathers and leaders must make this a top priority in their responsibilities and duties and leadership.

Fathers, please teach children and young people about Jesus!

2.15-17 CHOOSE GOD, NOT THE WORLD

Do not set your heart on the world, nor on worldly things. Don't choose or prefer that to God. Don't hang on to it, and then give up on God. If anyone prefers the world to God the Father, he does not love the Father at all.

This is because there are lots of things in this world that are not of God. There are things that people want, that give them pleasure, but then control them. That is not of God! People envy others who seem to have what they don't have. People also like ¹to impress others with how well they are doing in life. All this is not of the Father. It is of the world.

But the world is on its way out. It is running out of steam; it's going to disappear! So is everything that people like and want and chase after, that they shouldn't. But the person who carries out the will of God by obeying him is going to live and get through life. He is going to live for a long, long time.

¹to impress others: Here John uses a word that actually has a military meaning. When soldiers got ready to fight, they would start to chant: "A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la..." and so it would go on. This chanting was designed to impress or intimidate the enemy. It is like the chanting or singing of a crowd at a game when they feel that their side is going to win. They sing in order to encourage their own side and also to discourage or intimidate the other side. When people try to impress others with how good they are, or how successful they are, they are not really doing anyone any good. Nobody likes someone who brags, and nor does God.

2.18-19 FALSE TEACHERS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

You young people, remember that there is a very little time left. As for this world, it is now unbelievably late in the day. You have learnt and understood that ¹antichrist is going to arrive and influence people. Well, many antichrists can now be found as teachers in the churches. In fact, that is how we know that ²the time is now short.

These false teachers have left us. They left our churches, but they never truly belonged to us. For if they were part of us they would have kept up being with us. ³But they left, so that it might be clearly shown that not all of them truly belonged to us.

¹**antichrist is going to arrive:** The word “antichrist” means someone who fights against Christ and against Christianity and against Christians. The idea goes back to the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel, who served God during the exile of the Jews in Babylon. The Jews used to believe that when the Messiah or Christ came, that some sort of antichrist or anti-messiah would oppose him. Now, as Christianity spreads, the apostle John sees lots of signs of antichrist at work.

The big problem is that antichrists come from inside the Christian church. They are teachers and leaders who say false things about Jesus. They do this because they are fighting against the true leaders in the Christian church. They want people who are Christians to follow them instead of the apostles. So they make up teaching that sounds Christian but actually differs from the teaching of the apostles who knew Jesus and were trained by him.

Since the apostles have now died out, and only John is left, this means that the false Christian preachers are differing from what the Bible says. The Bible is the truth that the apostles left behind, just as the apostles were the teachers that Jesus left behind. All the Christian leaders who argued with the Bible and the apostles were not true followers of Christ. They were in fact antichrist. The greatest danger to the Christian faith does not come from people outside the church who persecute Christians, but from false teachers inside the church who change or corrupt the biblical truth. They undermine what the Bible tells us to believe. It is not Christ who uses false teachers to speak to his people. It is the antichrist, the devil, who uses false teachers. They call themselves Christians in order to try to mislead Christian people.

²**the time is now short:** This sort of statement, suggesting that the end is near, is common in Scripture. It is also a puzzle to many believers because 2,000 years have passed since the Bible was written, and the end has not yet come.

But the issue is, what does John mean here? He says that “**we know that it is the last hour.**” We know that it is the last hour because of the many antichrists who have been in the church but have then left it. What people forget is how quickly life passes. Just think how quickly your life has passed if you look backwards. It has gone very quickly, whether you are young or old. We are nearer to heaven than we realise.. Life IS very short.

When people are persecuted, their faith is strengthened, and others come to respect them for what they stand for. But when the truth is attacked and people change it to make it sound better, then it is very difficult to keep up our faith in the Bible. This is the hardest part of our struggle to stand up for Christ and his truth. That is when we must realise that heaven is near, and that there is not long to go. The harder it is to keep up our faith in Christ, the nearer we are to the end of our struggle.

John went to heaven not long after he wrote this letter.

³**But they left:** One would have thought that bad or false teachers would have been thrown out of the church, or chased out. But good teachers or leaders are often not able to get rid of bad ones. However, if those who teach what is true and right keep on teaching, then those who try to turn people away from the truth will not last long. The people will come to see what is Christian and what is not. Once they support the leaders who preach what is right and sound, the corrupt teachers will stop getting a hearing. When that happens, they will leave. They usually go and set up another church of their own where they can teach what they like and what their hearers want.

History has shown that, from the time of the apostles, a lot of false teachers have appeared among Christian people. We must always be on the look-out for what is not true, and for people who want to fool or trick us.

2.20-25 KEEP UP YOUR FAITH IN JESUS

But you have a special gift from God, which is the Holy Spirit. So you know the truth, all of you.

Don't think that I wrote to you because you DON'T know the truth. Of course you know it! You know the truth about God and you know what is right for us. You also know that ¹every lie has nothing to do with the truth.

Do you know who the real liar is? It is ²the person who argues that Jesus was not really the same as Christ, the Messiah.

Everyone who refuses to accept ³the Son of God does not have any real friendship with God the Father. Anyone who admits that he believes in the Son of God also has a true friendship with the Father.

But you people must keep to what you heard and learnt right from the beginning. Do not change your faith now. If you keep up with what you heard from the beginning, you are going to keep your friendship with both the Son and the Father.

This is the promise that God promised us. ⁴His promise is that we may have eternal life.

¹**every lie has nothing to do with the truth:** The lies that the apostle John is talking about are religious lies. In the Old Testament this was called idolatry. It means changing the truth that God has given us to suit ourselves. It is making up ideas about God that we like. It is also deciding for ourselves how we should live and behave, and doing this

to suit our own interests. A lie is when someone deliberately wants to mislead someone else. The worst kinds of lies are religious lies. This is where people say things about God that are not true. Another religious lie is telling people how to live by making up rules that God did not give us.

We have to be careful because there are so many of these lies being told, and there are so many religious people telling all these kinds of lies.

But the apostle John knows that God's true people will not believe these lies. They have the Holy Spirit, who will show them what is true and what is not, and what is right and what is wrong.

²**the person who argues that Jesus was not really the same as Christ:** We should always be careful about arguing. An argument is not a good way to discuss truth. Sometimes we do get ourselves into an argument, but then we must watch what we say and how we say it. There may even be times when we have to argue. When that happens we should not go all out to win the argument, or to get what we want, but rather concentrate on just sticking to the truth.

The great thing about Jesus Christ was that he brought God to us. He brought the true God to us.

Jesus gave us the truth about God.

The reason why he knew God so well was because he was God, and because he came from God. But this is what very few people are willing to admit and accept. Because of that people decide for themselves what Jesus is really like.

They either thought he was the Messiah who would drive the Romans out of the land of the Jews, or they thought that he could not be the Messiah because he ended up being crucified. Among other nations, like the Greeks or Romans, they thought that he was either a god, or maybe even God, but then not a real man. Or they thought that he was a real man, but then could not 'of course' really be God or anything like that. All these theories about Christ were because people would not accept the truth taught by the apostles who knew Jesus and had been taught and trained by him.

³**the Son:** That God has a Son is very hard for many people to believe. Most people don't really believe this. There are two main reasons for this:

- **First**, most people do not think that God is real. They are vague about God. They are uncertain what to believe about him. If God is difficult to imagine, then people cannot accept that God became a real man who appeared in history. Surely, they suppose, any real man cannot really be God.

- **Secondly**, if a man really was God who came to earth from heaven, then he must be the boss. He must be THE TOP RULER, the supreme ruler of the whole world. That means that everybody, absolutely everybody in the whole world, has got to obey him. Even rulers have to obey him. He must be the King of kings, or the Sovereign Lord of mankind. But this is just what most people don't want, especially the rulers of the nations.

The Son of God is a special title. It means that he is a very close friend of God, just as any son or daughter is normally very close to their parents. So Jesus knows all about God. It means that he is just like God. He represents God. God has given him God's own special powers and God's own special, supreme authority. The Son of God was sent into our world to tell us the truth about God. He also came to be our friend. Once we believe in him and become his friends we automatically become God's friends.

When Jesus was baptised God spoke from heaven. He announced: **This is my Son!** When Jesus was transfigured on a high mountain, with Moses and Elijah, God took Moses and Elijah back to heaven, leaving Jesus alone with three of his disciples. God's voice then spoke out of a cloud that settled on the mountain top. They heard God say: **This is my Son!**

⁴**His promise is that we may have eternal life:** Only God can give us life. He is our Creator. We give thanks for the gift of life to him alone. But on top of that God has made us an offer that we cannot afford to ignore. It is that if we believe in his Son, he will bless us with eternal life. Our lives will not end when we die. There is life after death. Only God has the power and ability to raise us back to life after we die. Only God has the energy to keep us alive forever.

Eternal life means three things:

We get the opportunity to go on living for longer than we can possibly imagine. We shall never lose our lives. This is called immortality. With Jesus Christ we become immortal. Once we have risen from the dead we shall never die again.

- **The great blessing will be what eternal life is like.** It is lovely! It is perfect. It is good, very, very good. We are going to enjoy life hugely, always. We are never going to get hurt or be unhappy, or have any of the ugly problems we have in this life. There won't be anyone suffering in heaven. We shall all be completely successful, utterly happy and perfectly at peace. We shall all get on well with one another, and with everybody.
- **The greatest blessing will be that we shall be able to meet God.** We shall know that he is real. It is going to be exceptionally exciting to know him and talk to him

and spend time with him. He will answer all our questions. He will encourage and inspire us. We shall enjoy his love, for he is the perfect Father. He will show us things that interest us, and many, many things that we shall like to do. He will always be available to give us good advice. We are going to enjoy his friendship more than that of any friend we have ever known. We are going to love him, and we are going to be utterly amazed when we see how much he loves us.

We shall be privileged and thrilled to worship him, and it shall be forever!

2.26-27 YOU CAN TELL WHAT'S TRUE OR FALSE

I wrote this to you about those who lead you into error and foolishness and sin. But you people have got the gift of the Holy Spirit that you received from God. The Holy Spirit lives in you. So, 'you don't need anyone to teach you anything. But you must just go on holding fast onto the Lord, because you have his Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches you about everything that you need to know. The Spirit shows you what is true, and never produces any lies. So, as he has taught you to believe, keep on living with the Lord.

'you don't need anyone to teach you: Be careful here to understand what John means. One of the clearest signs that someone has become a Christian is that he or she wants to learn more about Christianity. They all want to be taught about God, about Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about the Bible and truth, about how to live and how to face this difficult life. There is lots to learn, and the more we learn the more it helps us live God's way.

But John is not saying that we don't need this kind of teaching. Rather, he is talking to people, especially young people, who have become Christians. There are some people who want to get control of others, especially those who are young. They are teaching what is false, what is not true, what disagrees with the Bible. It is designed to get people interested and even excited. They are like a cunning person trying to sell you something that has got something wrong with it.

But if you are truly a Christian, you will have God's Holy Spirit in you. You will then be able to tell if someone is trying to fool you or trick you. You will be able to tell the difference between true Christianity and false religion that calls itself a better form of Christianity. You will be able to see the difference yourself. The important thing, says the apostle John, is to stick to the truth that you came to understand at the beginning, when you became a Christian. That is the way to keep your friendship with Jesus Christ and with God the Father.

Remember John's warning:

Do not change your faith.

Once you believe in Christ, the Son of God, do not give up your faith in him.

2.28-29 STAY FAITHFUL TO JESUS, AS OTHERS DO

So now, children, ¹you who are believers, hold fast onto Jesus. Keep it up, so that whenever he appears from heaven we may have boldness and complete confidence that we belong to God. Don't give up, so that when we have to face the Lord we may not be ashamed and confused in his glorious presence.

If you have come to see that Jesus is righteous, and kept God's commands, you then also know that everyone who does the same belongs to God. God has made him, or her, a Christian. Keep believing in Jesus, just as many other people do.

¹you who are believers, hold fast onto Jesus: The apostle John gives us two reasons why we must not give up our faith in Jesus, however difficult things become for us.

- **First, we are going to meet him.** That meeting is going to be the most important thing that has ever happened to us. We are going to appear before the King of heaven, the Ruler of the universe. When that happens we shall want to be glad that we were faithful to him. That way we can enjoy the experience of being brought into the presence of the Lord God. What we don't need when that day comes is to have terrible regrets, and confusion and shame, all because we failed to be faithful to him.
- **Secondly, all around us are other Christians.** We can see them living Christian lives. They don't give up their faith when problems happen to them. They stay true to Jesus, and do what God has commanded us to do. This means that there is no need to give up on God just because things go wrong for us, or because people don't like us.

Christianity is not going to die out because the world is in a mess. It is not going to die out just because most people don't want it. It is not going to die out even if people attack and criticise or mock it, or persecute believers. It won't die out, whatever happens, and whatever goes wrong, because Christianity belongs to God. And Christians belong to God, because Christ belongs to God.

CHAPTER 3

3.1-3 WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

Give some thought to how good the love is that the Father has poured out on us: We are called children of God, and that's exactly what we are! We are closely related to God, like children to their parents. He truly loves us and cares for us, and we trust him and love him too. That's why most people in the world don't understand us and don't want to know us. Their problem is that they did not get to know or understand God. They never loved him, which is why they won't love us.

Dear Christians, you must realise that in these times we live in, we ARE children of God. Also, ¹it has not yet been made clear what we are going to turn out to be like. We don't yet realise what we are going to become. ²But we do know that it is going to be made clear one day, and that then we are going to be like the Lord. We know that we shall see him as he is in his glory.

So, every Christian who has this good hope in him will keep himself innocent and keep his conscience clear. Anyone who does this makes himself, or herself, clean and pure, just as the Lord Jesus Christ is pure.

¹it has not yet been made clear what we are going to turn out to be: We know much more about how we should live now as Christians, than how we are going to live in heaven. This is what it is like to live by faith in God. What we know is that life is going to be wonderful in the end. We are going to be better people, and we are going to live in a better world, along with better people. We have confidence that God is going to sort everything out in the end.

Until then we concentrate on how we should live now, and we live like this by faith in God.

***We are to hope in the future,
but do our duty in the present time.***

²But we do know that it is going to be made clear: Although we do not know much about the future, we can learn more about how we are going to turn out in the end. The more we listen to God, the more we obey him, the more we love him, the more we shall learn about his plans for us. There are hints all over the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

The more we know about the future, the better we shall be able to cope with the present world and all its problems and struggles. The more clearly we can see what we should be, and how we are going to turn out in the end, the better quality of life we shall live now.

To help us understand what heaven is like the Bible concentrates on what Jesus was like on earth, and what he is like in heaven. Once we have a clearer idea of what he is like, we shall have a better idea of what we are going to be like. We are going to be like him, just as he was like God when he lived on earth.

3.4-6 JESUS SOLVES THE PROBLEM OF SIN

Every single person who is ¹guilty of sin is also ²guilty of breaking the law of God.

But what you now know is that the man Jesus was made known to us to solve this problem of sin. He was made known to us as the one to carry off our sins. He was able to do this because there is no sin in him.

Everyone who keeps up a proper friendship with Jesus does not go on sinning. The one who does go on sinning has not really come to see who Jesus is, nor has he truly got to know Jesus.

¹guilty of sin: Sin is the biggest problem in the world. Sin is what causes all the trouble and suffering that we have to live with. Some of it is our own fault. A lot of it is the fault of other people.

What is sin?

Sin is our failure to be what we should be, and to live the way we should live.

- Sin is our utter failure to treat others the way we should treat them.
- Sin is doing what we should not do. Sin is also NOT doing what we SHOULD do. Some sins are deliberate, others are thoughtless.
- Sin is what is wrong or bad or ugly or nasty. It applies to how we think or feel, and also to what we say or do.
- Sin is causing harm or hurt to others.
- Sin is breaking God's laws, either by ignoring them, or arguing against them, or rebelling against them.

*Sin means that people will do what they want to do
instead of what they should do.*

Some sins have such a grip on us that we cannot control or discipline ourselves, nor give up doing what is unacceptable to God.

To go on sinning means that we have failed in life.

The problem with sin is that there are always consequences. There are penalties. We shall be punished. Things will go wrong.

If we sin we shall end up regretting what we have done.

What we need for sin is forgiveness, God's forgiveness. God can make us clean, and can rescue us from our sin. He can wipe out our sins and cancel them. All we have to do is ask him for his mercy and pardon. If we ask him properly he will kindly help us.

*We were all born with sin,
but we must not also die with sin.*

²**guilty of breaking the law of God:** Sin is doing anything wrong or bad, anything harmful to others or nasty. If we do anything like that we will have broken God's law in some way, whether we knew it or not. God's whole law is to prevent us from doing such things, and to stop us doing them.

The law of God is the most important thing we have in life. It shows us what is **RIGHT** and what is **WRONG**. If we do what's right, we shall live successfully, no matter what problems we have to put up with for a while. If we do what's bad, we shall ruin our lives in the end.

The law of God is to be found in the Bible. The Old Testament teaches us what God's laws and rules and duties are, and the New Testament shows us how to understand them properly and how to make them work.

*The better we know our Bible
the more we shall do the right things in life.*

**THE WHOLE POINT OF THE LAW IS for us to have the right attitude in life,
to show us how to live decently and properly and well.
AND TO GET US TO BE GOD'S FRIENDS.**

3.7-10 GOD AND THE DEVIL, AND US

¹Little children, ²don't allow anyone to lead you away from the truth and into error and sin. The truth is that it is the person who lives the right way who is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous. He has shown us the right way to live. ³That is what righteousness is.

The person who sins, who goes on breaking God's rules and doing what is wrong, gets his attitude from ⁴the devil. The devil has always been stirring up sin since the beginning of history. This is the reason why ⁵the Son of God appeared, and why he was made known.

Everyone whose life has been completely changed by God does not behave in a sinful way. He does not live by breaking God's rules. This is because something of God's character and influence lives on in him. It is like a planted seed that will grow in his life. That influence or persuasion does not leave him. That is why he or she cannot go on sinning as before. It's because he has been born of God. God has influenced and encouraged him and that has changed him. God is like a father to him.

This is how one can tell who has been taught and influenced by God, and who is influenced and controlled by the devil. Everyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God. Nor is anyone who does not love his brother. And that brings us to another very important point about Christianity.

¹Little children: This is how the apostle John liked to speak to everyone who listened to him. John was a very old man, much older than the people he taught. But this was also the way Jesus used to speak to the people who listened to him. The Greek word “little-children” was used with love. It really meant “my dear friends.”

²don't allow anyone to lead you away from the truth: This is what the apostle John is worried about. People do think that Jesus was a wonderful man. They then make a hero out of him and worship him. But they also make up their own ideas about him. We do the same sort of thing: when we like someone we think of him as some sort of hero. We want to hear and believe only what we like about him. We don't want to hear anything about him that we don't like. When people hear about Jesus they like to invent stories and ideas about him. But the big problem is that **THESE IDEAS ARE NOT TRUE.**

The other problem is that THESE IDEAS ARE POPULAR. You always get preachers and teachers who want to be popular. Those who are popular make more money. But

all this does not help people with all their problems and needs, and their struggles and suffering. They need the help of **the real Jesus**. A Jesus they have invented or made up won't help them. The apostle John wants people to get to know **THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS, the Son of God**.

³**That is what righteousness is:** Anyone who truly believes in Jesus believes in righteousness. What is righteousness?

Righteousness, or doing what is right, means obeying God and keeping his laws.

- It means that we do what God wants us to do.
- We do our duty properly, whatever duty that may be.
- We live correctly, as we ought to live.
- We do what is right and fair to other people.
- We live lives that are pure and decent, lives of honesty and integrity.
- We keep our conscience clear.

Righteousness means that we live good lives. We do this with God's help. That is what Jesus, the real Jesus, has made possible. That is what he came from God to us for, and that is what he became a man for.

Jesus Christ came to make us better people.

Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life. He also shows us how to live a righteous, Christian life. He has made it possible for us to live genuine and good lives. A true believer in Jesus must be righteous. We must listen to Jesus and learn from the Bible how to live the right way, how to live God's way.

⁴**the devil:** Most people know that there is a devil, but they know very little about him. It is important to understand that the devil is real. The word "devil" in the Greek language means someone who spreads fake news. He is someone who accuses us of lying and who spreads lies about us. He keeps a list of all our sins, and is going to accuse us of them on Judgement Day, when we have to appear before God. He wants to stop us from going to heaven, and get us sent to hell.

The devil is the leader of all the demons who cause so much trouble in many people's lives. Behind all the evil and suffering in the world is the influence of the devil. He turns people away from God. He gets them to have doubts about God, and to find fault with God and criticise him. He spends his time causing trouble and ill-feeling between people. He turns people against those who love and obey God.

He uses anger to get people to sin. He uses people to do his dirty work for him. One of his cunning tricks is to try to ambush us into doing what is bad. He makes things happen so unexpectedly and so quickly that we did not think about it, nor even mean to do it. Then he has us trapped, and we feel guilty. We are sorry that we did it.

But the devil will then accuse us of disobeying God.

In the Greek language, in the Bible, people who tell nasty stories about others are called “children of the devil.”

⁵**the Son of God:** Jesus Christ has the title of “The Son of God.” This title means a number of things. It means that he is a hero and famous. That is how unbelievers think of him. But he is much more than that. To the Israelites and Jews he was the Messiah that they believed in. But the title “The Son of God” means that he is very close to God, his Father. It also means that he was perfectly obedient to God while he lived on earth.

Jesus Christ came to represent God.

That means that he could show us what God is like, because he is just like God. Because of this he is able to show us how to get in contact with God.

Once we believe in Jesus we are able to believe in God the way we should. For many people God is someone vague. They are not sure if he is real. But Jesus was real, very real. That is how we know that God is also very real.

One of the amazing things in the life of Jesus was the way demons reacted to him. They all knew that he was the Son of God. They had no hesitation in recognising him, and were extremely afraid of him. They knew that he came from God, and they always obeyed him.

The apostle John uses the title “The Son of God” more than any other writer in the Bible. This was because most people found it difficult to believe that Jesus Christ was actually God. They found it easier to think of him as a great prophet. John wanted them to learn and understand that Jesus was much more than just another great prophet. He came from God, and he was God. **This is what John wants us to believe.**

3.11-15 WE MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER

You see, this is the command that you heard and understood right from the beginning: It is that ¹we must love one another.

We must not be like ²Cain. Cain was controlled by the devil. So he murdered his brother without any mercy. And for what reason did he murder him

like that? It was just because his attitude and behaviour was bad, but his brother's attitude was what it should be: his brother obeyed God and did what was right.

Don't be amazed or shocked, brothers, and don't even be worried if the whole world hates you.

We have the privilege of knowing that we are going to leave this life to go to a much better one. We do not live with the fear of death and with no hope. We have a wonderful, full life to look forward to. We have this blessing because ³we love our brothers. We love those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The person who does not love his brother remains in danger of punishment and death.

Everyone who dislikes or hates his brother wrongfully, in a way that is unfair or undeserved, is actually just like a murderer to God. And you surely must realise that no murderer is going to have eternal life. A murderer does not live with the hope of going to heaven.

¹we must love one another: It is very important for Christians to understand what love is. Love begins with God.

God is love.

God loves us. This warms our soul or heart. We like to be loved.

Then God wants us to love others. Love means to have good-will towards other people. It is especially important that Christians love other Christians. We first learn to love God. Then we learn how to love other Christians. Then we learn to love all sorts of people.

Of course, this is not easy.

- Love is to want **God**.
- Love is to want something **good**.
- Love wants the truth, and what's **right**.
- Love means obeying God without arguing or complaining.
- Love means being grateful to God for all his goodness to us.
- Love is to want what is **good for others**.

- Love is being willing to go out of our way for someone, and be willing to struggle or even suffer for the good of people.
- Love means liking someone, or trying to like someone. It is to regard someone as important, and to have respect for him or her.
- Loving people means enjoying them. A big sign of love is when one can enjoy a meal with others. In the church this is called communion.
- Love is whatever good we can do to one another. People know whether we are kind or pleasant or helpful - or not.

The important thing about love is that it is **not just talk**. Love does not just pretend to love. Love is not just showing love for one's own benefit.

***What God is looking for is that we become good people,
good people who do good to others.***

What God wants is that we are blameless and harmless in this corrupt and violent world. God teaches us how to treat others with respect and also how to care about them. To those who believe in Christ Jesus God gives his Spirit to help us learn how to live among all sorts of people honestly and with integrity, so that we become reliable and faithful and respected.

Something very important to God is that we have patience with people, because he is very patient with all of us.

All this is what is meant by **LOVE**.

***We have properly understood the gospel
when we have love in our hearts for others.***

***We know we have found God
when our belief in him produces in us a good attitude toward others.***

²**Cain**: Cain [kayn] was the first person to be born in the world. His parents were Adam and Eve, the first people in the world. Cain's younger brother's name was Abel [aybl] . There were two problems: first, Cain was a godless young man. Secondly, he disliked his younger brother because he was godly. When they both worshiped God, God showed them that he was pleased with Abel, and that he was displeased with Cain. Cain therefore became bitter. He resented and hated his brother. Cain's bitterness and anger resulted in his committing a serious sin: he killed his brother Abel.

This is meant to show us a big lesson about life:

- **Adam and Eve** show us that right from the beginning people have always disobeyed God. This leads to all the problems and troubles and suffering that we have.
- **Cain and Abel** also show us that right from the beginning godless people have hated godly people. This is one of the main reasons why it is hard to become a true Christian.

³we love our brothers: To love those who believe in Jesus can sometimes be very hard. This is because so often people who call themselves Christians behave so badly. This not only puts unbelievers off Christ and God, but it also stirs up anger and frustration in Christians.

So many Christians ignore this little statement by John, that

we must love our brothers.

Instead they just love those they like. But this is what unbelievers also do.

What the apostle John says here is tremendously important. Christians should be like parents. Parents love their children even if they are naughty. When their children grow up parents still love them even if the children disagree with their parents. Christians should be like God. God kept on loving his people even though they failed to keep his commands. God kept on loving them even when he punished them. The greatest challenge Christians have is to love other Christians fairly. We are to treat all Christians well, even if they do not agree with us or we do not agree with them.

Unfortunately not all Christians do this. So John, who was very close to Jesus, warns us that if we don't love Christians properly we can expect to be punished by God the same way that unbelievers will be.

3.16-18 WHAT TRUE LOVE IS

We Christians have learnt what love is. We have got to know and understand love from Jesus Christ. This is because he gave up his happiness and buried his feelings for our sake. He gave up his life on earth for us. So we also ought to do our duty by putting aside our own interests for the good of other Christians.

For example, someone is comfortably off in this world and then comes across his brother or sister who has got a need. If he then has no pity or care for that unfortunate person, how can the love of God be living in him? It can't be!

My dear young friends, our love must not just be empty promises or excuses, or just nice talk. What we must do is make the effort to be helpful and useful. That is genuine love! ¹That's what true love is.

¹That's what true love is: When we read our Bible we find that John writes more about love than Matthew, Mark and Luke do. John is the one who makes sure that we understand that the Lord wants us to love one another. In the book of Acts love is not mentioned at all. Acts concentrates on the struggle to take the gospel not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles, the rest of the world. But John and Paul are the two apostles who urge us to love as Christians.

3.19-24 LOVE PLEASES GOD

By loving other Christians we shall know for sure that we are true Christians. By loving one another we can be confident when we get into the presence of God.

Even if we do feel guilty we know that what God thinks is more important than how we feel. God knows everything. He knows whether we have love in our heart.

Dear friends, if we have love, and don't feel guilty or bad about how we have treated other Christians, we can then have complete confidence before God. We shall feel good and unafraid, without any embarrassment.

Not only that, but we have the privilege that whatever we ask God for, we can get. The reason we have this privilege is because we obey God's commandments. By doing this we please God.

The whole point of God's commandment is that we should believe in the authority of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and that we should love one another. That's the command that God gave us.

¹The person who carefully keeps God's commandments will have a good relationship with God, and God will have a good relationship with him or her. The way we know for sure that God remains with us, and does not leave us, is this: We know it by ²the Spirit that he gave us.

¹The person who carefully keeps God's commandments: God's commandments are very important for us. They are most important! They are especially important for two reasons:

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

First, they show us how to have a good friendship with God.

Secondly, they show us how to treat other people well.

These are the two most important things in our lives: our friendship with God, and how we get on with others. What sin has done to us is to mess up both these relationships. We spoil our relationship with God and our relationships with people. God's commands are to get these relationships right. **A good relationship is a friendly one.**

The thing to concentrate on is **carefulness**. We must take care to know what God has told us to do, and what he has told us not to do. We must then take care to do it, and to live like that. As we obey God's laws we shall find ourselves getting closer to God, and doing more good to people. The secret is carefulness, as when we write an exam, or train for an important game.

2The Spirit that he gave us: When we speak about our spirit we use a small "s." When we speak about God's Spirit we use a capital "S." In Greek they always use a small 's' whether it is God's Spirit or our spirit. They never use a capital 'S.' So we do not know in the Greek whether this is the spirit God gave us or whether it is the Spirit God gave us. However, when we read the whole Bible we do get the idea that it is God's Spirit, because it is a special gift from God to those who believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Otherwise, every person has a spirit.

When we think about any of God's commandments we should ask the question: Why did God tell us to do this? What is **the purpose** of the commandment? Every commandment has **a spirit** and a reason, a purpose and a goal. It is important for us to understand what God wants us to do. We don't just obey an order. We do it for a reason and a purpose. That is what is meant by the spirit of the commandment. Its purpose is to do some good. It is to achieve something worthwhile for others. God's commandments are not just a lot of rules that we have to stick to. They are the way God makes us better people. That is what the spirit of all the commandments is for. To get this right, we have to study God's commands carefully and thoughtfully. We need to pray about them, and ask God for guidance and help.

The other important thing about obeying God's commands is our spirit. Our spirit is our attitude. It is the way we think and feel. It is what we decide to be or to do. It is what develops our character. It is our heart and soul. It is our spirit that believes in God, that listens to God's truth, and that wants to obey the Lord. It is our spirit that controls our life. When God gives us his Spirit it is to help and support our spirit to do what is right and good. Without God's Spirit to guide and encourage us we could never properly obey God's commands. God's Spirit is a gift that gets our spirit to be good, and gets our life right.

God has told us to ask him for his Spirit. He gives his Spirit to all those who want it. That's how God's Spirit comes to live in us. God's Spirit and our spirit become a team. God's Spirit is our coach and we are the players. Together we do what God wants. Together we do what's right. Together we can do a lot of good. That's why our friendship with God is so important. To have a good friendship with God we must carefully obey his commandments. Then his Spirit will help our spirit to make it possible for us to live well and to do a lot of good.

CHAPTER 4

In those days the apostle John saw what was going wrong in the Christian church. While he and the other apostles who knew Jesus were teaching the truth about him, other teachers were not. These teachers called themselves prophets, but what they taught was NOT the truth about Jesus. They invented some ideas about him. What they said was false; it was fake news about Jesus Christ.

There were two kinds of lies or false news being spread about Jesus.

(1) One false teaching was that since he came from heaven, he could not possibly be a real man, a proper human being. In that case, if he was just like a super-angel, he could not really have suffered the way we do. But John had known Jesus well, and been his friend. John knew that Jesus was a genuine human being. He was as real a man as John and the other disciples were. Jesus could get tired and weak and sad. He even cried. He also got hungry and ate ordinary food. He needed to sleep, he could sweat, and he walked long distances with crowds of people. He felt the need to pray often. No angels or spirits ever did these things.

Jesus could also get frustrated and even worried. He sometimes faced real danger, and he could feel pain. When he was stabbed and beaten blood poured from his body. He could even die, and was put to death by the Roman authorities at Jerusalem in the Middle East.

His mother was a real woman who lived in Nazareth, Galilee. She gave birth to him in Bethlehem, Judaea. Nazareth and Bethlehem both still exist in our modern world.

Even our dating system, like the year 2000, is based on the fact that he was born 2,000 years ago.

(2) The other false teaching was that if Jesus was a real man he could not have come from heaven. And, of course, if he did not come from heaven then we are free to criticise him and disagree with him. John knew that it is absolutely vital that we take seriously

whatever Jesus told us and taught us. John had discovered that Jesus was perfect, and that he never made any mistakes. Jesus' teaching can get us to heaven.

- **The signs that he came from heaven were such things as his amazing** and astonishing miracles. No one in history has ever performed so many miracles. He could even completely control the weather and the fish in the sea. He could feed thousands of people with one small basket of food. He could walk across a stormy lake in the dark. He could heal any sick people and even bring the dead back to life. He could chase away demons as no one else ever could. On top of that the demons recognised him and knew that he had come from God.
- **He fulfilled all the predictions in the Old Testament** that said that God would come to visit his people.
- **He never made a mistake.**
- **No one could ever argue with him.** He always won every argument. He even knew what people were thinking.
- **Although he was born of a human mother,** he had no human father. His father was God in heaven, as the Bible said it would be hundreds of years before he came.
- **His teaching was more brilliant than anyone's has ever been in history.** Yet he was only a young man in his thirties, and not an old man like all the other great teachers of the world.
- **His kindness and goodness completely and wonderfully changed the lives of many,** many people. Some changes, like that of the Apostle Paul, were amazing. There have been lots and lots and lots of them in history.
- **Jesus also predicted the future perfectly.** What he said would happen to the Jews after he was gone, did happen just as he prophesied it would. No one in his day could imagine the temple being totally and completely destroyed - and certainly not in their life-time, forty years later.
- **When they put him to death he came back to life on the third day.** He openly predicted that it would be on the third day so that everyone knew he had said it. Of course nobody believed him – nobody at all! Not even his friends. But that is indeed what happened.
- **Jesus had even claimed that he existed before Abraham,** who had lived about 2,000 years before him. What sort of man is that? There is something about him that is like God!

The truth is that Jesus was a real man, who came from God, and spoke the truth. People who knew him loved him and worshiped him the way they loved and worshiped God.

4:1-3 CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST

Dear friends, don't just believe everyone who claims to speak from God. What you need to do is to test whether he does genuinely speak from God. The problem is that lots of false prophets have sprung up all over the place, to attract people to their own ideas.

This is how you can know whether someone who calls himself a prophet is genuinely from God. Every religious person who clearly and openly says that ¹Jesus Christ was a real man has truly come from God. He speaks with God's authority.

It also follows that every religious leader who does NOT clearly and openly say that Jesus is from God, does not speak from God. This is the sign of ²the antichrist, the enemy of Christ. You learnt that there is an antichrist coming. In fact, it is quite clear that he is already in the world.

¹Jesus Christ was a real man: When some people heard the preaching about Jesus Christ, they liked the idea of a perfect man who could save the world. The only problem was that they thought that this was too good to be true. So they turned the good news about Jesus into just a nice story that had been made up. To them Jesus was not real, but he was a good idea. He was something like a fairy tale, and people could believe what they wanted to believe if it made them feel good.

But Jesus was real enough. He was born in Bethlehem, and his parents were descended from King David. Caesar Augustus was the Roman ruler at the time, and Herod the Great was the king of the Jews. Herod tried to kill the baby Jesus because he was likely to be the Jewish Messiah. But when he could not find little Jesus he put to death all the baby boys under the age of two in the area of Bethlehem. Those mothers and fathers never forgot that tragedy. It was all terribly real. It was one of the many great disasters in Jewish history.

On top of that John had spent three years with Jesus, being trained by him. John knew that Jesus was NOT just a story that they had made up.

²the antichrist, the enemy of Christ: The Greek word "Christ" is the same as the Hebrew word "Messiah." It means the person that God sent to save his people and be their king,

their super-king. God chose him because of his outstanding character. So in a way Christ means His Majesty the Messiah. The word Christ came to be used as a kind of surname for Jesus.

Any king will have enemies. In the case of Jesus Christ the enemy is called the antichrist. He is usually known as the devil. He wants to destroy Christianity, which is the belief in Christ. The way he works is to argue with the truth. He uses false or fake ‘teachers’ or ‘prophets’ to twist the truth and put lies and falsehood in its place. The main method he uses is to make up stories about Jesus that are not true. Once people believe things about Jesus that are not true, they will not be able to find God. So the big war going on in life between Christ and antichrist is the battle between the Truth and lies.

4:4-6 CHRISTIANS LISTEN TO GOD

You people, little children, are from God. ¹So you have defeated them. This is because God, who is in you, is more powerful and splendid than the devil who is busy in the world.

Those false teachers are from the world. ²The world does not believe in God, nor do the people of the world want God. Therefore they say things that come from the world. So people in the world like to listen to them. They don’t say what God tells them to say.

But we are from God. The person who knows God listens to us. But the person who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know the difference between someone who wants what is true and someone who wants what is wrong. People who have the right spirit listen to us, and people with a godless spirit won’t.

¹So you have defeated them: This tells us about the great struggle or war going on in the world, and in our lives. The battle is between God and the devil, truth and lies, right and wrong, good and bad. We are caught up in this, whether we want to be or not. What God guarantees us is that if we are faithful to him we are going to be on the winning side. We are going to defeat those who fight against God. This is why God sent Jesus into our lives. It was to lead us to victory. The world is going to end with the people of God conquering all that is nasty and wicked. We are going to win with a splendid triumph over God’s enemies and over those who teach false ideas about the Lord.

The victory is also going to be a personal one. Thanks to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of God we are going to win our struggles against temptation and weakness, against sin and foolishness, and even against death and suffering. We are going to

triumph over all our trials and heartaches. We are going to win gold medals in heaven. We shall be crowned with a victory that shall be forever. All this is thanks to God's kindness or grace.

On top of all this John has something special and encouraging to say. He calls us "little children." This means that he knows we cannot argue with clever and popular false teachers. But that does not matter, because God is with us. When God supports us not even the greatest or most powerful people can confuse us or intimidate us. Once we have God in us, however small we are, we know what is true and what is not, what is right and what is wrong. We not only know the truth - we love it! No one can argue or beat the truth out of us, however clever or powerful or nasty they may be. This is thanks to God in us, even if we are little and lonely or struggling.

²The world: This is an important word in the Bible. It means most of the people in the world. They do not really believe in God. If they do get interested in God it is only for selfish reasons. They don't want to listen to him. They just want to see what they can get out of him.

Actually people are against the true God. That is why they do not like Christians. What they like is the things of this world, and this life, not the things of God or righteousness. The world is godless. False teachers are popular because they say what people want to hear. But they are false because they do not tell us what God wants us to know.

4:7-11 WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Dear friends, we should love one another because love is of God. So everyone who does love others has been given spiritual life by God. Therefore the person who loves other Christians is someone who has come to know God.

The person who does not love others does not know God. He does not realise that GOD IS LOVE. That means that God not only loves us, but he likes us to have love. God wants us to love others as well as love him.

The way the love of God was made clear to us was this: It is that God sent what is ¹his only Son into our world and into our lives. He did this so that we might enjoy a better life, a blessed and endless life, in God's kingdom.

What is love, really? It's not that we loved God. No, it's that God loved us! Out of love ²he sent his Son to make up for our sins. His Son is a sacrifice for sin, a special way of restoring peace between God and us.

My dear friends, if God loved us so much then surely we ought to love one another. If God loves all Christians then shouldn't we also love all Christians?

¹his only Son: This is what makes Christianity so special and so different from other religions: God has a Son who is just like him. The Greek word “only” was used of families that had only one child. God sent his Son from heaven to the world. Heaven is a beautiful and happy place. The world is where we struggle and have lots of unhappiness.

The Greek word for “sent” is a word we all know well. It is the word for “apostle.” An apostle is someone who is sent somewhere with a message. When God sends someone to do something he sends him with his authority. God also sends him with his blessing. We know that God wanted Jesus to join us down here, and that Jesus was completely willing to do what his Father wanted.

It was God's love for us that made him want to help and save us. It was also the love of Jesus that made him willing to come for our sake. It was a great sacrifice for him to do it for us. And we have benefitted greatly from his kindness. He has made life well worth living for us, and has made it possible for us to enjoy life forever.

This is how we know that God loves us. This is how we can appreciate how much God loves us. Jesus saves us from a hard life of suffering and unhappiness, which ends in death. He takes us to a beautiful life of glory and joy that never ends. That's what God wants for us.

²he sent his Son to make up for our sins: John uses a special Greek word for “to-make-up-for-our-sins.” It means a way to sort out an argument and bring peace between two people. It's the way someone says sorry when he has hurt someone else. It is like an apology. But it is not an apology just with words. This is because our sins against God have made him angry. They have upset him. He is going to punish those who have sinned.

So this special apology is by way of A **SACRIFICE**. Jesus, by means of his suffering, apologised to God for our sins. Jesus' suffering took away God's anger. This is something we can understand. We may get annoyed with someone for saying something or doing something we don't like. But when we hear that he or she has had an accident and is in hospital, we forget our anger and go and pay him a visit to cheer him up. You can't be angry with someone who is suffering. You can't be angry with someone who is sorry for having done something wrong. When someone is in pain, and sorry, it is a good time to forgive his faults and form a new friendship.

When God saw Jesus suffering, his heart lost its anger over our stupid and ugly sins. Jesus, by his sacrifice, made peace with God for our sakes. Jesus' death made us friends with God instead of our being enemies of God because of our sins. The reason why God now loves us is because Jesus loved us. The wonderful thing about God is that he sent Jesus to love us.

The apostle John points out that we must not think that religion is how much we love God. Because we have sinned we can never love God properly or enough. What makes us Christians is that we come to appreciate how much God loves us. His love puts everything right. His love brings us peace and joy. His love for us produces love in us for him. Jesus came to get that right. He came into our world and he comes into our lives. But it was his sacrifice that did the trick! When he suffered and died for us he achieved God's purpose. God wants us to be his friends, not his enemies.

4:12-16 KEEP UP YOUR LOVE

Of course, no one has ever seen God. But if we love one another God is with us. He continues to live in us, and his love has been fully developed in us. We don't need anything more.

The way we know that we are living with God and that he is living with us is because he has given us his Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit helps us to love God and love one another.

On top of this, we have seen and reported what God the Father has done. He has sent his Son who is ¹the Saviour of the world. He came to rescue all of us.

Whoever admits that Jesus is the Son of God is God's friend. Anyone who is convinced of this has God in his life. Whoever stands up for Jesus belongs to God.

I promise you that we apostles have been able to get to know the love that God has for us. We have become utterly convinced of it. GOD IS LOVE! So whoever keeps up their love for others keeps up their love for God, and God keeps up his love for them.

¹the Saviour of the world: What does Saviour of the world actually mean? What does Jesus rescue us from?

This world is going to come to an end. Our lives are going to come to an end one day.

All of us are going to die at some time. When the world comes to an end everything is going to stop. Jesus Christ came to save us from this. He saves us from death. He rescues us from our helplessness, from our weaknesses, our mistakes, our failures, from all our regrets and fears. He turns life into something good and promising and permanent for us. He gets us to heaven.

Everybody needs him. That's why everybody in the world should love him. And that's why we should all love all those who do love him. We should even love others in order to encourage them to love him.

4:17-21 LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

In this letter the apostle John is teaching us that where people do not believe in the truth, they also end up not loving all God's people. They love only those who agree with them. That, of course, is also what unbelievers do: they like only those who agree with them, and do not love those who disagree with them.

What we need is that we love God and God loves us. And God loves us when we love one another. And our love for God is genuine when we love one another. When our friendship with God is genuine and good then we can face ¹the Day of Judgement. We can face it with confidence. We can feel completely safe and free and happy. We have this great advantage because we are like Jesus. We have learnt from him to love people the way he did.

If one lives with love, one doesn't have anything to fear from God's judgement. If one keeps the law of love, and loves properly and genuinely, one gets rid of one's fear of God and judgement. What brings on fear is the fear of punishment. So if someone is frightened about meeting God it means that he does not love the way he should.

The reason why we love is because it was God who first loved us.

If anyone makes the claim: "I love God," and then hates his brother believer, he's a liar! He is faithless and false. The one who won't love his brother or sister, whom he has seen, cannot possibly love God whom he has not seen.

This then is the commandment we have from God. It is given in order that the one who loves God should also love his brother.

'the Day of Judgement: When the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the world he is going to judge the whole world. He is going to judge all of us, every single one.

Judgement means that God is going to separate the righteous from the wicked. He shall separate the good from the bad. He is going to judge between what is right and what is wrong. He is going to expose all our secrets, whether good or bad. He is going to reveal what we did that was just or fair to others, and what was unfair to people.

Nobody is going to be able to hide anything, or bluff God in any way. No one can argue with God. No one can lie to God. God knows even what we were thinking, and why we did what we did, or said what we said. God forgets nothing; God misses nothing. What God decides is going to be final and eternal. It is going to be an awesome experience for everyone, just as dying is.

Judgement Day will be all about how we have behaved and how we have treated other people. An important part of this judgement will be how Christians have treated other Christians. Here we have to be very careful that we show other Christians true love.

But now the apostle John is telling us that there is a way to be able to face Judgement Day without any problem. If we learn from Jesus how to love people, and how to treat them well, we are not going to be embarrassed or condemned on the Day of Judgement. If we love God, and know that God loves us, we shall have nothing to worry about on Judgement Day. We shall be able to face the Lord with confidence and joy. He is not going to be picking on all our faults or looking for all our mistakes or showing up all our failures. He is going to be examining whether we loved God and loved others. If we did, the Lord is going to accept us. If we did it well God is going to be proud of us. He is going to reward us.

If God is pleased with us we have nothing to fear, whether from death or judgement. If God invites us, and welcomes us, into heaven we shall celebrate with great excitement and joy.

All that God asks is that we learn from Jesus how to love God and people. That is what God's laws are all about.

CHAPTER 5

5:1-5 WHAT THE LOVE OF GOD IS ABOUT

Everyone who believes that ¹Jesus is ²Christ, the Messiah, has been born of God. Everyone ³who loves God, who produced Jesus, shall of course love Jesus who was ⁴produced by God.

The way we know that we really do love ⁵God's children is this: Every time we keep God's laws out of love for him, we automatically love God's people. All God's laws and rules are designed to train us to love people.

That is what the love of God is about. The love of God is that we keep God's rules and laws. God's laws and commands are not difficult to obey. God is not a strict and hard boss.

No, rather, whatever has been produced by God achieves victory over the world. We can be sure of that and rely on it. So our faith and faithfulness is the thing that overcomes and conquers the problems that people produce. Obeying and trusting God is the way to succeed and win in this life.

Who is the person who wins, who beats the world and its troubles, and overcomes all the odds? It is only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

¹Jesus: In those days lots of boys were called Jesus. Jesus, in Greek, was the same name as Joshua in Hebrew. Both names meant “The Lord Saves.”

His mother's name was Mary. She was an exceptionally godly woman. His step-father's name was Joseph, a carpenter and a very good man. Jesus had five step-brothers and at least three step-sisters. They were all Joseph and Mary's children.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem near the Dead Sea, and grew up in Nazareth not far from the Sea of Galilee. He began his work for God when he was about 30 years old. That was the age a man could start to be a priest. He served God as a travelling preacher and teacher.

After three years of this ministry he was wrongfully arrested by the Jewish leaders, and unjustly and cruelly put to death by the Roman governor at Jerusalem.

All this is history. It happened. It was real.

²**Christ**: The word “Christ” is rather like a title. So Jesus is sometimes called Christ Jesus as well as Jesus Christ. The Greek word ‘Christ’ is the same word as the Hebrew word ‘Messiah.’ To us it is something like a captain of a team, or a chief or president, or the boss, or a professor or a general. It means someone who is appointed to a very special function and duty. It means he is a leader and director.

The Greek word Christ means appointed or anointed by God. This anointing was used for installing a priest or a king into their office. The anointing was done with holy ointment or oil that was poured, like incense or a rare perfume, onto his head. This was a sign, or symbol, that God would give him the Holy Spirit in order to do his work for God and for people.

In the case of Christ, he was so filled with God’s Spirit that he could do amazing miracles. He performed more miracles than anybody else in history. The miracles he liked to do most were to help people. The greatest miracle he performed was to rise from the dead on the third day, exactly as he had predicted.

For Jesus the title of Christ meant two important things:

- He was the Messiah of the Jews who were God’s people,
- and he was the Saviour and Lord of all people in the world who became Christians.

³**who loves God**: What does it mean to love God?

- **To love God is to put God first in your life.**
- **To love God is to obey God, and trust him to look after you.**
- **To love God means to listen to him, to please him and to honour him.**
- **To love God is to form a friendship with him and always be faithful and loyal to him.**
- **To love God is to want to do what he wants us to do.**

To love God is to be proud of God.

⁴**produced by God**: The most important thing about our Christianity is that it is produced by God. We become Christians when God does a work in our hearts.

God does something in our lives that gets us interested in him.

God does something in our mind that gets us to believe in him and understand him as someone real.

God does something in our soul that convinces us that God is good, lovely and honourable.

God's work in us is that we begin to realise;

- what is most important in the whole world,
- and what's best for me,
- and what everybody needs.

We become Christians when God himself inspires us to believe in him and love him.

When God's Spirit comes into our lives we become his family, his children, and his friends. When God changes our lives we become someone new, someone better.

It is actually God who makes us true Christians, and gets us ready to go to heaven.

⁵**God's children:** God's children, whom he loves, are those believers who have God's Spirit. They are the people in whom God has worked. He has produced them. They are people who are proud of God, and the way they live and behave shows it.

5:6 WATER, BLOOD AND SPIRIT

Now we come to a part of John's letter that is rather hard for ordinary people to understand.

How does God get us to be successful in life? What is his way for us to triumph over all our problems and over all people who cause us trouble and suffering? How do we overcome the difficulties that are in the world?

The starting point for success in life is to understand what causes all our problems, and what causes people to behave so badly. It is sin. Human beings have turned away from God and disobeyed him. This is what has caused all the troubles we all have in life.

In that case the important point is to know what the solution is to such a problem. The problem of sin is one that people and nations cannot solve. Even history has not come up with the answer anywhere in the world. Many people have produced lots of guesses and all sorts of man-made ideas, for ordinary people to believe in.

Only one man in the history of the world has risen from the dead and goes on living forever.

He is the only one with the answer.

He taught his apostles the answer to the problem of sin and death, and judgement and hell.

So now the apostle John uses three words to get us looking for the answer to sin. When sin is solved the other big problems shall also get solved. So will our search for success and victory in life. The first two words are, “water and blood,” and the third word is “spirit.” Here they have a special meaning:

- Water is the sign of washing and being cleaned. It means that our sins are washed away. We are left with a clear conscience.

Water is vital for life. Without water we die.

- Blood is the sign of purity and honour. We use the word blood to speak about an animal like a horse or a dog that belongs to a good breed. We also use the word blood for someone born into a royal family or a famous family. So blood means that we become better people. We become people who are important to God, and people who are proud of God.

Blood is vital for life. Without blood we die.

- Spirit is what happens deep down in our feelings. Spirit is what makes us what we are, each one of us. Spirit is what shapes our lives, our characters and our beliefs. When God does this in us he does it by means of his Holy Spirit. When his Spirit works on our soul or spirit he and we become friends. Becoming God’s good friend is what loving God is about. God’s friendship has a deep and great influence on our lives, for good.

Spirit is vital for life. Without spirit we die.

Jesus Christ is the one who came from heaven to earth to help us. He helps us ¹by means of water and blood. He does not wash us just with water, but he purifies us with water and by his blood. Then the Spirit tells ²our conscience that we are clean. We know that it is true because the Spirit is ³the truth.

¹**by means of water and blood:** What we need in order to succeed in life and enjoy life is to get rid of the sin in us. This is what Jesus Christ came into our world for. This is what he comes into our lives for.

Water and blood are signs or symbols of what Christ does in us. Water is the Bible’s way of saying that he makes us clean. Blood is the Bible’s way of saying that Jesus,

who is perfectly good, comes to live in us. As blood keeps us alive, so Jesus gives us a better life, a life that shall last forever.

²**our conscience**: Our conscience is tremendously important. Our conscience is the way we can live at peace with ourselves and at peace with others. A good conscience is a vital part of our character.

³**the truth**: After God, truth is the next most important thing in life. Truth comes from God. God is true. He is someone all of us can rely on. You can trust God fully and absolutely. God is genuine and authentic. He is real. He is honest. Whatever he says is correct.

Unfortunately this world is completely different. It is full of lies. Every day people tell lots of lies. Very few people are totally and truly honest. One of the greatest achievements in life is to become genuinely honest and truthful, a person of real integrity. To be the kind of person who can be fully relied on and completely trusted is a marvellous achievement for anyone.

The reason why people tell lies is because they do what is wrong. Lies are a cover-up for bad ideas or for doing what we should not do. To begin with we may not be sure whether someone is lying, so he may get away with it for a while. But later on lies have a way of being uncovered and discovered. People who tell lies end up being caught out in the end. People who are honest do what is right. Because they have done what is right they are willing, and even keen, to tell the truth. If we do what is right we never have anything to hide or be ashamed of. We don't have to be afraid of anyone finding out the truth.

We are all going to be judged by God. He will show us whether we and others have been truthful or not. No one who tells lies will be allowed into heaven. In heaven everyone will be truthful and honest, all the time, with everyone else. Wow! That will be lovely!

Jesus is the only person who has lived his whole life with perfect integrity. The way for us to find and get integrity is to open our heart to the Lord. He will live in us. Once we decide to make him our boss, and listen to him and do as he says, he will train us to be honest. His Spirit will help us learn how to become reliable and trustworthy. He will teach us to love truth and train us to live with integrity. Integrity, being honest and reliable, is very rare. It is a standard few people live up to. But it is an important part of being a Christian. Integrity is an important way of how we bring respect to Jesus Christ. Integrity is what we need if we are to encourage others to believe in Jesus. Integrity is vital if we are to love others. One cannot truly love people if one is dishonest and unreliable.

5:7-12 GOD'S WITNESS ABOUT HIS SON

Now John explains to us how law works. The law, and justice, depends on witnesses. Witnesses are people who have seen or heard something that will make it possible for us to get to know the truth about whatever happened.

We know that this is the truth because there are three signs as witnesses that prove it.

There's the Spirit and the water and the blood. They all say exactly the same thing. All three are about making us better people, clean and pure and good.

We accept the report of people about what they have seen or heard. Well, then we need to realise that what God says is much more important. It has greater authority because this is the witness of God. It is what he has informed us about his Son. According to God it is his Son who can get us right.

The person who believes in the Son of God has accepted God's word. The person who does not believe God makes him out to be false and unreliable. That's because he has not believed in the witness that God has given us concerning his Son.

The witness that God has given us is this: It is that God gave us eternal life, life that will last forever. And this gift of living eternally is by means of God's Son.

¹Whoever has the Son of God in his heart has true life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹Whoever has the Son of God in his heart: This is how one becomes a Christian. This is how one finds God and becomes his friend. The secret is to open one's heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian is someone who has invited Jesus into his heart and his life. A friend of God is someone who has Jesus and God in his or her heart and soul.

Jesus will come into our heart if we ask him. Ask him honestly. Ask him to take over your life, and trust him. Ask him to be your friend, your best friend. Tell him you will be his friend, a good and faithful one. You must just open up your heart and

life to him. Do it without wasting time. Do it without doubting, without hesitating, without excuses and half-heartedness.

5:13-15 WE CAN CONFIDENTLY RELY ON GOD'S SON

I have written all this to you so that you may know that you have permanent life, that is, eternal life. You will live forever! This is for those people who believe in the Son of God, and rely on him. They believe in his authority and rely on his power. His authority and his power come from God.

So we have the utmost ¹confidence in him. Our confidence in him is such that ²we can ask him for anything. He listens to us, whatever we ask, ³as long as it fits in with his will.

So we know that he listens to us, whatever we ask. Because of that we know for sure that we have whatever we asked him for.

¹confidence in him: Confidence in Jesus Christ is the basic idea of what Christianity is. That is what faith in Jesus is, or believing in Jesus, or trusting Jesus. It means to start a friendship with him that begins with complete confidence in him, and develops into deep pride in him and true love for him. A deep friendship with God and his Son is the most honourable kind of life that we can live. Confidence in the Lord enables us to do great things in life.

²we can ask him for anything: Here is a problem that is a puzzle for many Christians. Can we really just ask God for anything and get it? The answer is yes and no. But it is really, Yes!

- **YES, we can.** Asking God for what we need is a sign of faith in him. Getting from God what we need shows that he really is our friend and that he has accepted our friendship. Don't give up asking God for what you need. Learn from God how to ask him for what you want. After the Bible, answered prayer is the most important part of our friendship with God. We learn from it how kind God is, and become confident of how reliable he is.

The key to answered prayer is to follow the Spirit of God and our conscience.

- **No, there are times when God does not give us what we ask for.** Keep a note of when those times happen, for in time they will teach you how to ask and pray. We cannot just get God to do what we want; we have to learn to fit in with him. **We**

need to learn that God is the Boss and that we cannot tell him what to do. We must learn how to ask him for what we need and even what we want. The Bible will teach us how to do this.

God will not give us what we ask for if we do not listen to him.

He will not answer our prayers if we disobey him.

³as long as it fits in with his will: This means two things:

- We must learn to listen to God. We must get to know what God wants.
- We must train ourselves to want what God wants, for what God wants is always best.

Children who listen to their parents can ask their parents for more than children who won't listen to their parents.

People who work for a boss, and know what the boss wants, can ask for more support than workers who don't obey the boss' instructions.

It's the same with God and his Son. If we listen to God and obey the Lord we shall get more of what we need and want than if we don't listen and obey.

5:16-17 WE SHOULD PRAY FOR SINNERS

If anyone is worried about his brother who is committing sin he will likely ask God about that. He can ¹ask as long as the person's sin is not a serious one. God will then give that person who sins the gift of life. God will do this to people who sin in a way that is not very serious. But there is such a thing as serious sin, sin that leads to death. I am not saying that one should question the Lord about that or beg him for such a person.

All wrong-doing or cheating is sin. All injustice or unrighteousness is sin. But there is sin that is not punishable by ruin or death. Pray for those people who sin like that.

¹ask as long as the person's sin is not a serious one: All sins are sins, but some sins are more serious than others. If one reads the Old Testament one will see that some sins deserved the death penalty. Other sins could be forgiven by offering a sacrifice to God. That's what the priests were there for, to get God's pardon and forgiveness for people's sins. But the king and leaders of the tribes were also there to see that those who deserved to be punished were dealt with. They were there to punish people who committed crimes. Some crimes, of course, were more serious than others.

If one keeps on reading the Bible one will get the idea of what sins or crimes are less serious, and what ones are more serious. Sins that people knew were wrong are greater than sins where people did not realise that they were breaking God's laws. Sins that are deliberate are more serious than those that are thoughtless or stupid. Sins that people boast about are worse than sins that people regret. Sins that do a lot of harm to others deserve greater punishment than those that do less harm to others.

God alone decides what is forgivable and what is not. God judges what punishment is fair or just. God decides how serious any sin is, but the whole Bible does give us some ideas of what makes God angry.

However, the point that the apostle John is making is that God wants us to pray for people. He wants us to pray for them even if they sin, whether they sin against God or against us. God wants to save people from their sins. He wants to use our prayers for that gracious and very kind purpose.

At the same time John warns us that if people rebel against God there does come a point at which they can expect no mercy from God. People can lose their lives by turning against God, the way people can lose their freedom and go to prison by committing crimes. People can ruin their lives by defying God the way people can lose their jobs by committing fraud or theft in the firm they work for. When anyone does those sorts of things that are serious or very bad, then justice must happen. We cannot stop it.

5:18-21 WHAT GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT GOD

We know very well that everyone who has been ¹born of God ²does not sin. Rather, the person who is born of God keeps a firm hold on himself. He is careful to do what is right. That way no one who is bad can get hold of him to get him to do what's wrong.

We know that ³we belong to God. We also know that the whole world is dragged down together under the grip of sin.

We also know that the Son of God has come into our lives. He has given us an understanding and feeling so that we might know what is real and true. Through him we can get to know what is genuine about God. Indeed, we are now connected to the true God. We are connected to him by our connection with his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the genuine God, and this is the way to eternal life.

Dear children, watch out that you protect yourselves from ⁴idols. Avoid them!

¹**born of God:** To be born of God means that God changes our nature and attitude. He adopts us as his children. He puts spiritual life into us. By his Spirit he persuades us to put our faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. God personally then inspires us to live a better life. He influences us to live a Christian way of life, a life that is godly and faithful to him. He causes us to live the way he wants us to live. He helps us to live the right way each day. He does for us what our parents do for us when we are young.

Born of God means that God becomes our Father, our Dad, and we belong to him.

²**does not sin:** Sin means to break God's laws. It is to go wrong in life, and to do what's bad or nasty. To sin is to make God cross or angry by disobeying him. Sinning is like committing a crime.

- Sin is to turn away from God or to turn against him.
- Sin is to break God's laws.
- Sin is to treat people badly.
- Sin is to go against one's conscience.

It is the Bible that shows us properly what sin is. People, and even churches, can make up all sorts of rules, but it is the Bible that tells us what to do and what not to do. The Bible is God speaking to us. By putting your confidence in the Bible you learn how to trust God.

³**we belong to God:** The real sign that we belong to God is that we obey him. We obey him because we love him. And we keep it up, no matter what happens. We go on obeying and loving him, and keeping up our confidence in him, even if things go wrong for us. If we truly belong to God we never give up on him nor disregard his instructions.

⁴**idols:** Idols are ideas that people make up when they don't really believe in God. But they want to believe in something, so they put it in the place of God. But whatever they think their god may be, it is a false god that shall eventually let them down. That is because it does not really exist to look after them. Anything that we pretend is the answer to life cannot really help us when we need help from above. If it's not real, or genuine, or reliable, or good, it's no use to us. It is of no use simply because it is false or a fake. Anything that is false will let us down.

The most common forms of idols are money, or sport, or famous people, or clever ideas, or politics, or popular social traditions. Idols are what people live for and believe in. But none of these things are really there for us. None can save us or bring us peace, or comfort us when we die. All of them let people down, sooner or later. And that is what an idol really is:

An idol is something we like that will eventually let us down.

An idol is anything we want that stops us listening to God.



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*(Further volumes 9 to 12 are to be planned, researched and written, God willing.)



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