

# THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | JANUARY 3, 2021

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## Introduction

PURPOSE: To know how to make the church sustainable for future generations with *orthodox* agape love.

### I. Doing Church -*Not a Cakewalk*

#### A. What Was Going On Then

Near the end of the first century A.D.<sup>1</sup> the Apostle John had to write an urgent letter to warn a struggling church against false teachers who were coming in and taking people's focus off the risen Christ.

It is likely that certain teachers were already introducing the Gnostic Heresy which prized the spiritual aspects of life over the physical. Thus, the testimony of Jesus who came to Earth in bodily form was likely starting to be downplayed as something immaterial. (Note: The same thing was apparently occurring in the church of Colossae).

When people take their focus off of the Redeemer, carnality and hateful divisions start to form. John appears to be aware of this too as he urges the congregation to “..walk in the light, as he is in the light...” (1 John 1:7).

On the upside, it appears from the letter, the genuine believers **had staying power**. Even with the confusing wayward teachers coming and going, the congregation was held together by their *corporate anointing* –a gifting of the Holy Spirit helping Christians detect error and avoid it when it comes (see 1 John 2:18-22).

<sup>1</sup> For more on the date of letter, see *New Testament Introduction* by Donald Guthrie, p. 879-80).

## B. How It Relates To Us Now

While today we may not be faced with, per se, Gnostic influences ravaging the church there are other things which can take our focus off of Christ and his testimony of love and purity.

Immersion into the things of social media, gaming, intense political debates, carnal entertainment, fashion, personality worship, and open skepticism to the Bible being true are modern forms of diluting influences having the same effect of Gnosticism in the first century. So Christ has to take another seat back *since he's no longer on the throne in people's minds*.

The good news is that Jesus promises to build his church and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). As believers, we share a corporate responsibility in this building project. In this spirit John writes his exhortation...

## II. **Three Love Languages**

### A. Love = Action

*This kind of love prioritizes making the church into a soup kitchen. Details about doctrine can wait. The situation is urgent –we need unity in redeeming this world from so many social ills and injustices.*

Lest someone write off this approach, church history is filled with humanitarian efforts and causes uprising when there was truly an urgent health or equality crisis facing the commonwealth (e.g. George Mueller, "Salvation Army," "Samaritan's Purse") -some maintained their core beliefs better than others.

But if anyone has the world's goods **and sees his brother in need**, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's

love abide in him? <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love in word or talk **but in deed and in truth** (1 John 3:17-18).

B. Love = Truth

*This kind of love prioritizes making the church into a seminary. Details about how people are doing health-wise can wait. The situation is urgent –we need to rescue our doctrine from the growing compromise and pragmatism we see all around us.*

Lest someone write off this approach, it was Jesus who said, “For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me” –Mark 14:7. Also, it can be statistically proven that a family which prays and goes to church together will actually fare better, economically, later on. Something as simple as opening the Bible and reading it can make a world of difference –eternally and in the here and now (e.g., see [www.20schemes.com](http://www.20schemes.com)).

C. Love = Truth in Action (where 1 John lands)

*In the book of 1 John, truth and confession of faith are the benchmark for everything...*

This is **the message** we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

-1 John 1:5

Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and **the truth** is not in him...

-1 John 2:4

(Cont. >>)

*And the overflow of this is real, authentic, Christian love and charity...*

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

-1 John 1:6

but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought **to walk in the same way in which he walked.**

-1 John 2:5-6

### **The Book of First John Course Outline:**

- January 3 - Introduction
- January 10 - Authentic Christian Fellowship / 1 John 1:1-4
- January 17 - The Confession & The Walk / 1 John 1:5-2:2
- January 24 - Triumph of Light over Darkness / 1 John 2:3-11
- January 31 - Rallying the Troops / 1 John 2:12-17
- February 7 - The Congregational Anointing / 1 John 2:18-27
- February 14 - Know Your Roots / 1 John 2:28-3:10
- February 21 - Practical Agape Love / 1 John 3:11-24
- February 28 - Spiritual Discernment / 1 John 4:1-6
- March 7 - Perfected Agape Love / 1 John 4:7-5:4
- March 14 - Orthodox Christology / 1 John 5:5-12
- March 21 - Peace (and War) unto Eternity / 1 John 5:13-21
- March 28 - Conclusion