

# THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | JANUARY 31, 2021



## Rallying the Troops – 1 John 2:12-17

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

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. <sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. <sup>14</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. **I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.**

<sup>15</sup> **Do not love the world or the things in the world.** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- 1 John 2:12-17

### I. Legacy & Morale (2:12-14)

*Morale wins wars, solves crises, is an indispensable condition of a vigorous national life and equally essential to the maximum achievement of the individual.*

*Napoleon's dictum that "in war morale forces are to physical as three to one" has been reaffirmed by Colonel Foertsch, the outstanding military theoretician of the German High Command: "The final word regarding victory and defeat rests not on arms and equipment, nor the way in which they are used, nor even on*

*the principles of strategy and tactics, but on the morale of the troops.” In battle, morale gives victory. The outnumbered, ill-equipped or even outmaneuvered may triumph if their morale is markedly superior...*

*The Importance of Morale*  
by Arthur Upham Pope

As we mentioned before, the book of *First John* was written under the dark backdrop of the threat of incoming false teachers advancing an early form of Gnosticism. The Apostle John’s purpose in writing to this church is to prepare them for spiritual battle. It is evident in the beginning of the letter that the church had already started to engage the Enemy (cf. 1 John 2:14, and with Ephesians 6:12), apparently with success.

John seizes the opportunity to remind this multigenerational church of their noteworthy resilience, holding on to the true New Testament teachings given to them before the Gnostic teachers began their descent.

We can learn from this too, when we look back at our church experiences and recall the number of times the Lord moved us out of harm’s way and sheltered us with his Gospel. But this is not merely a passive reflection on our part. It involves us keeping our blister-ridden hands to the plow.

The Testimony of a Resilient Multigenerational Church:

- The “little children” were sustained by the story of God’s forgiveness (v. 12).<sup>1</sup>
- The “fathers” were sustained by their deepening knowledge of the Savior (v. 13a and 14a).
- The “young men” were sustained by staying true to the Word, and thus overcoming the evil one (15b).

<sup>1</sup> Note that many commentaries may interpret “little children” not as Sunday School kids, but rather referring to the church addressed as a whole which was younger compared to the aged Apostle writing them (e.g., -think about when you turn 50 and your parents still refer to you as “young”).

## II. **Defense & Morality (2:15-17)**

Many Christians are still reeling from shock after hearing how a well-known Christian apologist, Ravi Zacharias, had been found to have inappropriate relationships with workers of a massage parlor business which he actually owned and frequently visited. Mr. Zacharias died of cancer in 2020. He leaves behind him a tell-tale warning: Oratory and intellectual skills are not everything in defending the Faith. Winning an argument with a Buddhist is of diminished worth if the person having all his Bible verses ready to go cannot say “no” to his own lusts.

### A. God Wants Us to Have a Governing Love for Him (v. 15)

- God the Father does not allow for syncretism.
- In the pyramid of our minds, the God of the Bible must be on the very top (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- This benchmark rule isn’t meant to be burdensome. In fact, it is the wellspring of our joy and peace and worship.

### B. The Anatomy of Worldly Enticements (v. 16) <sup>2</sup>

- **Flesh:** Is not necessarily referring to some kind of strange flesh which we are going after, but rather our fleshly desires that spring up from our fallen core.
- **Eyes:** We’ve all heard of “love-at-first-sight.” That’s usually how it works. Before reaching into a sinful pattern, there is the circling-of-the-wagon, pacing, with eyes fixed at the center.
- **Heart:** “boastful pride of life” (v. 16) has also been translated as “the arrogance produced by material possessions” in the NET Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Note that before the Fall, in Genesis chapter 3, the world could be truly enjoyed without inhibition. But once sin entered the world it corrupted all life.

C. Sobering Reflections on Eternity and Endurance (v. 17)

- The world is “passing away” and all those desires have a terminal end in death and judgment.
- NET Bible: “the person who does the will of God remains forever.”

**III. What This Means for Us**

A. “Know Thyself”

What are the areas in which you’re most vulnerable to fail? Are there mature, loving Christians in your life you can go to for accountability?

B. Savor That Moment of Success over Satan

Mark it as a time when God showed his faithfulness in your life.

**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