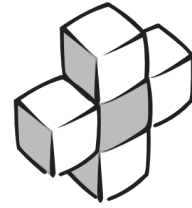


SMACC
Making Disciples of Jesus Christ



Bible Study Series:

1 John



Our Mission:

To glorify God together in response to his grace

by making disciples of Jesus Christ

About These Studies

These studies were written by various SMACC leaders for use among young working adults and university students. You are most welcome to use and adapt these studies for your own context. Where you do so please provide the following acknowledgment.

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Study 1: “A letter of light, life and love” (1 John 1:1-10)

Context

1. Skim through 1 John. (Your group may wish to split into pairs or smaller groups and go through a chapter each.)
 - a. From your broad reading, what clues do you learn about the intended recipients of the letter and who they might potentially be?
 - b. List/summarise the key themes, ideas or repeated phrases which you think are the important points that the author wishes to impart to the recipients of the letter.
 - c. From 1b, what indications or clues do you perceive might describe the situation which has led the author to write this letter?

Digging in

Read 1 John 1:1-4

2. In the introduction of his letter, what or who is the main subject of John’s proclamation? (v1-2)
3. Read John 1:1-5 and compare this passage with 1 John 1:1-4. How do some of the similarities of the introduction of both the gospel of John and 1 John help us establish the identity of the subject?
4. Who do you think ‘we’/‘us’ in John 1:1-4 refers to?
5. How does that help us understand why John chose to describe the subject of his letter with many phrases emphasizing verbs such as ‘heard’, ‘seen’, ‘looked upon’ and ‘touched’? (cross-reference: 2 Peter 1:1-2 and 16-21)
6. Why does John want to share the news about “the life made manifest” with his readers? (v3-4)

Read 1 John 1:5-10

7. In v5, what is the truth about God that John wants to highlight to his readers?

8. Consider some implications of what that means and compare with what John has written about Jesus in his gospel: John 1:1-9, 3:16-21, 8:12, 12:35-46. Do your ideas match with what scripture has revealed about Jesus' nature and message? Why or why not?

9. Yet it seems that there are different messages which contradict v5 and which have spread amongst John's readers, leading John to immediately refute them at the start of his letter. What is the message that John exposes in v6 and what do you think this means?

10. Contrastingly, what if we are walking in the light instead as per v7?

11. What about the messages in v8 and v10, what do they mean?

12. How does John counter these claims in v9?

13. How does this show God to be faithful and just in dealing with us?

Application

14. Do you have doubts that what the Bible says about Jesus is really true? How might the eyewitness testimony of John give us confidence?

15. What written truths from 1 John have encouraged you to place your assurance firmly on Jesus and His gospel?

16. In the earliest verses of 1 John, we already see John warning the early Christians and condemning the false messages and gospels which have arisen amongst them. Can you think of how these false claims might manifest themselves amongst modern day society?

17. One of the key ways in which we walk in the light is to remain in the light. How do you see the role of confession in this endeavor and what are some ways which might help us to practice confession in our Christian lives more effectively?

18. Are you quick to confess your sinfulness, or do you excuse and deny it?

19. Honestly, speaking – are you walking in the light or the darkness? Are there sins that you need to confess before God? Spend some time in personal reflection and prayer confident of God's forgiveness for all who trust in Christ.

Study 2: “Children of the Light” (1 John 2:1-17)

Getting started

Which of the children in our church/Cathedral whom you think look most like their parents? In what ways are they similar?

Context/Recap

1. Who was the letter of *1 John* written to and why? (2:26, 5:13)

2. From *1 John 1*, what reasons were given for why John wrote to the people? (v.3 & 4)

Digging In

Read *1 John 2:1-17*

3. What is one other concern we see here when John wrote this letter to fellow Christians? (v.1)

Ponder:
Is v.2 speaking of universal atonement (i.e. everyone regardless will be saved because of Jesus’ sacrifice)? If not, what does it mean?

4. Just like in Chapter 1, Chapter 2:1-17 contains a series of tests that the readers can evaluate themselves against. Fill up the table below to help us understand better what John is trying to say.

v.	To ascertain that...	What is the test?
3 - 4		
5 - 6		
9		
15-17		

In all the verses above, what gives away the fact that whether someone belongs to God or otherwise? (To answer this, find out what is John contrasting in each of the verses above)

Read *1 John 2:3-4*

- 5 a) Do you think “keeping [Jesus’] commandments” in v.3b means *never sinning*? What is your reasoning behind your answer? (c.f. 1:8-10; 2:1)

- b) If it doesn't mean *never sinning*, what do you think "keeping [Jesus'] commandments" means in v.3b?

Read 1 John 2:5-6

- 6 a) How would you describe Jesus in one word?
- b) Based on the above, how do you understand v.6 when it says *to walk in the same way in which he walked*?

Ponder:

In v.5a, it speaks about love of God that is perfected in a follower. How do 2:15 & 4:12, 17 help us understand what it means?

Read 1 John 2:7-11

- 7 a) What do you think is the old commandment that John said his readers had from the beginning? (c.f. 3:11 & Lev 19:18)
- b) What do you think is the new commandment (c.f. John 13:34)? How is the old and new different?
- c) Comparing v.8b with v.17, what motivation do we have to love as how Jesus loved?

Ponder:

In v.9, why is the one who hates his brother described as still in darkness?

8. If John's readers have read from 1:5 – 2:11, what do you think the readers would be thinking?
9. Why then do you think v.12-14 is written? Why also in repetition?

Read 1 John 2:15-17

10. What reasons does John give for not loving the world?

Thinking It Through

11. Looking at the Table in Question 4, we see the traits of
- keeping Jesus' commandments,
 - walking in the same way as him,
 - loving one's brothers
 - not loving the world

Are these traits the **causes** for someone to become God's child, or are they traits that **reveal** someone to be God's child? How then should we view assurance (i.e. knowing and feeling secured in Christ)?

Application

12. Looking back at the traits mentioned in Question 11 above, do they seem like a joy or do they seem like a chore for you? Share with one another why you think this way?
13. As we have seen in 1 John 1:4, John's intention in writing to the Christians was so that the readers' joy may be complete also. In groups of 2 or 3, discuss one aspect of your Christian life which you find to be a boring duty (not a delight) and share with one another how today's passage can speak into each situation?
14. Matthew 7:21-23 reads

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Compare the above with 1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Note that while it is important to get our creed right, that's not all to the Christian life. A true Christian is known not merely by what they say (creeds) but by their lifestyle (deeds).

Examine your life. Do you think you there are areas of your life where your creeds (things you know about God and know to be true) do not translate to your deeds (your lifestyle)? Be real in sharing about them and pray for one another as you close.

Study 3: “Counterfeit Christianity” (1 John 2:18-27)

Getting Started

What sort of scams or counterfeit products have you encountered?

Digging in

Read 1 John 2:18-27

1. What do you think is the ‘last hour’? (v18)
2. How do we know that it is the last hour? (v18)
3. How does John describe the antichrists? (v19, 22). What other things do we learn about “the antichrist”? in 1 John 4:1-3 and 2 John 7?
4. How are John’s readers different from the antichrists? (v20, 21)
5. What does it mean to be anointed by the Holy One? (v20)
6. What was John’s reason for writing? (v21)
7. Why is it such an issue that these false teachers deny that Jesus is the Christ? What implications does that have for those who claim a relationship with God but deny Jesus (or truths about Jesus)?

8. Why is our response to Jesus the same as our response to the Father? (v23)

9. How do John's readers abide in the Son and in the Father? (v24)

10. Why does John immediately tell us about God's promise of eternal life, after he tells us to abide in him? (v25, see John 17:3)

11. Why is there no need for anyone to teach them? (see v20-21 and v27)

12. 'You have no need that anyone should teach you' – Does this mean that we do not need sermons / seminars / trainings?

Application

13. What are examples of antichrists we see today?

14. How should we respond when we see/hear of people who leave the church?

15. How can we determine which doctrines are core doctrines, worth dividing over, and which are more peripheral?

16. How can we ensure that we continue to abide in Christ and are not led astray by false teachers?

17. Look back over the flow of the whole passage. In what way does it give us assurance of eternal life? (Remember, that's a big part of why John is writing his letter; cf. 5:13.)

Prayer

- Thank God for the coming of Jesus as the Christ, and ask God to enable you to abide in him and stand firm in your testimony about Christ.
- Pray for brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who are living amidst severe pressure to deny Jesus as the Christ.

Study 4: “Living as God’s Children” (1 John 2:28-3:10)

Getting Started

1. *A pastor preaches: “A Christian is free from sin because there is now no condemnation in Christ”.* What do you think of this statement and why do you agree or disagree?

Digging in

Read 1 John 2:28-3:10

2. Who is Paul asking the readers to abide in? Why?

3. Why would there be shrinking away from “him”?

4. How does this verse make you feel? Do you think you will shrink away from “him”?

Read 1 John 3:1-3,

4. What is the relationship between the people Paul is writing to and God?

5. Verse 1 mentions “see what kind of love the Father has given us”. What do we understand about this “love”?

6. How do you see this love working in your life and what changes do you see in yourself as a result?

Read 1 John 3:4-10,

7. What do we learn here about sin? (v4-6)

8. How does it apply to us?

9. Why does Paul need to mention the things in verse 8? Do you think it is still relevant today?

10. What reason does a Christian have for not making it a practice to sin?

Application

11. What benefit is there in understanding the difference in nature between the two different patterns of behaviour that is shown in the passage?

12. To not sin and live a holy and blameless life is not easy...
 - (a) What can a person do to work towards this?

 - (b) how can we be helping each other do that?

- b. Can someone truly experience the love of God and not be moved to love others?
-
- 6. In what ways do we simply say that we love people but not act on it?
 - a. If you don't feel love towards someone, how do you overcome that?
-
- 7. How do the truths of verse 11-18 reassure us? Or do they? (19-20)
-
- 8. How does our heart condemn us and how does God overcome it?
-
- 9. Reading verse 22 by itself it sounds like God grants our requests as a reward for obedience. Is this really what John is saying?
-
- 10. What do you think it means that God "abides in us" (3:24)? How is this different from us abiding in God? (if you have time)

Thinking It Through

- 11. According to John 3:11-24, what are the marks of a genuine Christian?

Application

12. How has the love of God transformed your life?

13. Where in your life do you see a brother in need? How should you respond?

14. What kinds of people in SMACC2, could you show love to? How?

15. What would it look like for you to love others better in your Bible study group?

Prayer

- Praise God for the love he has shown us through Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us.
- Ask God to help you love others—even if it is hard—and to comprehend the enormous cost of giving
- Thank God that we are not condemned and that he sets our hearts at rest.
- Ask for wisdom and insight so that you can discern areas of genuine need for other Christians you might know.
Ask God to give you a proactive, practical love like Jesus' love, so that you might sacrificially help with these needs as they become apparent to you.

Study 6: “Testing the Spirit” (1 John 4:1-6)

Getting Started

1. “Most Christians would rather die than think- and most do”- Bertrand Russell. Is this a fair statement?

Context/Recap

2. What have we learnt so far about the false teachers that are troubling the church John is writing to? Why is John writing his letter (5:13)?

3. According to 3:19-24, how do we know that someone abides in God and has life?

Digging In

Read 1 John 4:1-6

4. What does vs 1 ask us to do and why?

5. How do we tell if the spirit is from God or it is the spirit of the anti-Christ?

6. What exactly is the spirit of the antichrist? Is this the same as chapter 2?

7. To summarize, what is the difference between Spirit of God/Truth and Spirit of the Antichrist/Error?

	Spirit of God/Truth	Spirit of Anti-Christ/Error
Who do they confess?		
Who listens to them?		

8. What does it mean to “confess Jesus”? (v3) Is it just about what you say? (cf. Matthew 7:21-23, Mark 7:6-7, 2 Peter 2:1)

9. In view of this, what further test does John give us to enable us to recognize a false prophet? (v5-6)

10. In John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” What are the false teachings that we have heard about Jesus? How do we know if they are false?

11. What happens when churches/believers do not “test the spirit”?

Application

12. Verse 1 tells us that there are false prophets. Where would we find false prophets?

13. Have you ever encountered any false prophets? What would be the best way for us to respond to false prophets?
14. In order for us to identify false prophet, we all need to know biblical doctrine. How can we encourage each other to “test the spirit”?
15. How do we or the world judge our preachers/bible study leaders? Are these factors biblical?

Prayer

- Ask God for wisdom in discerning true teaching from false teaching. Ask God to help you stand up for the truth and speak out when necessary.

Study 7: “No God, No Love; Know God, Know Love” (1 John 4:7-21)

Getting started

Separate into 2 groups and compete to see how many famous love songs tagline you can sing out (in any language). Do you think the concepts of love portrayed in love songs are similar to what the Bible speaks of on the topic of love? Why?

Context/Recap

1. The theme of love was also mentioned before in 1 John 3:11-24. Which verse (from v.11-24) do you think best capture the big idea about love there?

2. Why do you think John launched into the theme of testing the spirits in 1 John 4:1-6?

Digging In

Read 1 John 4:7-11

3. When John says “whoever loves has been born of God and knows God”, what does it tell you about those who do love one another?

4. Why do you think John can say that “God is love” in v.8? What is the difference if John said “God is loving”?

5. To understand what it means to love others, we first need to understand God’s love. How does God’s love look like as seen in v.9-10?

Read 1 John 4:12-16

6. Given that John has been talking about loving one another in v.7-11 (and also v.12), one would expect v.13 to sound like “*By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because we love one another”*. However, John said it is “*because he has given us of his Spirit.*” Why do you think John brings in the topic of the Holy Spirit here?

7. To help answer question 6, let's trace the topic of *abiding* from v.12-16.

Verses	How can we know that God abides in us and us in God?
v. 12, 16b [c.f. 2:10, 2:24; 3:24a]	
v.13 [c.f. 3:24b; 3:27]	
v.15	

So, coming back to question 6, why do you think John brings in the topic of the Holy Spirit?

8. How can we be like John and his readers in coming to know and believe the love that God has for us? (Hint: v.16 starts with the word "So". Look at v.13-15 for the clue).

Read 1 John 4:17-21

9. Fill up the table below to find out how we know that love is perfected in us.

Verses	How do we know that love is perfected in us?
2:5	
4:12	
4:16b-17	
4:18b	

10. What is the purpose to which God's love is perfected in us? (v.17-18)

Ponder:
 What do you think it means when the Bible says to "fear the Lord"? Are there different ways of fearing God? Read Exodus 20:20 to get a glimpse of both types of fear.

11. In v.19-21, John comes full circle to where he began in v.7-11. What do you think John is trying to emphasize here?

Thinking It Through

12. From what we have seen so far, what can we conclude about God’s love and how it affects us?

About God	
About Us	

Application

13. *On God’s Redeeming Love*

Have you known the God who is love and has shown much love to you through His Son, Jesus Christ? As how John puts it in v.16, have you come to know and believe the love that God has for you?

14. *On Our Assurance*

The word “so” in v.17 goes to show that we can have confidence when we face God in the Day of Judgment because God’s love has been perfected in us. Many of us might not feel confident like how John described. Is that an indication that we might not have fully grasped God’s love for us still? What might be the reasons for that?

15. *On Our Renewed Nature*

The famous Christian wedding love passage is found in v.19 – *We love because he first loved us*, but actually we all need it more so on the days when life is less blissful than the wedding day itself. Discuss the following.

- i) Two weeks ago when we did 1 John 3:11-24, we looked at concrete examples of loving others. How can you continue to persevere in that for the days ahead?

- ii) Which characterizes your trajectory of life more: to love and serve people or to promote yourself and your wellbeing?

The Love of God – F. M. Lehman

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

*Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints’ and angels’ song.*

Study 8: “Certainty In Jesus” (1 John 5:1-12)

Getting Started

1. What are the things that you are certain about in your life?

Digging In

Read 1 John 5:1-5

2. How do we know that we have been born of God?
3. What does it mean to believe that Jesus is the Christ? (v1)
4. How do we know that we love the children of God? (v2)
5. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (v3). Why does John say that the commandments are not burdensome? (cf. Matthew 23:4, Matthew 11:30)
6. In what ways have we overcome the world? (v4-5) (You might also like to look up 1 John 2:15-17)

Read 1 John 5:6-12

7. What does it mean that Jesus came by water and blood? (v6)
8. What is the role of the Spirit? What is his nature? (v6) (cf. John 15:26-27, 16:13)

9. What is the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son? (v11-12)

Application

10. John says that “everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him”. Can we say that we love God and not love those who have been born of him? How does this challenge the way we relate to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

11. How do you view the commandments of God? Do you find them burdensome?

12. How do we help our brother and sister in Christ who are doubtful about the assurance of eternal life?

Prayer:

- Thank God for the gift of His Son and for the completed work of Christ on the cross
- Pray that we will continue to abide in Christ and trust in Him for salvation
- Pray for our non-believing friends & family members to find Christ and for them to find certainty and hope in Him

Study 9: “Life Assured” (1 John 5:13-20)

Getting Started

1. What kind of sins are prevalent and “popular” among Christians today and seems tolerated?

Digging in

Read 1 John 5:13-20

2. **Who** is John writing to and **what** is his purpose for writing this? (v13-14)

3. In your words, what do you think John means in v15 and how does that connect to v16?

4. What does John mean by sin that leads to death and sin that does not lead to death? (Refer: Mark 3:28-30)

5. Discussion: What ways can this “sin that leads to death” be expressed?

6. What are we to do for a professing believer who is sinning? What confidence do we have in doing this?

7. Can we know if someone is committing sins that leads to death or sins that don’t lead to death? How does this effect our prayers?

8. What is John telling about sin in a Christian’s life? (v18)

9. What does v19-20 tell us about the nature of the world and the nature of Christians? Does this give you hope or makes you scared?

10. What does v21 tell us about this letter and why it was written? How does it tie into the bigger themes that we have seen so far?

Application

11. What encouragement can we give to Christians who are persisting in sinfulness?

12. **Share** something that you have **learned/ thinking** about from what we have learned from this book (1 John).

Prayer:

- Thank God for what you have learnt today
- Personal prayer points