

## Who wrote the book?

## 1 JOHN overview

There are some that do not believe this is the same John that walked with Jesus, but that is just unfounded foolishness. History books have a group of witnesses including Polycarp, an early second-century bishop who as a young man knew John personally and witnessed John's actions and wrote of them. In addition, the author clearly places himself as part of a group of apostolic eyewitnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus, noting that "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also" (1 John 1:3). Only an antichrist will try to discredit these writings.

## Where are we?

It is thought John wrote this letter from Ephesus—as the city where John ministered late in his life. The date of this writing is about AD 90.

## Why is First John so important?

The parallelisms in 1 John are striking for their simplicity: Christ vs. antichrists, light vs. darkness, truth vs. falsehood, righteousness vs. sin, love of the Father vs. love of the world, and the Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the Antichrist. While this is not a complete list, it reveals a letter that presents the world in an uncomplicated way—there is right and there is wrong, period. This emphasis by John, while striking, is not without love. It's quite the opposite, in fact. John recognized that love comes from God, and he encouraged the believers to love one another (1 Jn 4:7). John's first epistle teaches that while it is important to recognize the lines between truth and error, it must always be done in a spirit of love.

## A basic look at the idea?

As he did in his gospel, John stated with clarity the purpose of his first letter. He proclaimed the good news about Jesus to the receivers of this letter, saying "so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3). Later, John added "so that you may not sin" (1 Jn 2:1) and "so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13). John wanted his readers to experience true fellowship with God and with God's people. But he knew that would not happen until the Christians set aside their own selfish desires in favour of the pursuits God had for them.

To help them attain that goal, John focused on three issues: 1/ the zeal of the believers, 2/ standing firm against false teachers, and 3/ reassuring the Christians that they have eternal life. John wrote to churches full of people who had struggled with discouragement—whether due to their own sinful failures or the presence of false teachers in their midst. The ageing apostle hoped to ignite the zeal of these believers so that they might follow the Lord more closely and stand firm against those who meant to sow discord among the churches. In doing so, they would solidify their relationship with God and gain confidence in His work in their lives.

## How do I apply this?

We all go through ups and downs in our Christian faith. Whatever the struggle—whether outside of us or inside—we often feel ourselves blown about by the winds of emotion or circumstances. Yet God calls us to lives of increasing consistency, with the evidence of our inner transformation becoming more and more apparent as the months and years pass by. How would you characterize your relationship with God—consistent and fruitful or sporadic and parched?

John knew that we would never find in ourselves the faithfulness God requires. Instead, we have to place complete trust in the work and grace of God, believing that He will certainly conform us to the image of His Son, Jesus. That sense of being grounded in God only comes when we set aside our sin in the pursuit of the one true God. Or, in the words of John, "if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Lord's Words Red Old Testament reference blue man's words pink

**1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

**1:2** The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

**1:3** We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

**1:4** We write this to make our joy complete.

**1:5** This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

**1:6** If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

**1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

**1:8** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

**1:10** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

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### Chapter 2

**2:1** My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

**2:2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

**2:3** We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

**2:4** Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

**2:5** But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him:

**2:6** Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

**2:7** Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

**2:8** Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

**2:9** Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.

**2:10** Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.

**2:11** But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

**2:12** I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

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**2:13** 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.

**2:14** I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. 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 lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

**2:15** Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

**2:16** For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

**2:17** The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

**2:18** Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

**2:19** They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

**2:20** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

**2:21** I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.

**2:22** Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son.

**2:23** No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

**2:24** As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.

**2:25** And this is what he promised us—eternal life.

**2:26** I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.

**2:27** As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

**2:28** And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

**2:29** If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

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## Chapter 3

**3:1** See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**3:2** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

**3:3** All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

**3:4** Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

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**3:5** But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

**3:6** No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

**3:7** Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

**3:8** The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

**3:9** No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

**3:10** This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

**3:11** For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

**3:12** Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

**3:13** Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

**3:14** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

**3:15** Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

**3:16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

**3:17** If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

**3:18** Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

**3:19** This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence:

**3:20** If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

**3:21** Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

**3:22** and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

**3:23** And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

**3:24** The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

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## Chapter 4

**4:1** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**4:2** This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

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**4:3** but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

**4:4** You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

**4:5** They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.

**4:6** We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

**4:7** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

**4:8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**4:9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

**4:10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

**4:11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**4:12** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

**4:13** This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

**4:14** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

**4:15** If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

**4:16** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

**4:17** This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

**4:18** There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

**4:19** We love because he first loved us.

**4:20** Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

**4:21** And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

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## Chapter 5

**5:1** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

**5:2** This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.

**5:3** In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

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**5:4** for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

**5:5** Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

**5:6** This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

**5:7** For there are three that testify:

**5:8** the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

**5:9** We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

**5:10** Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

**5:11** And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

**5:12** Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

**5:13** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

**5:14** This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

**5:15** And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

**5:16** If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that.

**5:17** All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

**5:18** We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them.

**5:19** We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

**5:20** We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

**5:21** Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

## Who wrote the book?

## 2 JOHN overview

John did not identify himself by name in this letter, but he did adopt the term “elder” for himself (2 John 1:1). There has been some debate about whether an author named John the Elder wrote this letter (as well as 3 John, which is addressed the same way) or if John the apostle was using a different title for himself. However, the earliest church tradition from the second century on testified in unison that this letter and its companion, 3 John, were written by the apostle, not by a mysterious and unknown elder. In fact, an apostle using the term “elder” for himself was not at all unprecedented—Peter did that very thing in his first epistle (1 Peter 5:1). As in 1 John there are written witnessed accounts of John the Apostle actions.

## Where are we?

It is thought that both the 2nd and 3rd Epistles (letters) of John could have been written about the same time and sent out for circulation to all the Churches. John who was called ‘The disciple that Jesus Loved’ and wrote ‘The Gospel of John’ which has been called ‘The love Book’ he somewhat changes his tone in two of his Epistles, being the first and second letters. It is believed he wrote these letters while he was in Ephesus, probably between 80-95 AD, near the end of his life.

## Why is Second John so important?

Second John makes clear what our position should be regarding the enemies of The Truth. Whereas 1 John focuses on our fellowship with God, 2 John focuses on protecting our fellowship from those who teach falsehood. The apostle went so far as to warn his readers against inviting false teachers (humans) into the house or even offering them a greeting (2 Jn 1:10). Such practices align the believer with the evildoer, and John was keen on keeping the believers pure from the stain of falsehood and heresy.

## A basic look at the idea?

John began his second Epistle proclaiming his love for “the elect lady and her children,” a love he shared with those who know The Truth (2 John 1:1). From the reports he had received, he understood that these believers were following the teachings of Christ. He summed up this kind of lifestyle in the exhortation to “love one another” (Jn 1:5), a clear reference to the great commandments of Jesus—to love God and love your neighbour. In other words, those who walk in the truth should be people who love others. But they should be cautious whom they love. Deceivers and false teachers had infiltrated the church—people who taught falsehoods about the person of Jesus, teaching that He was not truly a man but only appeared to be one. This early heresy, called agnostics, required the strongest possible response from John. So the apostle warned the true believers away from these false teachers. John’s encouragement, then, was not simply to love but to love others within the limits that truth allows.

## How do I apply this?

John’s strong encouragement to the believers in 2 John involved loving one another. However, John did not leave love undefined but described it as walking “according to His commandments” (2 Jn 1:6). This echoes the teaching of Jesus in John’s gospel, where the Lord told His followers, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (Jn 14:15). Our love is dependent on our obedience. When we don’t obey, we don’t love. Often we get in the mind-set that our obedience to God affects only ourselves. But that simply is not true. Our actions, whether obedient or disobedient, have ripple effects far beyond our own limited vision of a circumstance.

Consider your own life. In what ways might your obedience or disobedience impact those in your immediate circle of relationships? Second John reminds us not only of the dangers of falling away from the truth but also of the importance of making obedience a priority in our lives—for ourselves and for those most important to us.

## THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

Lord's Words Red Old Testament reference blue man's words pink

**1:1** The elder, To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth—

**1:2** because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

**1:3** Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.

**1:4** It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

**1:5** And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another.

**1:6** And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

**1:7** I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

**1:8** Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.

**1:9** Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

**1:10** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them.

**1:11** Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

**1:12** I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

**1:13** The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings.



### Who wrote the book?

### 3 JOHN overview

The apostle John identified himself in 3 John only as “The Elder” (3 Jn 1:1), the same as he did in 2 John. At the writing of this, his final epistle, John was nearing the end of his life, a life that had changed dramatically some six decades before, when Jesus had called John and his brother James out from their fishing boat. The boys had left their livelihood and their father Zebedee to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:21–22). James was the first of the twelve disciples to die for his faith with all the others following in like manner over a period of time, John was the last one living! John referred to himself in his gospel as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn 21:20), a title that highlights one of the great themes of all John’s biblical contributions, including 3 John—the love of God working itself out in the lives of human beings.

### Where are we?

It is thought 3rd John could have been written possibly in Ephesus, probably between 80-95 AD, near the end of his life.

### Why is Third John so important?

John wrote to Gaius who was dealing with certain troubles in his area, John wanted to direct him, not only in how to respond to the trials but also how to relate to those who proclaim the truth. John’s three epistles are largely concerned with the issue of fellowship—with God, with enemies of the gospel and, in the case of 3 John, with those who proclaim the truth. John wanted to ensure a warm welcome from the churches to those who travelled around preaching the gospel, offering them hospitality and a send-off “in a manner worthy of God” (3 Jn 1:6).

### A basic look at the idea?

Troubles had come to the church in Asia. Diotrephes had taken control of one of the churches there and used his power to ban certain travelling missionaries from coming to the church at all. At one point, the church had seen something of a leadership quality in him and had placed him in charge, but now in the top spot, the power had gone to his head. He refused to welcome those travelling ministers of the gospel to preach and take rest with his church. And even worse, upon receiving an earlier correction from John, Diotrephes refused to listen (3 Jn 1:9).

This troubling situation prompted John to write to Gaius, commending the believers for holding fast to the truth and doing so with a loving attitude. These Christians strove to make the gospel a reality in their lives through the way they treated one another. And John, in response to this good report about the behaviour of these “rank and file” Christians, encouraged them to continue to love and support those visiting believers who gave of themselves and ministered in the churches of Asia.

### How do I apply this?

How do you show hospitality to other Christians, particularly those who serve you and others in your local church and at churches around the world? Showing hospitality to others—particularly strangers—requires a level of trust and acceptance that is not necessarily required of us in our everyday lives. It forces us to rely on a common bond in Jesus Christ, rather than a particular blood relationship or shared experience. It forces us out of our comfort zones and into a territory where we must place our trust in God. John used words such as love and truth to describe this kind of living, and he used the negative example of Diotrephes to illustrate the dangers of going down a different path. We have a responsibility as Christians to live according to the truth we find in the life and ministry of Jesus, to care for and support those who serve God’s people. Our Lord was surrounded by people who took care of Him. Third John teaches us that we should do the same for those who carry on the teaching of Jesus in our own day.

## THE THIRD LETTER OF

## JOHN

Lord's Words Red Old Testament reference blue man's words pink

**1:1** The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

**1:2** Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

**1:3** It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it.

**1:4** I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

**1:5** Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you.

**1:6** They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honours God.

**1:7** It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans.

**1:8** We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.

**1:9** I wrote to the church, but Diotrefes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us.

**1:10** So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

**1:11** Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

**1:12** Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

**1:13** I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink.

**1:14** I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.