

Episode: Other Letters Series No. 07

Narrator: Mary, the mother of Jesus

Primary Scriptures: 1 John 1-5

Story Summary: Overview of *1 John*

Location: Roman Empire

Time: 85-95 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 John 1:5-7, 1:8-9; 2:5-6, 2:15-16, 2:25; 3:1, 3:17-18, 3:23-24; 4:7-10, 4:16, 4:20-21; 5:2-3, 5:11-12

Love. That is the main theme of *1 John*. Minor themes include obedience, warnings against false teachings, and life. Make no mistake, though: this book is about love.

It is generally accepted that the Apostle John wrote this book, along with *2 John* and *3 John*. He also wrote the *Gospel of John* and *Revelation*. There is no confirmation on the date he wrote this book, but scholars suspect it was written very late in John's life, between 85 and 95 AD.

The letter is not addressed to a particular group, but late in the letter, John says he wrote it to those who believe in the name of the Son of God... so that they may *know* they have eternal life. It is possible that John was writing to Christians under persecution from Rome or to those being influenced by false teachers.

The letter opens with John's personal witness of being with Jesus. He describes God as being light, and verifies that the blood of Jesus cleans people of their sin. Jesus is the Advocate and the atoning sacrifice for people and their sins. John wants people to know, beyond any doubt, that they have eternal life if they follow Jesus.

Love is light. If you love, you are in the light. If you hate someone, you are in the dark. If you love the world, you don't have the love of the Father in you.

If you accept Jesus, and abide in him and the Father, you receive the promise: eternal life. The Father loves His people so much He calls them His children... and incredible promise and reward. John wants everyone to receive this promise and not be led astray by false teaching and sinning.

Like James, John insists the love of God is shown by helping people in need. Like James, John insists his hearers love with actions and truth, not just words.

1 John 3:23 is an eye-opening verse. John commands people to believe in the name of Jesus, and to love one another. These are not recommendations from John, but commands.

1 John 4:16 is the summation of everything John teaches: God is love, and whoever lives in love, lives in God and God lives in them. John follows a few verses later with the demand that anyone who loves God must love their brother and sister.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do the first verses of *1 John* have in common with the first verses of *Genesis* and *John*?
 2. What is one characteristic of God?
 3. Where did John learn to write things like 1 John 3:15?
 4. 1 John 5:11 says that God gives eternal life. What does that mean? Can you know you have eternal life?
 5. Why did John end his letter with a sentence that seems out of synch with the rest of the letter?
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1. They talk about the beginning, the nature of God, and the existence of Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit. 2. He is light (1 John 1:5). This may have some interesting implications from a scientific viewpoint since time has no defined meaning when traveling at the speed of light. 3. From Jesus. 4. John wrote this letter so people would know they have eternal life.

Application Questions:

1. Modern culture often denies the existence of sin. According to 1 John 1:8-10, you deceive yourself if you claim to be without sin. How does that statement impact your thoughts on the existence of sin, as well as your propensity to sin? Will Jesus forgive you from your sins if you do not acknowledge them?
2. According to 1 John 2:3-5, how do you know if you know Jesus? Can you know the commands of Jesus without having a good understanding of the Bible? According to 1 John 4:8, how can you know if you know God? How does 1 John 4:21 impact your understanding of knowing God?
3. 1 John 2:22 says that anyone who denies Jesus is a liar. Do you deny Jesus by any of your actions or words? How can you protect yourself from ever denying Jesus?
4. Explain how you can fulfill 1 John 3:18.
5. What does 1 John 3:19 mean to you?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 1 John 2:15 says not to love the world or anything in the world. What does that mean? Are there areas of your life where you love the world? How can you root those out?
2. Do the lusts listed in 1 John 2:16 seem wrong to you? Where have you learned to evaluate things like the lust of the eyes?
3. What does it mean to be a child of God? What are the privileges and responsibilities? (1 John 3:1-10) How does your own relationship with your parent(s) affect your views on God as your parent?