

Reading Through the Letters of John, Part I

We recommend you have a notebook and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Bring this notebook with you to Faith Group for discussions and prayer times. Select a quiet place and consistent time to read and pray. We also recommend you pray for a moment before you read God's word and ask for his illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read. Be prepared to think carefully about what the author is conveying in the passage, what God's word is saying, and how you might apply it.

Abbreviations: TAI – *Think About It* PP – *Prayer Point*

Monday, October 24 – I John 1:1-4

TAI: John speaks as an eyewitness here – “we have heard...we have seen with our eyes” – which is a requirement for apostleship, to have been with Jesus himself. What does he mean when he says, “the life was made manifest”? When do we celebrate that truth? How is Christian fellowship truly unique? How would John's joy be “complete” by writing these things?

PP: Praise God that His Son was given as the Messiah! Ask God to give our church the kind of unique and special fellowship described by John here. Thank God for eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Pray for some who don't know Christ, to whom you seek to “testify” and “proclaim” Jesus Christ your Lord.

Tuesday, October 25 – I John 1:5-10

TAI: Contrast “walking in the light” and “walking in the darkness.” How can God forgive us our sin, when he is light and there is no darkness in him? Why is God's character so important in the forgiveness and cleansing of our sin? What self-delusion is John speaking against here?

PP: I John 1:9 is one of the most important verses in the New Testament with regard to personal prayer. It is a call to confession, critical to a healthy walk with God. Spend time today in prayer, confessing any sin which God brings to mind, and rejoicing in forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Wednesday, October 26 – I John 2:1-6

TAI: Why does John call his readers “little children”? Who is our Advocate when we sin? What does “propitiation” mean? (This has come up before in our reading and Romans series!) In the whole world, how many Saviors are there who can “make propitiation” for our sin? What role does keeping God's commands have in our walk of faith, according to John? Why is obedience important for believers?

PP: One of the most painful personal recognitions is hypocrisy (v. 4 “liar”). Confess areas of your life where you believe there may be hypocrisy. Ask for God the Holy Spirit's help in eliminating hypocrisy and living in the obedience of faith. “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! Help me walk in the way that Jesus walked.”

Thursday, October 27 – I John 2:7-11

TAI: Do you love your brother? Actually, ponder this: *who is our brother?* In what sense is this both an old command and a new one? Why would claiming to “walk in light” but then hating your brother mean that you are walking in darkness? How does the darkness blind us?

PP: If you have found the darkness of hatred in your soul, as you have pondered this lesson, stop to confess that sin right now. Ask God to help you take direct steps to overcome it. Express thanks to God for the forgiveness that comes to us as we confess our dark corners and receive the fullness and help of the Holy Spirit.

Friday, October 28 – I John 2:12-14

TAI: This seems like an early poem of reflection from John. John seems to take a moment to apply all he has been saying to the men of the generations. Think about why John puts this poetry here, and consider what he wants you to gain from it. Which generation are you? John’s purpose seems to be *encouragement*; would his readers have found this poetry encouraging?

PP: Pray for the generations of our church. Ask God to encourage the older, the young adults, and the children with victories of gospel faith. Pray specifically that each truth would be evident in our lives as believers (sins forgiven, know God, overcome the evil one, etc.).

Weekend, October 29-30 – Romans 8

TAI & PP: This weekend Pastor Dana will preach on one of the most extraordinary promises of the Bible: Romans 8:28. Have you ever memorized this verse? Do so! Ask God to help you see with his eyesight how “all things work together for good” as you love him. Are there some tough areas in your life, where it is difficult to believe this promise? Tell God all about them.

Monday, October 31 – I John 2:15-17

TAI: Why are world-love and Father/God-love so contradictory? Do you think that John has captured this right, that worldly things all seem to fit into one of these three categories (v. 16)? Which of these categories seems to provide the greatest temptation for you? What abides forever? Reflect on the fact that worldly things are temporary but the things of God eternal.

PP: Ask God to stamp out world-love in you. Ask him to replace it with Father/God-love! Confess the sins which are your greatest temptations, and ask God to replace these temptations with an even greater desire to do the will of God, which abides forever. Rejoice again in the gospel promise of 1 John 1:9! Thank God for the cross and Jesus’ atoning death for you.

Tuesday, November 1 – I John 2:18-25

TAI: How can John say it is the “last hour” when he wrote this almost 2,000 years ago? The “many antichrists” which came have now gone “out from us” – what does that say about them? What does the fundamental problem seem to be with these “antichrists”; how is the believers’ faith on contrast to them? ***Make no mistake: what we believe about Jesus Christ is absolutely crucial!*** What precious promise has God given to those who persevere in faith?

PP: Ask God to protect you, your family, and our church family from false teachers. Affirm again to God your desire to be faithful and biblical in all you believe! Affirm also your wholehearted love for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Rejoice in eternal life.

Wednesday, November 2 – I John 2:26-29

TAI: False teachers come wanting to teach “new” and “secret” and “previously undiscovered” truths – but they should not disturb Christ-centered, biblical Christians. How could we possibly improve upon the gospel of Jesus Christ? What kinds of things would make a person “shrink back in shame” from Christ when he comes? Why does righteousness align with new birth?

PP: Ask God to help you abide in Christ. Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit. Pray for those who are deceived by false teachers (in cults, churches which have abandoned the gospel, etc.). Ask God to help you discern what is righteous and do it by his grace and power.

Thursday, November 3 – I John 3:1-10 We'll spend two days on this passage.

TAI: There seems to be a “now and then” (“*already but not yet*” as we sometimes say about the kingdom of God) aspect to this section: we are now the children of God, but there is also going to be so much more! Why doesn't the world recognize us as God's children? What will change when Jesus returns? In the meantime, what do we do as we wait for the return of Christ?

PP: Thank God that you are a child of God – if in fact you are one! Have you come to trust in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness of sin and a new identity as a child of God? Thank God that when Christ returns you will be glorified, with a resurrection body! Ask God to help you discern what is pure and “purify” your life: discard impure things and live in purity, by his power. This is the way to a joy-filled, happy and “whole” life, no matter what our circumstances.

Friday, November 4 – I John 3:1-10 This is our second day on this passage.

TAI: Why do you think John made the point “sin is lawlessness”? “Keeping on sinning” (living a lifestyle of persistent sin without repentance) is evidence of what, according to v. 6? Note: John seems to say the same thing again and again, from slightly different directions. Why do you think he writes this way? What point (or points) is he trying to make with these restatements? What is the *warning* he is giving to his readers? What did Jesus come to destroy?

PP: All of us sin. Even as believers, we are far from perfect, and in fact as we grow we will even become more sensitive and aware of our sin. So, John is not asking us to be perfect, but rather he is stressing twin truths: we need to confess our sins and be open with God about them, and, we need to seek God's grace and power to flee from this sin and pursue purity. Pray about this.

Weekend, November 5-6 – Romans 8

TAI & PP: Predestination! Even the word makes people shake in their boots. But it is a biblical word, and we have no choice but to wrestle with its meaning. How is your memorizing going? Did you try just vv. 37-39, or the entire chapter? Review. And ask God to give you wisdom and understanding of what he is saying to his people through verses 29-30. Pray for Pastor Dana as he preaches this crucial text of Scripture. Pray for all our staff at Faith Baptist.

Monday, November 7 – I John 3:11-15

TAI: Turn in your Bible to Genesis, find the story of Cain and Abel, and read it for yourself. What two lessons does John take from this story? “Brother-love” is evidence of what change in our lives, according to John? Shockingly, John says that to hate is to murder! Why do you think he makes this point? What are the “two ways to live” John is contrasting here?

PP: Ask God to help you love others. Ask him to help us build a loving Christian community at Faith Baptist Fellowship. Is there currently anyone in your life that you are struggling to love? Admit that struggle to God and ask him to help you love this person (remember, Jesus even taught this radical love: *love your enemies*).

Tuesday, November 8 – I John 3:16-18

TAI: Who is our great example of love? What does it mean to “lay down our lives for the brothers”? Can you think of an example of this kind of love? Why is generosity an evidence of God’s love in a person? Why are we tempted to talk about love but not really live that way?

PP: Ask God to bring to mind practical ways for you to show love to others. In your Faith Group, discuss how you might show love to others during this Thanksgiving/Christmas season. Pray about your heart: ask God to fill your life with Christ-like love for others. Continue to pray for our church to be a biblical household of Christ-like love. Pray for our Share Team and its ministry to needy people both inside and outside our church family.

Wednesday, November 9 – I John 3:19-24

TAI: Where is the Great Commandment in the gospels? Find it and read it over a couple times. Do you think John drew upon the Great Commandment in writing this paragraph? What does love have to do with answered prayer? How is love an evidence of true faith? What would be the opposite of that? How does God help us to abide in him? What does abiding look like?

PP: Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit so that by his power you can abide in him and keep his commandments, especially the call to radical love. Ask God to make your life an example of faith working itself out in love (see Galatians 5:6). Pray for love to be evident in your family.

Thursday, November 10 – I John 4:1-6

TAI: In the midst of all this talk about love, John takes a brief detour! Why do you think John wants his readers to learn to test the spirits? What is his most basic test for discerning whether or not a spirit is from God? The promise of v. 4 is vitally important: never be tempted to believe that the evil one is greater than the Lord Jesus! Is the “spirit of error” alive and at work today?

PP: Ask God to make you a discerning person with regard to false teaching and false Christs. Ask him to make you a hungry reader of his word, eager to learn the truth and cling to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Praise God that he is greater than the devil, so that there is no need to fear.

Friday, November 11 – I John 4:7-9

TAI: Now John turns again to his favorite (it seems!) subject: love. Notice: in verse 7, the word love appears 4 times, and the word for God appears 3 times! That says something! The love terms are variations of “agape” and the names of God are variations of “theo” in Greek. Both words appear twice more in v. 8. John’s writing here, especially when read aloud, draws attention again and again to “love” and “God” – why? What is he saying by this? How does this relate to Christ and the gospel? To Christmas?

PP: Are you a loving person? Do you love God? Your family? Your neighbors? Your brothers and sisters in Christ? Your co-workers? Your enemies? We cannot become loving people on our own. It is the work of Christ in us. Pray about this. Ask God to grace-fill you with love!

Weekend, November 12-13 – Romans 8

TAI & PP: We are now drawing toward the close of our series “Inseparable” on Romans 8. This is truly one of the grandest chapters in all the Bible, full of precious and tremendous truth for every Christian. In preparation for Sunday’s message, review the questions in vv. 31-35. Review your memory work (many are taking up the challenge of memorizing the whole chapter! That’s exciting!). Have an earnest and robust praise prayer time for all that God has done for you and promised you in Christ Jesus our Lord, that nothing shall separate you from the love of Christ.