

Exploring
the Letters
of John
& Jude

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY



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PART I

1 John

Lesson One

1 John: A Bird's-Eye View

First John is one of the most theologically packed documents in the Bible. From its first verse to its last it presents a running theological discussion as the apostle warns his readers of the dissident elements troubling his churches.

As with other Bible books, one of the best ways to begin is to read 1 John through in one sitting from a translation such as the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the King James Version, the New International Version, or the *New American Standard Bible*. A first reading should take about a half hour. Answering the questions will, of course, take some additional time, but the amount depends upon individual goals in the study of this important book of the Bible.

I. First Impressions of 1 John

- A. As you complete your initial reading of each chapter, jot down in three or four sentences what you think the author is seeking to teach you in that chapter.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

B. Now that you have read 1 John, write out your impressions of the book as a whole.

II. First Impressions From Exploring the Letters of John and Jude

Read the “Introduction to the First Letter of John.” On the basis of your reading:

A. Provide a one-sentence statement on the purpose of 1 John.

B. List the eight major themes of 1 John.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

C. Discuss the main issues related to the structure of 1 John.

D. Highlight the main issues related to the occasion and background of the document.

E. Reflect on the relationship between 1 John, 2 and 3 John, and the Gospel of John.

F. In one paragraph, indicate the relevance of 1 John for our lives in the twenty-first century.

Lesson Two

Setting the Stage

1 John 1:1-7

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 1, 2

- A. Read 1 John 1:1-4 and section 1
1. Summarize in your own words what John is telling his readers.

 2. List the important points in these four verses.

 3. Compare verse 1 with the first verse of the Gospel of John. How are they alike? How do they differ?

 4. According to section 1, what is the problem John is facing in his letter?
 - a. Why does he emphasize his personal experience with Jesus?

 - b. Why is a correct understanding of the Incarnation so important?

Lesson Three

Issues in Salvation

1 John 1:8-2:6

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 3-5

A. Read 1 John 1:8-10 and section 3.

1. What seems to be the problem in verses 8-10?

2. How does verse 9 relate to verses 8 and 10?

3. How do verses 8-10 relate to verses 5-7?

4. According to section 3, how does people's denial of their sin make God a liar?

5. According to section 3, what are the implications of "just" in verse 9?

B. Read 1 John 2:1, 2 and section 4.

1. Summarize in your own words God's answer to the sin problem as found in these two verses.

2. Discuss how 1 John 2:1, 2 relates to 1 John 1:7, 9.

3. What can we learn about Jesus from verses 1 and 2?

4. What can we learn about God's will for His people in verse 1? How does that will relate to their life in the real world?

5. According to section 4, how can Jesus and the Holy Spirit both be the Paraclete?

6. In what ways does section 4 help us understand both the "finished" and the "unfinished" work of Christ?

7. Discuss why, according to section 4, people have a problem with the word “propitiation.”

C. Read 1 John 2:3-6 and section 5.

1. List the main points in those four verses.

2. Summarize in your own words the teaching of verses 3-6.

3. Discuss the problem in the church that made it important for John to raise the issues in verses 3-6.

4. How do verses 3-6 relate to 1 John 1:5-7?

5. After reading section 5, discuss the difference between John’s understanding of “knowing God” and other forms of knowing Him.

Lesson Four

The Love Test and the Master Lie

1 John 2:7-27

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 6-10

A. Read 1 John 2:7-11 and section 6.

1. Summarize the main lesson of verses 7-11.

2. Discuss how the old/new commandment relates to that lesson.

3. How do verses 7-11 relate to verses 3-6? Illustrate your answer.

4. After reading section 6, summarize the concept of “acid test” and how it relates to Christianity.

B. Read 1 John 2:12-14 and section 7.

1. Outline these three verses utilizing people addressed in one column and the message to them in a second.

2. Do you think the message for each “age level” is unique to that level? Why or why not?

3. After reading section 7, discuss the purpose of these verses as an “intermission.”

4. According to section 7, what is the best explanation of the “age level” references in verses 12-14?

C. Read 1 John 2:15-17 and section 8.

1. List the main points of those three verses.

2. Discuss why John may have raised the specific issues he treated in verses 15-17. What does his raising them say about the people he is writing about?

3. Discuss the ways that section 8 aids in understanding verses 15-17.

D. Read 1 John 2:18-21 and section 9.

1. List the major points John is making in verses 18-21.

2. Discuss the implications of verse 19 in the context of the problems that John is dealing with.

3. After reading section 9, discuss the concept of the “last hour” in verse 18.

4. In what ways does section 9 help us understand the nature of the “antichrist”?

E. Read 1 John 2:22-27 and section 10.

1. Outline the main points in verses 22-27.

2. Summarize in your own words the implications of verses 22 and 23.

3. Discuss how verses 22 and 23 fit into the flow of the discussion in verses 18-27.

4. Reflect upon why section 10 refers to the problem in verses 22-27 as the “master lie.”

Lesson Five

Being Ready for Jesus

1 John 2:28-3:10

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 11-14

A. Read 1 John 2:28, 29 and section 11.

1. Summarize the main lesson(s) of verses 28, 29.

2. Explain how verse 28 relates to such passages as 1 John 2:19. What are the implications of dwelling “in Him”?

3. What does verse 29 tell us about God? about Christians?

4. Discuss the meaning of “righteousness” in this context.

5. Discuss the centrality of tests to 1 John as explained in section 11.

B. Read 1 John 3:1-3 and section 12.

1. List the main ideas in verses 1-3.

2. What are the implications of verse 3 for our lives?

3. How do verses 1-3 relate to 1 John 2:29 and 3:4?

4. List four ideas from section 12 that helped you understand verses 1-3 better.

C. Read 1 John 3:4 and section 13.

1. Compare the translation of verse 4 in section 13 with that of the King James Version. Discuss the implications of the differences.

2. What is “lawlessness”?

3. In the light of section 13, discuss the difference between sin and SIN.

D. Read 1 John 3:5-10 and section 14.

1. Carefully outline the main points of verses 5-10.

2. Discuss what you think John means when he says in verse 9 that Christians “cannot sin.”

3. After reading section 14, reflect upon the apparent contradiction between verse 9 and 1 John 1:8-10.

4. Discuss, after reading section 14, how the concepts of sin in chapters 3 and 1 relate to the treatment of sin in 1 John 5:16, 17.

Lesson Six

More Lessons in Genuine Christianity

1 John 3:11-4:6

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 15-19

A. Read 1 John 3:11, 12 and section 15.

1. Outline the significant points in verses 11 and 12.

2. How do those verses relate to what goes before and after them in 1 John 3?

3. After reading section 15, reflect on the implications of John's use of "the beginning" in verses 11 and 12.

4. Discuss section 15's understanding of the "core of godliness." In what ways is something the core?

B. Read 1 John 3:13-18 and section 16.

1. List the main points of those verses.

2. Reflect on how John makes those verses practical for daily life. In what concrete ways could you apply them to your personal walk with God?

3. What are the main lessons that you gained from reading section 16?

C. Read 1 John 3:19-24 and section 17.

1. According to verses 19-24, how can we “know” that we are in the truth?

2. Discuss John’s use of the word “commandment(s)” in these verses.

3. List and briefly discuss the lessons on Christian assurance that you found in reading section 17.

D. Read 1 John 4:1-3 and section 18.

1. List the main points of verses 1-3.

2. Why do we need to test the prophets? How does John tell us to test them in verses 1-3?

3. Discuss the major lessons you learned about testing the prophets by reading section 18.

E. Read 1 John 4:4-6 and section 19.

1. Outline the main ideas in verses 4-6.

2. How do verses 4-6 relate to verses 1-3?

3. Reflect on how verse 6 relates to the problem John is facing in his first letter.

4. What lessons in Christian overcoming can be gleaned from section 19?

Lesson Seven

God's Love and the Life of Victory

1 John 4:7-5:12

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 20-25

A. Read 1 John 4:7, 8 and section 20.

1. List the ideas in verses 7 and 8.

2. How does the declaration that “God is love” relate to the declarations of 1 John 1:5 and 2:29? Discuss how they might relate.

3. In what ways does section 20 help us understand the declaration that “God is love”?

B. Read 1 John 4:9-12 and section 21.

1. Outline the points made in verses 9-12.

2. Describe the relationship of those verses to verses 7 and 8.

3. Discuss the implications of verses 9–12 for your life.

4. After reading section 21, discuss the meaning of the Greek word *monogenes*. How does that understanding help you understand such passages as John 3:16 in the King James Version?

C. Read 1 John 4:13–17 and section 22.

1. List the main ideas in verses 13–17.

2. Discuss the teaching of Christian assurance in these verses.

3. Discuss, after reading section 22, the function of the word “know” in 1 John.

D. Read 1 John 4:18–21 and section 23.

1. Outline the main ideas in those verses.

2. Discuss the concept of fearlessness in verse 18 in relation to verses 16 and 17.

3. Reflect on the lessons that can be learned from section 23 for your personal life.

E. Read 1 John 5:1-5 and section 24.

1. Summarize in your own words the life of victory as set forth in verses 1-5.

2. List the lessons for your personal life that can be gained from these verses.

3. After reading section 24, discuss why all three of John's "tests" are important and why none of them can be left out of the truly Christian life.

F. Read 1 John 5:6-12 and section 25.

1. Discuss the word "testimony" in these verses.

Lesson Eight

Parting Thoughts

1 John 5:13–21

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 26, 27

A. Read 1 John 5:13–17 and section 26.

1. List the main points made in verses 13–17.

2. Given what you know about the entire letter, discuss the significance of verse 13.

3. Reflect on what verses 14 and 15 teach us about prayer.

4. Discuss the implications and meaning of John's treatment of sins that lead to death and sins that don't lead to death.

5. Discuss how verse 16 is related to verses 14 and 15.

6. According to section 26, how is the purpose of 1 John related to the purpose of the Gospel of John?

7. Discuss the “conditions of prayer” listed in section 26. How should those conditions affect your prayer life?

B. Read 1 John 5:18-21 and section 27.

1. Outline the main ideas in these verses.

2. What do you think John means in verse 16 when he claims that the evil one cannot touch the faithful?

3. Do these verses sound like the conclusion to a letter? Why or why not?

4. After reading section 27, discuss how it helps us to understand John’s three final affirmations better.

PART II

2 and 3 John

Lesson Nine

Lessons in Facing Heretics

2 John

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Introduction and Sections 1-3 for 2 John

A. Read the “Introduction to the Second Letter of John.”

1. What does the introduction tell us about the author and recipients of 2 John?

2. Discuss the relationship of 2 John to 1 John.

3. Describe the purpose of the author of 2 John.

4. What are the main issues faced by John in his second letter?

B. Read 2 John 1-3 and section 1.

1. Discuss the function of the word “truth” in verses 1-3.

2. Discuss the meaning of grace, mercy, and peace in verse 3 and their function in the letter's introduction.

3. How does section 1 help us understand the "chosen lady" and the "elder"?

4. After reading section 1, reflect upon the balance of truth and love in 2 John 1-3.

C. Read 2 John 4-9 and section 2.

1. List the main points of verses 4-9.

2. Summarize in your own words the meaning of the warning in verses 7-10.

3. List four ways that section 2 helped you understand the deceivers in 2 John.

D. Read verses 10-13 and section 3.

1. Discuss the implications of verses 10 and 11.

2. Reflect upon the meaning of verse 12.

3. Who is “your chosen sister”? What reason can you give for your answer?

4. After reading section 3, discuss how come those who host certain types of people “participate” in their evil deeds.

Lesson Ten

Hospitality and Perversity in Action

3 John

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Introduction and Sections 1–4 for 3 John

A. Read the “Introduction to the Third Letter of John.”

1. What does the introduction tell us about the relationship between 3 John and John’s other two letters?

2. What is the purpose of 3 John?

3. List the ways in which John helps us understand the dynamics of the first-century church.

B. Read 3 John 1–4 and section 1.

1. Outline the main ideas in verses 1–4.

2. In what ways does section 1 help us identify Gaius?

3. How does the discussion in section 1 help us realize the value of individuals to God?

C. Read 3 John 5-8 and section 2.

1. List the main points in verses 5-8.

2. Discuss the lessons we can learn about hospitality from those verses.

3. Outline the ways that section 2 adds to our knowledge of Christian hospitality.

D. Read verses 9, 10 and section 3.

1. Summarize the personality characteristics of Diotrephes as given in verses 9 and 10.

2. Describe the relationship of John and Diotrephes.

3. How does section 3 help us understand possible connections between Diotrephes and the antichrist party of 1 and 2 John?

D. Read 3 John 11-15 and section 4.

1. List the main points John makes in verses 11-15.

2. What can we know about Demetrius from those verses?

3. Who is Demetrius? In what ways does section 4 help us in his identification and his role in the issues reflected upon in 3 John?

PART III

Jude

Lesson Eleven

Jude: A Bird's-Eye View

Jude is a book that most Bible readers avoid. And those who don't avoid it often fail to understand its powerful message.

Before we begin our study of this little letter, it would be helpful to read it through once or twice. That is not a demanding task, given the fact that Jude is only 25 verses long. Be sure to use a good translation, such as the Revised Standard Version, the King James Version, the New International Version, or the *New American Standard Bible*.

I. First Impressions of Jude

A. As you complete your initial reading of Jude, jot down in three or four sentences what you think the author is seeking to teach us in each paragraph.

1. Verses 1, 2:

2. Verses 3, 4:

3. Verses 5-7:

4. Verses 8-13:

5. Verses 14-16:

6. Verses 17-23:

7. Verses 24, 25:

B. Now that you have read Jude, write out your impressions of the book as a whole.

II. First Impressions From Exploring the Letters of John and Jude

Read the “Introduction to the First Letter of Jude.” On the basis of your reading:

A. Discuss the problem that Jude is facing.

B. Provide a one-sentence statement on the purpose of Jude.

C. List the six major themes of Jude.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

D. Discuss what we know about Jude as a person.

E. Reflect on the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter.

F. Analyze what we know about Jude's use of apocryphal books.

G. In one paragraph, indicate the relevance of Jude for our lives in the twenty-first century.

Lesson Twelve

Problems With False Teachers

Jude 1-16

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 1-5

A. Read Jude 1-4 and section 1.

1. List each item in the greeting of verses 1 and 2 and briefly discuss their significance.

2. List the main ideas of verse 3. Discuss how they are related.

3. What are the important elements in verse 4? Discuss their significance.

4. After reading section 1, discuss what it teaches regarding being a “slave” of Christ’s.

B. Read Jude 5-7 and section 2.

1. Outline the three illustrations in verses 5-7 and what Jude is saying about each.

2. Reflect upon what the three illustrations have in common.

3. Discuss how section 2 helped you understand the three illustrations of verses 5-7.

C. Read Jude 8-10 and section 3.

1. List the main points in these three verses.

2. Summarize in your own words the problem of those being talked about in verses 8-10. Hint: what do they have in common?

3. Discuss how section 3 helped you understand the illustrations in verses 8-10.

D. Read Jude 11-13 and section 4.

1. List the three characters in verse 11.

2. What problem did each have?

3. Describe your impression of those individuals discussed in verses 12 and 13.

4. Discuss the specific ways in which section 4 helped you understand the descriptive phrases in verses 12 and 13.

E. Read Jude 14–16 and section 5.

1. Summarize the implications of verses 14 and 15.

2. List the characteristics of those described in verse 16.

3. Describe the impression that that final list leaves in your mind.

4. Reflect upon the ways that section 5 helped you understand Jude's use of 1 Enoch.

Lesson Thirteen

Admonitions for True Believers

Jude 17-25

Exploring the Letters of John and Jude, Sections 6-8

A. Read Jude 17-19 and section 6.

1. Summarize the meaning of verses 17-19.

2. Why, in the context of Jude, did the author add these verses?

3. Using the marginal reference in your Bible, compare verse 18 with its parallel in 2 Peter. How are they alike? How are they different? Include the context of each in your discussion.

4. After reading section 6, discuss the “remembering” concept as used by Jude.

B. Read verses 20-23 and section 7.

1. List the admonitions in those verses.

2. In comparison with the rest of Jude, what impression do these verses leave in your mind? Why do you think Jude added them at this place in his letter?

3. List the three groups found in verses 22 and 23. How does Jude's counsel vary concerning missionary work with each group?

4. In what specific ways did section 7 help you understand verses 20–23?

C. Read verses 24 and 25 and section 8.

1. List the main ideas in verse 24.

2. Discuss the implications of each idea that you listed.

3. List the elements of the doxology in verse 25.

4. What are the implications of each element?

5. In what ways did section 8 help you understand the concept of “stumbling” in verse 24?

D. Reread the entire book of Jude.

1. In what ways has your study helped you understand it better?

2. If you could select only one sentence summarizing the meaning of Jude for your life, what would you write? Why did you select that sentence?