



Two-week Bible Reading Plan:

“Discerning Love”

February 29/March 1

March 7/8

3 John is a letter to a disciple named Gaius, and the author’s goal was to deal with a specific situation. However, the truths the author emphasizes are intimately connected to the truths throughout the epistles widely attributed to John (1, 2, and 3 John). This two-week, 10-Scripture reading plan covers all three epistles. We encourage you to join us in the Word so that you are better equipped to follow Jesus and understand that knowing Him is knowing the God who gives His followers discerning love.

WEEK ONE: The Love of Support

To walk in truth is to follow after Jesus, and Jesus leads the way in radical generosity and obedience to God and His Kingdom.

Five daily Scripture readings and questions

3 John 1-8 – Do you see the connection between walking in the Truth and your generosity to the mission of God in this world? What is one way you can stretch yourself in your generosity?

1 John 1 – Jesus deals with the issue of sin in our life, and this section makes it very clear that we all have that problem. The solution is to confess that sin to God, and in repentance turn and go in the opposite direction by God’s strength and power. What are ways you can share what is going on with people you trust so they can support you as you walk in the Truth and continue in repentance?

1 John 2:1-14 – It is amazing what Jesus has done for those who know Him. The idea of the atoning sacrifice (“propitiation”) is that God paid the penalty and took the wrath that we deserved, while preserving His justice and holiness (Romans 3). When we keep God’s commandments, including loving one another, we see the reality of Jesus’ forgiveness in our lives. A helpful definition for love is “giving someone what they need even when they do not deserve it.” How can you love someone today?

1 John 2:15-29 – Followers of Jesus experience immense distractions. In 1 John, love is indicated not simply by our desires but also our actions. Therefore, a true love of the world would reveal itself in our desires AND our actions. Where do you see these tendencies? How might you practice righteousness and combat those desires?

1 John 3 – The problem of identity is a human issue; we all want to know who we are. The Bible answers this question in this chapter: We are children of God. What are the implications of this identity for you? When do you have a tendency to doubt this? How can you live in light of who you are in Jesus?

WEEK TWO: Discerning Fruit

Behavior demonstrates faith and is indicative of the level of intimacy that someone has with Jesus.

Five daily Scripture readings and questions

1 John 4:1-6 – During the writing of the New Testament and immediately after, churches were just beginning -- and vulnerable to false teachers. The author of 1 John is dealing with this reality. It is very likely this message was from the Apostle John to many churches, trying to demonstrate the truth of God to the members of the church. All of us are tempted to believe lies, and the way to deal with that is to test a belief through the filter of the grace and love of Jesus. What lies are you tempted to believe? What does the grace and love of God through Jesus say about those untruths?

1 John 4:7-21 – Who wouldn't love this section of Scripture? God is love! Remember, the love of God is defined by the person and work of Jesus, and the mark of that love is the Spirit of God (v.13). The Spirit is what causes us to love, because God is in us, and this love combats fear, malice toward others, and the desire to control others. What do you fear? Where are you tempted to wrong others? What or whom do you try to control? How does God's love combat those things in your life?

1 John 5:1-12 – 1 John talks a lot about keeping the commandments of God, and the author includes that in the category of loving others. Jesus does the same when He sums up the commandments in Matthew 22:34-40. Living out these commandments and walking in the Truth will develop our faith, and our faith helps those who believe to "overcome the world." When do you feel overcome by the world? How can keeping His commandments help strengthen your faith in Jesus?

1 John 5:13-20 – This final section of 1 John has clear connections with John 20:30-31. The author says that those who believe Jesus is the Son of God have eternal life ... in the present tense! We don't wait for eternal life – we live in it now! By understanding this, we can discern what is true and who is from God. Finally, he finishes his letter with the enduring admonition to "keep yourselves from idols," acknowledging that this is an ongoing temptation. What are the "idols" in your life -- things that you honor and pursue at the expense of your pursuit and loyalty to God? How does having eternal life help you with that temptation?

2 John – This letter is written to a congregation dealing with the realities of what was written in 1 John. How can you abide in the teachings of Christ? How can you identify those who do not follow the teaching found in the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John? How can you lovingly reject false teachers?