



Eyewitnesses

SESSION 5:
THE LETTERS & GOSPEL OF JOHN

Pre-Class Discussion

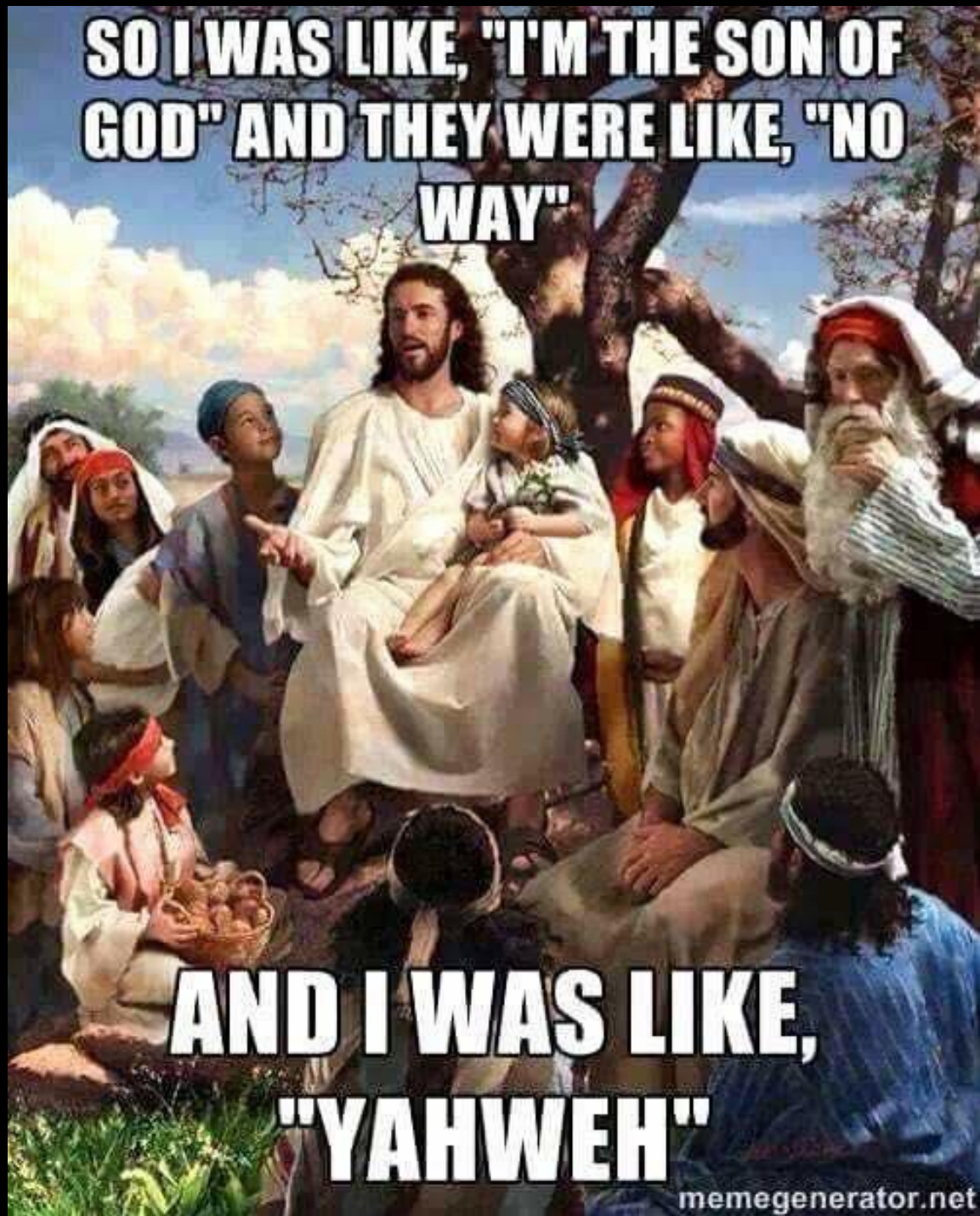
- Draw on what you have learned from Bible Project videos, the textbook, class lectures, and your own Bible reading.
- If you had a friend who had never read any of the Gospels but wanted to read one, which one would you recommend to them first? Why?

The Gospel of John

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”

John 1:18

**SO I WAS LIKE, "I'M THE SON OF
GOD" AND THEY WERE LIKE, "NO
WAY"**



**AND I WAS LIKE,
"YAHWEH"**

Basic Information:

Author, Purpose, Date & Audience

Author:

“The Beloved Disciple”

- John 21:20, 24 “Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against him during the supper...This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.”
- = One of the closer disciples.
- = Not mentioned elsewhere in John’s Gospel
- = John son of Zebedee!

Distinctives of John

- No genealogy
- No birth
- No baptism
- No temptation
- No casting out demons
- No parables
- No transfiguration
- No institution of the Lord's Supper
- No agony in Gethsemane

Distinctives of John

There IS:

- Emphasis on ministry in Jerusalem
- Emphasis on private conversations
 - Nicodemus (John 3)
 - Samaritan Woman (John 4)
 - Pilate (John 18:28-19:16)
- Emphasis on care for Disciples (John 13-17)

Date:

- Gospel of John assumes a basic working knowledge of the contents of the Synoptics
- It looks like John was trying to “fill in the gaps” left by the Synoptics
- Church tradition places John as the last Gospel written (80’s or 90’s)
- A post-70’s date would explain John’s emphasis on Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish institutions and festivals
- = 80’s or 90’s

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Audience:

- John son of Zebedee later served as the overseer of the Church in Ephesus (and that whole region)

= part Jewish apologetic (growing hostility toward Christianity during the end of the first century)

= part Gentile audience
(emphasis on Jesus as the Word;
avoids confusion by leaving out
Parables and Demons)

Gospel of John

A pair of hands, appearing to be of a darker skin tone, are shown cupping a small, realistic globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned symmetrically on either side of the globe, with fingers gently curled around it. The globe shows blue oceans, green landmasses, and white clouds. The background is a solid black, which makes the hands and the globe stand out prominently.

**JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD,
BY BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME.**

Is John Trustworthy?

“...John actually contains more details of time and place in the course of Jesus’ ministry than do the Synoptics. It is only from John that we are able to determine that Jesus’ ministry spanned approximately a three-year period.” (Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 182)





Literary Structure

- 1-12 = Book of “Signs”
 - 7 Signs and 7 Discourses
- 13-21 = Book of “Glory”
 - Farewell discourse
 - Cross, resurrection and ascension conflated as Jesus’s moment of glory and being lifted up

John's Seven Signs:

1. Turning water into wine (2:1-11)
2. Healing nobleman's son (4:46-54)
3. Healing the invalid (5:1-18)
4. Feeding the 5,000 (6:5-14)
5. Walking on water (6:16-21)
6. Healing blind man (9:1-7)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead
(11:1-45)
8. Rising from the dead (20:1-31)

Fulfilling the Feasts



John 5 = The Sabbath



John 6 = Passover



John 7-9 = Tabernacles



John 10-11 = Rededication
(Hanukkah)



Light and Darkness

Light in the Darkness

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^{[a](#)} it.

Love the Darkness

John 3:19-21 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

“I Am” the Light

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Belief & Unbelief

Belief

confidence is
religious faith.
opini

Children of God

John 1:11-12 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

Whosoever Believes

John 3:14-18 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[a] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”^[b]

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

The Work of God

John 6:27-29 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

John 12:32-36

And I, when I am lifted up^[a] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

³⁴ The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. ³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

John 12:37-46

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”^[a]

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.”^[b]

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

The Purpose of this Book

John 20:29-31 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe^[a] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1 John

That you may know...

Opening Discussion:

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

Authorship:

- 1 John claims no author, but is someone who has “heard, seen and touched” Jesus (1:1)
- 2 & 3 John written by “the elder” (*presbyteros*)
- Extremely similar in style of writing and vocabulary (i.e., Luke & Acts)
 - *monogenes* and *parakletos*
- Ancient testimony unanimously points to John



Gnosticism:

- Gnosis = knowledge (usually secret)
 - You can gain perfection if you learn the secrets
- Believed in a myriad of deities in descending power/emanations
 - God of the OT is evil (because he created)
 - Jesus is a demiurge; who reveals the highest God
- Docetism: matter is evil; spirit is good.
 - Salvation is about escaping the body and physical world

Authorship: Apostle John?

- The Gospel of John was extremely popular among Gnostics (heretical Christian movement). They emphasized:
 - Deity of Christ
 - Empowerment of believers to keep commands
 - Realized eschatology ("already")
 - Guidance of Holy Spirit

Gospel of John vs. Letters of John

Gospel of John

- Deity of Christ
- Empowerment of believers to keep commands
- Realized eschatology ("already")
- Guidance of Holy Spirit

1-3 John

- Humanity of Christ
- Caution against claims of sinlessness
- Future eschatology ("not yet")
- Test the spirits!

Date & Authorship:

- “It was the letters of John—1 John in particular—that redeemed the Fourth Gospel for the New Testament...”
(Gary Burge)
- If true, this hypothesis affirms authorship by John, and necessitates a date sometime after his Gospel would have been distributed.
- = late 80's/early-mid 90's

Application: Guard against Heresy

Gnosticism: Growth through knowledge alone.

Perfectionism: Self-help approach to discipleship.

Docetism: Disregard for the body or the material universe because it is inherently evil and/or temporary.

Genre:

- Has no ordinary marks to identify it as a letter
 - No opening (or author)
 - No greeting (or addressees)
 - No prayer/blessing
 - No closing
- “This absence of form has led many to suggest that 1 John is not a personal letter but a general treatise or a sermon for wide distribution... Perhaps it is a pamphlet engaged in some sort of polemic.” (Textbook, 414)
- = a sermon or pamphlet

Literary Structure:

- “Discovering a recognizable structure of thought in 1 John has proven impossible.” (*New Testament in Antiquity*)
- “What is clear about the structure is that John repeatedly cycles through *three key themes, which together form what have been called “the tests of life”: loving one another, keeping the commandments, and believing in Jesus as fully God and fully human.*” (Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos*, 489)

Test 1: Obey His commands

1 John 2:3-6 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. ⁴ Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, love for God^[a] is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Test 2: Love others

1 John 3:16-18 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. 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? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Test 3: Trust in Jesus

1 John 2:22-25 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. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

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

Test 4:
Share in the
Holy Spirit

1 John 4:13-16 ¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 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.

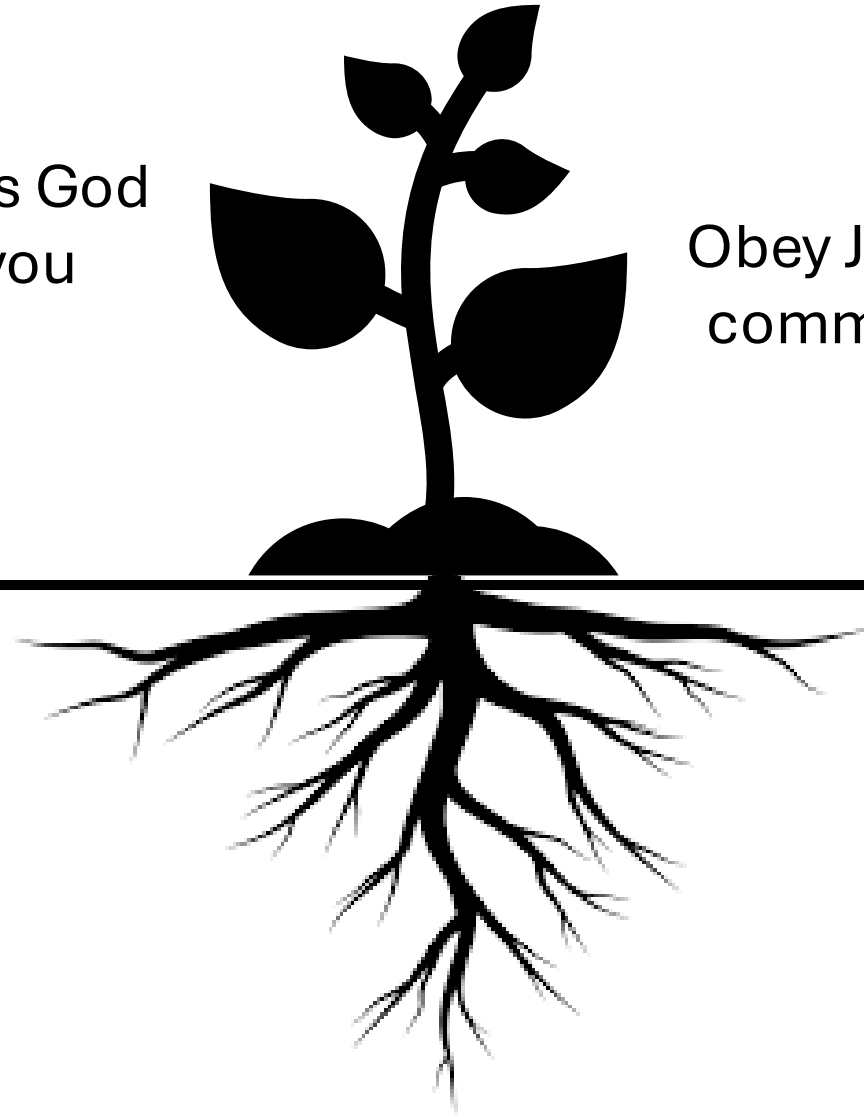
Summary:
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1 John 3:23-24 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Fruits:

Love others as God
has loved you

Obey Jesus's
commands



Fruits:

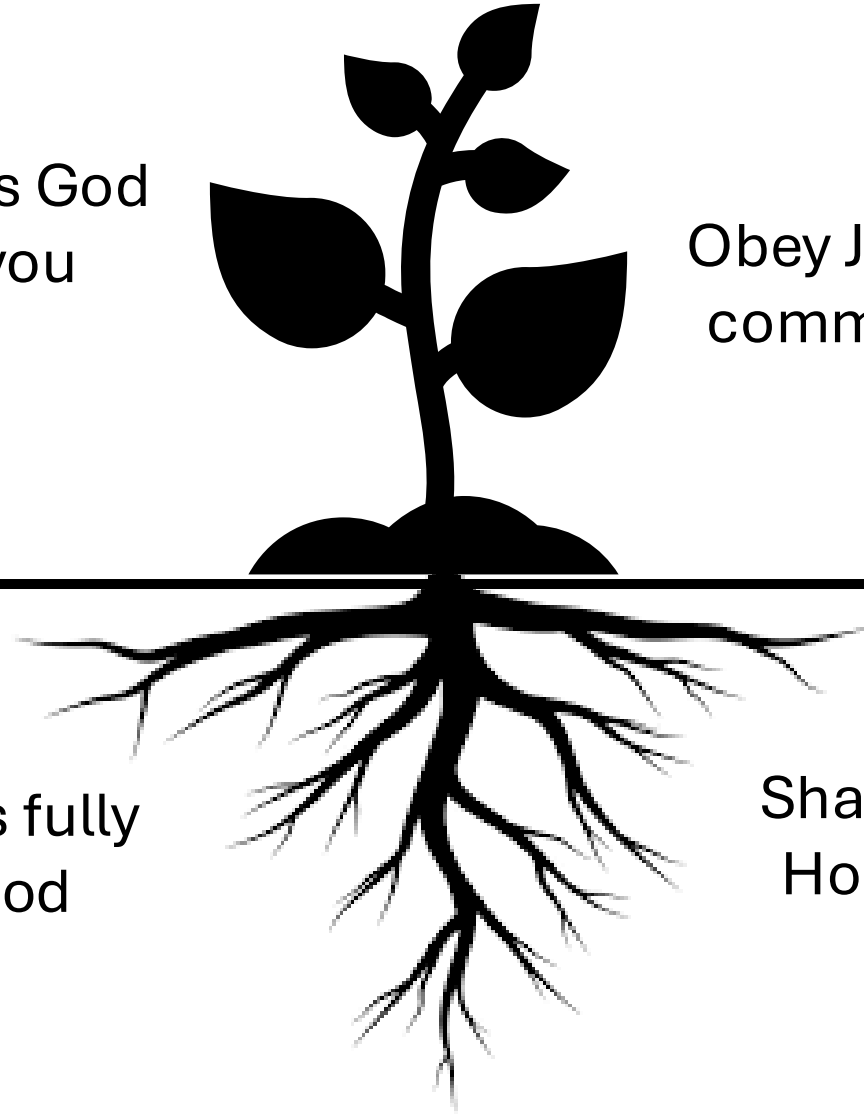
Love others as God
has loved you

Obey Jesus's
commands

Roots:

Believe in Jesus as fully
man and fully God

Share in the
Holy Spirit

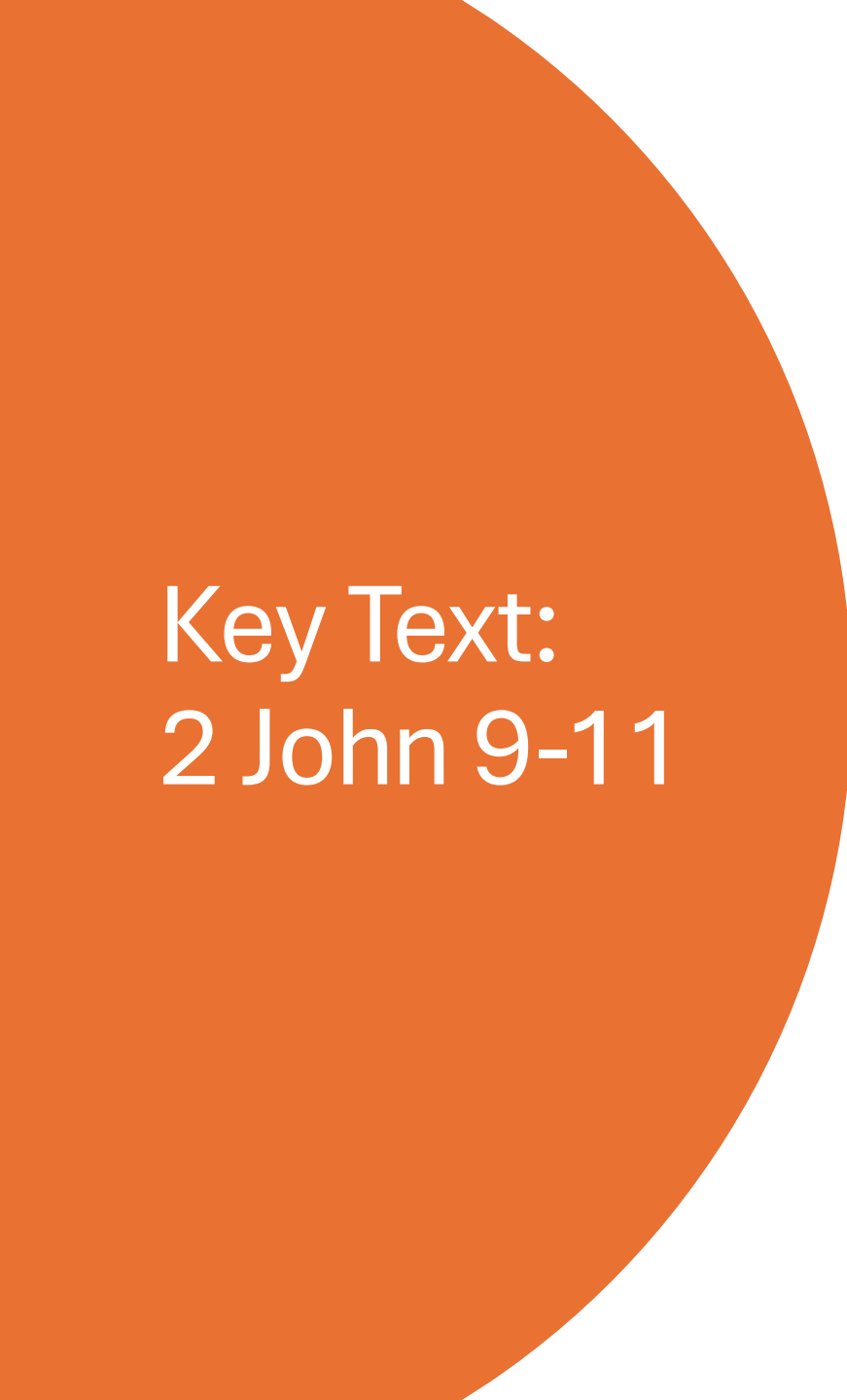


1 John

GENUINE CHRISTIANS HAVE BOTH ROOTS AND FRUITS:
FAITH IN THE REAL JESUS AND LOVE FOR REAL PEOPLE


2 John

The Heretics Attack

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Key Text: 2 John 9-11

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. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. ¹¹ Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

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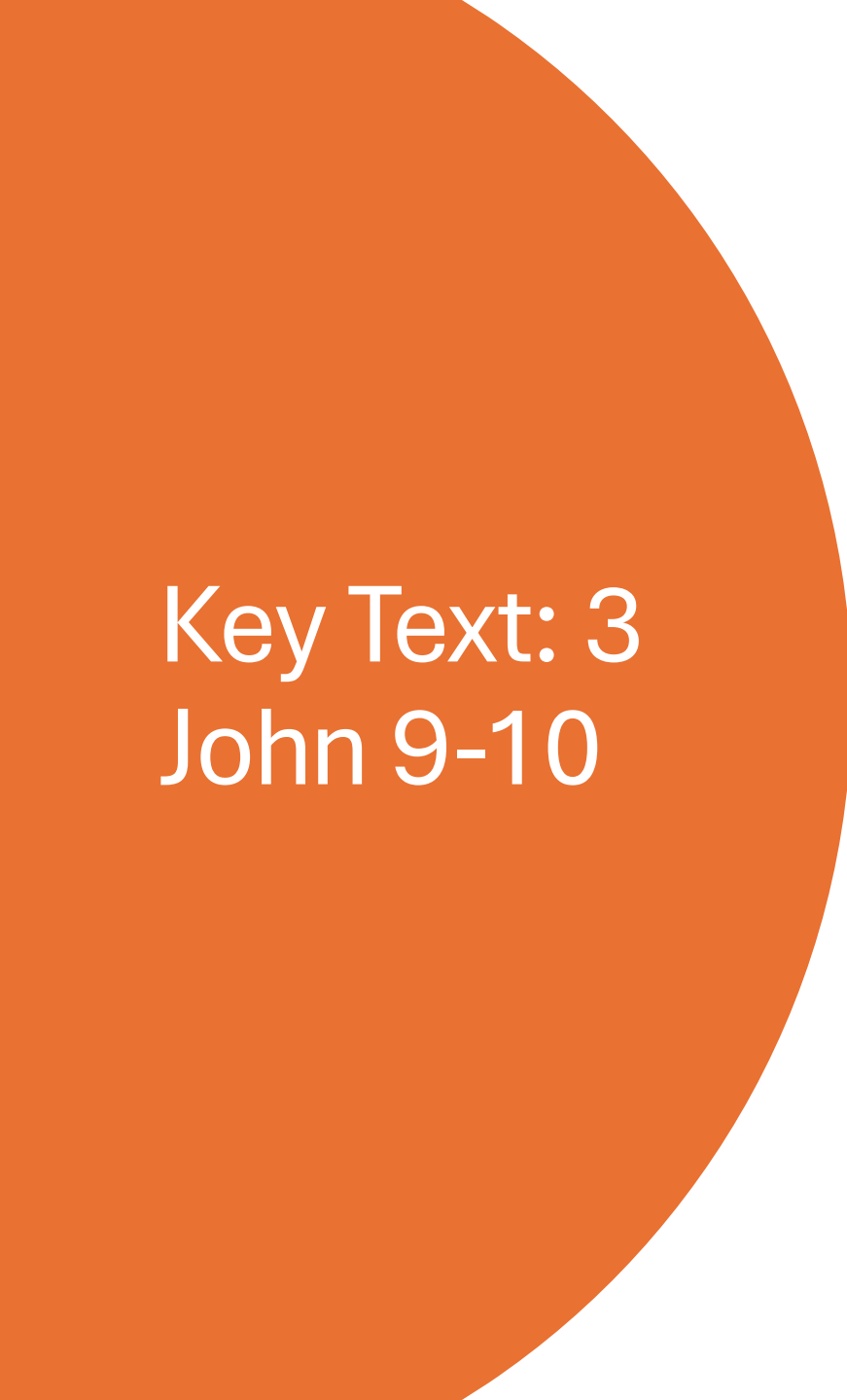
2 John

GO AWAY

DON'T WELCOME FALSE TEACHERS


3 John

The Heretics Take Over

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Key Text: 3 John 9-10

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. 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.

A decorative blue curved line is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.



3 John

DO WELCOME TRUE TEACHERS

A black and white photograph of a person walking up a wide, dark staircase. The person is seen from behind, silhouetted against a bright light source at the top of the stairs. The light creates a strong lens flare effect. The walls on either side of the stairs are dark and textured, with metal handrails. In the background, a multi-story building with many windows is visible, partially obscured by the light. The overall mood is contemplative and symbolic.

Walking

1 John 1:6-7

If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 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^{[a](#)} sin.

2 John 1:4-6

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

3 John 1:3-4

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