



Background

Although the epistle we call 1 John does not identify its author, the early church ascribed it to the apostle John and its language is very similar to John's Gospel. Most conservative scholars believe the book was written in the late first century (after AD 70). John wrote to Christians but the book does not identify any specific church or region. Many have argued that John wrote to Christians in Asia Minor, perhaps even in Ephesus.

What John Heard

In the prologue (verses 1:1-4), John explained that the incarnate Jesus Christ was God's message to humanity, and the message was "eternal life." John said the message was heard, seen, observed, and touched. Then in verse 5 John shares a foundation principle he heard from Jesus, which we do not find in John's Gospel or the other Gospels. It is this key principle that John uses as a springboard to re-affirm his readers in the truths they already know and to dispute the deceivers that John warns his readers about.

1. **God is light:** John told his readers in v. 5 a foundational truth he heard from Jesus — God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. But what does that mean? What does light represent and what are the implications of John's statement?

— On "light" see John 1:4-9; 3:16-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:36; 12:46; Matthew 5:14-16

— See 1 John 2:28 — John encourages his readers to "remain in him", but how can imperfect sinners remain in him if there is no darkness in him?

2. **A negative and positive principle:** John frequently expounds with a negative example followed by a positive example.

3. **Fellowship with the God who is light (vv. 6-7):** John states that those who walk in darkness do not enjoy fellowship AND do not do the truth.

— On "truth" see John 3:20-21, 4:24, 5:33, 8:40-46, 14:17

— You cannot walk in darkness and enjoy fellowship

— Those who claim fellowship but walk in darkness LIE and are not doing the TRUTH

— But those who walk in the light enjoy fellowship AND the blood of Jesus cleanses them (why does this matter?)

4. **The reality of our sinfulness (vv. 8-9):** Claiming to have no sin is not only false but self-deception.

— In verse 8, "sin" is singular, but in verse 9 it is plural; note that noun "sin" is singular in John 1:29 and the adjective "without sin" is singular in John 8:7 — so what does John mean in verse 8 about claiming to have no sin?

— The verb "confess" is the Greek *homologeō* and "to share a common view of be of a common mind about a matter"

— For what reason should we "confess our sins"? See John 13:6-11.

5. **The reality that we have sinned (v. 10):** When John writes "we have not sinned" he uses the Greek perfect tense, which generally denotes past action with continuing consequences.

— To deny having sinned means "the word is not in us", but what does that mean?

— Does it mean we are not Christians if we make that claim?