

## 11. Important Themes in First John (3Q 2009—Loved and Loving: John’s Epistles)

**Biblical material:** Matt. 5:13; John 14:6; Eph. 4:25–5:21; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 John.

### Quotes

- Truth is not the feeble thing which men often think they can afford to disparage. Truth is power; let it be treated and trusted as such. *Horatius Bonar*
- If a thousand old beliefs were ruined in our march to truth we must still march on. *Stopford A. Brooke*
- If God were able to backslide from truth, I would fain cling to truth and let God go. *Meister Eckhart*
- Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is. *Winston Churchill*
- Half-truths are like half a brick—they can be thrown further. *Hyman von Rickover*
- Dare to be true: nothing can need a lie; /A fault which needs it most, grows two thereby. *George Herbert*
- ...and remember you're a Man, not just god, and for you there aren't and never will be any easy answers, only questions, and no reasons, only causes, and no meaning, only intelligence, and no destination and no kindly magic smiling down from above, and no fires to goad you from below, only Yourself and the Universe and what you make out of the interface between the two equals. *Keith Laumer, Night of Delusions*

### Questions

Why is it so important to distinguish truth from lies? In what way is truth absolute? How does this affect what we do? In the cosmic conflict, what role does truth play, and how does the Accuser distort and misrepresent? What happens when we compromise? Why is the cross of Christ the “center of attraction” for the whole universe?

### Bible discussion

God, church, salvation, Christian behavior, truth and lies. These are the “important themes in First John” as defined by the lesson author. He writes, “John knows that there are absolutes; more so, he makes it very clear that there is a sharp distinction between truth and lies, a contrast that tends to be blurred in relativistic worldviews. There is absolute truth. God is true. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are truth. On the other hand, a liar is a person who makes unsubstantiated claims, who confesses to love and does not keep the commandments, and who denies that Jesus is the Christ. In contrast, sincere Christians know the truth, love the truth, and belong to the truth. Thus, truth is both what we intellectually grasp and what we practice.” (Thursday’s lesson).

This practical demonstration of truth is at the heart of John’s message. He says much about it: 1 John 2:4, 21; 3:19; 4:6; 5:20. And the central point of truth is God. Our salvation depends on this, and should be manifested in our lives and behavior. This is shown primarily in the love we have for each of God’s children. Note this: “Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. (1 John 3:18, 19 NIV)

John's message should go with us, ringing in our ears. Re-read John 1 and 1 John 1. See how John speaks so clearly of how God is made unmistakably plain in Jesus. And as we think of Jesus: his life, death, resurrection and heavenly ministry—and his soon return, what should be *our* message to this sad and dying world?

### **Comment**

“If, then, the whole purpose of Christ's first appearing was to remove sins and to undo the works of the devil, Christians must not compromise with either sin or the devil, or they will find themselves fighting against Christ. If the first step to holiness is to recognize the sinfulness of sin, both in its essence as lawlessness and in its diabolical origin, the second step is to see its absolute incompatibility with Christ in His sinless Person and saving work. The more clearly we grasp these facts, the more incongruous will sin appear and the more determined we shall be to be rid of it.” John R W Stott, Epistles of John (London: Tyndale Press, 1964), 125.

### **Ellen White Comments**

There is a living power in truth, and the Holy Spirit is the agent that opens human minds to the truth. But the ministers and workers who proclaim the truth must show certainty and decision. They are to go forth in faith, and present the Word as though they believed it. Try to make those for whom you labor understand that it is God's truth. Preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This will confront Satan's lies. {Ev 169}

Satan's angels are wise to do evil, and they will create that which some will claim to be advanced light, and will proclaim it as new and wonderful; yet while in some respects the message may be truth, it will be mingled with human inventions, and will teach for doctrine the commandments of men. If there was ever a time when we should watch and pray in real earnest, it is now. Many apparently good things will need to be carefully considered with much prayer, for they are specious devices of the enemy to lead souls in a path which lies so close to the path of truth that it will be scarcely distinguishable from it. But the eye of faith may discern that it is diverging, though almost imperceptibly, from the right path. At first it may be thought positively right, but after a while it is seen to be widely divergent from the way which leads to holiness and heaven. My brethren, I warn you to make straight paths for your feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way {Ev 590}

A reformation must take place in every family, in every institution, in every church. “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” “Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. . . . If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. {RH, April 3, 1900}