

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Living for the God Who Really Came

1 John 1:1—2:2

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

If desired, write Barclay's list of attributes of darkness (pages 8-9) on a white board or large piece of paper to encourage discussion. Also, you may copy the list from the final page of this session and simply show it—if your group is small enough for all to see. Or, make multiple copies.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Oh, How He Loves You and Me, *The Worship Hymnal* # 170, CCLI #15850

Amazing Love (My Lord, What Love is This), *The Worship Hymnal* # 168, CCLI #1043618

There Is a Savior, *The Worship Hymnal* #286, CCLI # 20728

How Deep the Father's Love for Us, *The Worship Hymnal* # 101, CCLI # 1558110

Shine on Us, *The Worship Hymnal* # 89, CCLI # 1754646

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Living for the God Who Really Came

Focal Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Background Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Main Idea

The gospel of God's really coming in human flesh in his Son Jesus Christ demands that we live faithfully for him.

Question to Explore

If God really came in Jesus, how should that affect how we live?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to identify implications for their lives of the meaning of God's coming in Jesus Christ.

Gathering together:

Sing the following or another song emphasizing the love of God.

Oh, How He Loves You and Me, *The Worship Hymnal* # 170, CCLI #15850

Amazing Love (My Lord, What Love is This), *The Worship Hymnal* # 168, CCLI #1043618

First thoughts:

William Barclay wrote in 1958 these words "The trouble which 1 John seeks to combat did not come from men who were out to destroy the Christian faith; it came from men who thought that they were improving the Christian faith. It came from men whose aim was to make Christianity intellectually respectable. It came from men who knew the intellectual tendencies and currents of the day, and who wished to express Christianity in terms of these current philosophical ideas. It came from men who felt that the time had come for Christianity to come to terms with secular philosophy and with

contemporary thought” Barclay, W. **The Daily Study Bible, The Letters of John and Jude**. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958, First Edition, 1960, Second Edition, page 5).

The desire for Christianity to come to terms with contemporary thought is as real today as it was when 1 John was written sometime around A.D. 85-100. It is as real today as when Barclay wrote in 1958.

Today we will examine what changes to the gospel message were being introduced when John wrote this book. We will ask ourselves how we recognize changes which challenge Biblical faith today. How do thoughtful Christians deal with today’s culture? More importantly we ask ourselves how the reality of Jesus coming to earth and dying for our sins affects our daily life.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won’t need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Living for the God Who Really Came

Focal Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Background Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Main Idea

The gospel of God's really coming in human flesh in his Son Jesus Christ demands that we live faithfully for him.

Question to Explore

If God really came in Jesus, how should that affect how we live?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to identify implications for their lives of the meaning of God's coming in Jesus Christ.

Introduction to your personal study:

William Barclay said “In the very first days of Christianity there was a glory and a splendour, a magnificence and a radiance in life. But now Christianity had become a thing of habit”. As you prepare to lead the Bible Study, ask the Lord to renew the glory, splendour, magnificence and radiance of life in Christ for yourself and each participant.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching # 23) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

By the time 1 John was written around 85-100 A.D. certain things had happened within the Church. One of these was the fact that many of the Christians were second or third generation Christians. The excitement of early believers who often held the hope of Christ's imminent return had faded. The reality of living a counter-culture lifestyle with no immediate reward was less desirable.

"In the very first days of Christianity there was a glory and a splendour, a magnificence and a radiance in life. But now Christianity had become a thing of habit" (Barclay, page 4).

Church planters may relate to this experience. It may even be true of home churches. Beginning a new church is an intensely exciting adventure. But it is also very hard work. At first, everyone may be glad to set up chairs in the meeting room, take them down after the service is over, carry in all the supplies and arrange them and pack them up again when the service is over. But over time, that excitement may diminish.

Whenever the excitement of living the Christian life begins to fade we are vulnerable to something new. Sometimes that something new is a good thing. Sometimes it is not. When it is a change in the basic teachings of Biblical faith, it is a serious issue.

John was addressing such an issue when he wrote 1 John.

Related to this was the reality that some did not want to live up to the standards of Biblical mandates. Jesus said ***If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you (John 15:18-19).***

But we get tired of being different. We want to appear intelligent, suave and "with it" The demands of holy living may get in the way of success. This is our reality today and it was apparently the reality in John's day as well.

There was no sign that the church was being persecuted at the time of the writing of 1 John. "The peril was not persecution, but seduction; for the peril came from within. This, too, Jesus had foreseen. 'Many false prophets,' He said, 'shall arise and shall deceive many' (Matthew 24:11)" (Barclay, page 5).

There was a way of thinking throughout the Greek world to which the general name of Gnosticism is given. "The basic belief of all Gnostic thought is that only spirit is good and matter is essentially evil" (Barclay, page 6).

"Here, then, is a picture of these Gnostic heretics. They talked of being born of God, of walking in the light, of having no sin, of dwelling in God, of knowing God. These were their catch phrases. They had no idea of destroying the Church and the faith; by their way of it they were going to cleanse the Church of what they regarded as dead wood, and they were going to make Christianity an intellectually respectable philosophy, fit to

stand beside the great systems of the day. But the effect of their teaching was to destroy the incarnation, to eliminate the Christian ethic, and to make fellowship within the Church impossible. It is little wonder that John, with such fervent pastoral devotion, seeks to defend the Churches he loved from such an insidious and threatening attack from within, for this was a threat which was far more perilous than the threat of any heathen persecution. The very existence of the Christian faith and of the Christian Church was at stake” (Barclay, page 15).

False teachers who had once been part of the believers denied the messiahship of Jesus and his incarnation. John addresses these issues.

Focusing on the Meaning:

1 John 1:1—2:2

1 John 1: 1-4

In verse 3 John declares ***We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.*** John gives his testimony. He tells what he has seen and heard in order that others may experience the same thing. John says that this Word of life existed from the beginning of time. He and others saw Jesus and touched him. Jesus existed in human form. John begins, then, in positive terms to counteract the teachings that Jesus was not a real person. ***The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it.*** An eyewitness account carries a great deal of weight in a court of law. John’s account should carry weight with believers across the ages.

These words call to mind the words of John 1: 1-5 ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.***

John’s desire – that which will make his joy complete – is that others will comprehend just how important this is.

1 John 1: 5-10

God is light; in him is no darkness at all. This is one of the great affirmations of the New Testament and one which brings great hope. In places where there is cold and short days and lack of sunlight, people can suffer from a depressive illness known as SAD or seasonal affective disorder. Light is essential for good mental health and good physical health as well. It is also essential for spiritual health. We need to proclaim ***God is light; in him is no darkness at all.***

John continues that because God is light, our lives should reflect that light. We are not living the truth if we live lives filled with darkness.

Barclay lists the following characteristics of darkness:

Darkness stands for the Christless life. It represents the life that a man lived before he met Christ, or the life that he lives, if he stays away from Christ.

The dark is hostile to the light.

The darkness stands for the ignorance of life apart from Christ.

The darkness stands for the chaos of life without God.

The darkness stands for the immorality of the Christless life.

The darkness is characteristically unfruitful.

The darkness is connected with lovelessness and hate.

The dark is the abode of the enemies of Christ and the final goal of those who will not accept Him. The darkness is the life which is separated from God (Barclay, pages 32-33).

John will come back to this theme. Apparently, those who believed that matter or the human body was evil felt that whatever the body did had no relationship to the spirit which was good. Therefore, pure living was not a requirement. John refutes this attitude - ***If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*** That fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ (verse 3).

There is simply no justification for one who claims to know the Light to live in the darkness of sin.

Walking in the light leads to fellowship with others who walk in the light. The blood of Jesus – that is, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ – purifies us from all sin.

John then discusses sin. We deceive ourselves if we claim to be without sin. Yet, millions of people make that very claim. They base their claim on a standard of moral conduct which is often very admirable. We may agree that from a human standpoint these are good people. But compared to the Light we have all missed the mark. This very basic teaching of the Christian faith is difficult for many to accept. Yet, selfishness, lack of love, envy, and pride enter into every life. It is not hard to see that we have all sinned.

Only confession of sin and acceptance of Christ's redemption can purify us from sin.

1 John 2: 1-2

John writes to those within his pastoral care with the desire that they not sin. Yet he knows that they will sin. Jesus, the atoning sacrifice, will speak to the Father in our defense. This amazing concept – that Jesus Himself speaks to the Father on our behalf is expressed in this way – “May not the present advocacy of Jesus be understood in light of his intercessory prayer for his disciples while on earth. And are not our prayers for forgiveness effective only in so far as he gathers them up in his? Is not his present intercession also of a character with his unfailing loving for his disciples of which John writes in 13:1: ‘Jesus...having loved his own who were in world, ...loved them to the end’? Does he still not love men ‘to the end’?” (**The Interpreter’s Bible, James; Peter; John; Jude; Revelation; General Articles; Indexes**, New York: Abingdon Press, 1957, pages 227-228).

Evangelical Christians do not emphasize confession. We act as if our confession of sin at the time of our initial conversion experience is enough. Yet the prayer of Jesus called the Lord’s prayer speaks of asking for daily bread and says **“forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us” (Matthew 6: 9-13)**. It is important that we daily confess our sins and ask for forgiveness.

John emphasizes that the atoning sacrifice was made **for the sins of the whole world**. In today’s world of many expressions of religious faith, it is easy for us to be content with a “live and let live” attitude. Yet we must remember that the Light is for all people. Communicating that in a loving and compassion way is our task.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Help your group understand the importance of coming of Christ as a man. Help each member consider what sort of lifestyle is indicative of knowing the light of the world.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Living for the God who Really Came

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Background Text

1 John 1:1—2:2

Main Idea

The gospel of God's really coming in human flesh in his Son Jesus Christ demands that we live faithfully for him.

Question to Explore

If God really came in Jesus, how should that affect how we live?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to identify implications for their lives of the meaning of God's coming in Jesus Christ.

Connect with Life:

Explain the context of 1 John. (You may want to read to them the “Background” section from the **Teacher Preparation**. Discuss the excitement of being a part of something new.

Inquire: How can we keep ourselves from losing our enthusiasm for our faith, our home church, and for sharing the gospel?

Guide the Study:

Have someone read 1 John 1:1-8 and 2:1-2.

State: There is no evidence that the church at this time (85-100 A.D.) was being persecuted. The problems arose from within the church. These problems included a group of people who sought a “higher” form of knowledge. They were influenced by ideas which saw matter as evil and spirit as good. Since the body was already evil, the spirit was all that was important. This led to a denial of the importance of living a holy life – the body and what happened to it was simply not important.

Add: A further implication of the idea of the body as evil was a denial of the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus could not have come in human form if the body is evil.

Ask: How important is the concept of the incarnation of Jesus to the Christian faith? (This is basic. Jesus took on human form –he suffered temptation, lived and died without sin. He identified completely with the human condition, but lived a sinless life. His death on the cross paid the price for our sin.)

Have someone reread 1 John 1:1-4.

Inquire: When did the Word of Life come into existence? (From the beginning)

Have someone read John 1:1-5.

Discuss the similarities in writing style and themes of the two passages.

Search out opinions: Do you feel that the same author wrote both books?

Say: John gives testimony to his relationship to Jesus – he heard, he saw with his own eyes and touched with his hands.

Ask: How do we give a testimony about our relationship to Jesus?

Continue: John emphasized that Jesus appeared and he was a witness to it.

Inquire: In a court case, how important is an eyewitness? In order for an eyewitness to be credible, what is important? (They must have seen clearly, had close contact, be themselves known as truthful and honest).

Request an answer: Does John meet that criteria? (He states that he knew Jesus, listened to his teachings and had close contact with him – touched him. Furthermore, John had lived many years since the death of Jesus and continued a faithful ministry).

Ask: How important was it to John that there be fellowship among the believers? (It would make his joy complete).

Continue: How important is fellowship to our church?

Have someone read 1 John 1:5-10.

Inquire: What is the great affirmation of these verses? (God is light; in him is no darkness at all).

Discuss: What are attributes of darkness? (You may want to have Barclay's list written on a white board or large piece of paper).

Question: Does walking in the light lead to fellowship with other believers? (Read verse 7).

Encourage a brief discussion: How important is it to recognize that we are sinners? (We deceive ourselves if we think we do not sin; further, we make Jesus out to be a liar).

Have someone read 1 John 2:1-2.

Comment: But Christians sin.

Encourage a brief discussion: What happens when we sin? (Jesus advocates for us with the Father. To be an Advocate is to speak on behalf of, in favor of a person or cause).

Follow with this: How important is it that we confess our sin? (Our confession allows for Jesus to be our Advocate).

Reread 1 John 2:2.

Ask: For whom was Jesus the atoning sacrifice for sin? (The whole world).

Continue: If this is true, we need to always be sharing Jesus with others. Ask: How much of the whole world walks in the Light?

Summarize:

Jesus was not a created being; he existed from the beginning of time.

John experienced Jesus by hearing, seeing, touching. Jesus was real.

John shared his testimony. We can share our testimony.

The Christian life style involves fellowship with God, confession of sin, obeying the commands of Christ and a right relationship with fellow Christians.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

The message of John is our message to share as well. ***God is light; in him is no darkness at all.*** Let us pray that during this week we proclaim this truth with our voice and with our lives.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Living for the God Who Really Came 1 John 1:1—2:2

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Light and Dark

Discuss sources of light. Imagine being in a cave where no light can enter (some may have had that experience. If so, ask them to share how it felt).

What would be some of the things you would expect to feel in a place with no light (apprehension, eventually fear, cold, need to touch someone else, need to know that others were present, a guide – someone who knew what was happening).

Discuss why books, movies and videos with dark themes seem to be so appealing to young people.

Are there spiritual implications in this emphasis on darkness? (You may want to list some of the books, movies or videos currently popular).

How does the Christian young person guard against an “overdose” of these kinds of influences?

How does he/she have a witness in a world where this is so commonplace?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Living for the God Who Really Came*****1 John 1:1—2:2****Beginning the Service:**

Choose one or more of the following:

There Is a Savior, *The Worship Hymnal* #286, CCLI # 20728

How Deep the Father's Love for Us, *The Worship Hymnal* # 101, CCLI # 1558110

Shine on Us, *The Worship Hymnal* # 89, CCLI # 1754646

Offering:

Praying for the World: Pray for the Turkmen of Central Asia. Approximately 4.5 million Turkmen reside in the former Soviet Republic currently known as Turkmenistan. Before the Russians conquered Turkmen lands, the Turkmen were mostly scattered tribes. During Soviet rule, these tribes were merged into a republic. The country declared independence from the U.S.S.R. in 1991, and its first president worked to create a strong sense of nationalism. During this time and in the midst of great persecution, the church was birthed among the Turkmen. Turkmenistan has a different president. There is much hope among the Turkmen believers that this will bring an era of peace and growth for the church in this country.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1: 5

The reality of light runs throughout Scripture. It is essential to the creation story. ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. God saw that the light was good and he separated the light from the darkness.***

Small children often need a light in their room in order to be able to sleep; city streets without adequate lighting are likely to be places of crime and danger; a power outage must be corrected immediately for ordinary life to continue. Many people in modern society cannot conceive of living without adequate light.

In earlier times and in many cultures today, people ordered their lives around light and dark. When the sun arose, the day began with its work of agriculture, home responsibilities, and cares. When evening came and night fell, people slept. Those who were out and about after dark were often up to no good. Responsible people were at home and asleep.

Modern societies enjoy the freedom that electric lights give. We are no longer bound by the restrictions of earlier days. We can play and work at all hours.

But unlike the light which is Jesus, there is sometimes darkness in the light which man has created.

A recent TV broadcast discussed the stress created by working night shifts. We, of course, are glad for those who make sacrifices to provide health care at night. Other night shifts may not be so worthwhile. The long-distance truck driver may suffer after long hours of driving. He/she may become a hazard to others as well as a danger to him/herself.

The factory worker in poorly paid positions who is required to work long hours and night hours to produce products from which he/she receives little benefit may suffer.

The light of cities which allows around the clock commerce and entertainment is making a huge impact of resources which may not be sustainable.

Natural light or sunlight has many positive connotations. When the long days of spring and summer arrive in northern climates, there is a general sense of well-being. Neighbours visit with one another after a long winter of not seeing each other very often. Soccer fields are busy throughout the evening.

A Bible dictionary defines light as a word used in connection with joy, blessing, and life in contrast to sorrow, adversity, and death. At an early time it came to signify God's presence and favour in contrast to God's judgment. ***The Lord is my light and my salvation –whom shall I fear? (Psalm 27:1a). The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light***

has dawned (Isaiah 9:2). For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6).

A dualism between good and evil is quite marked in the New Testament passages about light. In Luke 8:16-17 Jesus says **No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.**

The familiar passage of John 3:16 continues through verse 21 **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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes in the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.**

Colossians 1:12 speaks of the kingdom of light in which we have a place -**Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.**

God's holiness is expressed in terms of light 1 Timothy 6:15b -16 **God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light whom no one has seen or can see.**

In John's Gospel the term light refers not so much to God's holiness as to the revelation of His love in Christ and the penetration of that love into lives darkened by sin. So Christ refers to Himself as 'the light of the world' in John 8:12 **I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life** and in 12:46 **I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.**

Call to Commitment:

In the sermon on the Mount Jesus applies this term to His disciples **You are the light of the world Matthew 5:14.** (See **The New Bible Dictionary**, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1962, page 739).

Joy, blessing, life, God's presence and favour, good rather than evil, salvation, God's holiness, the kingdom of God and light – these are amazing, beautiful and powerful concepts.

We rejoice that ***God is light; in him is no darkness at all.***

And we ask “If we are the light of the world as Jesus said we were how will we go about being light this week.”

Concluding the Service:

Ask the church to join you in singing: **Shine on Us**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 89, CCLI # 1754646

Use this as needed as a visual aid during the Bible Study Time.

Barclay lists the following characteristics of darkness:

Darkness stands for the Christless life. It represents the life that a man lived before he met Christ, or the life that he lives, if he stays away from Christ.

The dark is hostile to the light.

The darkness stands for the ignorance of life apart from Christ.

The darkness stands for the chaos of life without God.

The darkness stands for the immorality of the Christless life.

The darkness is characteristically unfruitful.

The darkness is connected with lovelessness and hate.

The dark is the abode of the enemies of Christ and the final goal of those who will not accept Him. The darkness is the life which is separated from God.

(Barclay, pages 32-33).