



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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1 John 3:1-10 Commentary New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(1 John 3:1) See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

The Bible (the Word of God written) emphasizes the love of God for the world and for all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. God is love, and God's love is benevolent, kindhearted, sacrificial, and generous. Therefore, God loved the world enough to send Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into the world to save the world

and those of the world (see John 3:16). Indeed, as Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” But God loves even more happily and deeply those who accept the gift of His Son, believe in Jesus, love Jesus, and seek to obey Jesus’ commands in the Bible. God’s love for those who follow Jesus and their love for God brings joy and happiness to God. God delightfully dwells within the children of God, for the bodies of God’s children are temples of God. In John 2:21, Jesus spoke of His body as a temple. And in 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul asked Christians: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?” Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son help their children love as They love them, and God rejoices when His children love God and others. Just as a father and mother love and treat their children differently from the way they love and treat the children in other families, so the Father loves and treats His children differently from the way He loves and treats the children of other families. Because God loves His children, God will discipline His children when they misbehave, and His children will return to obeying God. God’s children will not persist in disobedience or lawlessness. As the writer to the Hebrews stated in Hebrews 12:6-8, “The Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts. Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that

discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children.” Believers in Jesus thank God that their Heavenly Father calls them His children, when at one time they were the enemies of God (see Romans 5:10). John emphasized that believers in Jesus truly ARE the children of God, not just “called” children of God. Paul also wrote in Galatians 4:6, “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Through the precious gift of the Son of God and by faith in Him, we can pray to the Father and call Him “Abba” (our Father) exactly as Jesus did.

John wrote that the world does not know God the Father, God the Son, or the children of God. The reason they do not know the children of God is not because God the Father has failed in adopting and changing morally and spiritually the followers of Jesus into His children. The reason those of this world do not know that those who believe in Jesus are the children of God rests in the fact that the world does not know the true God. When those of this world reject a child of God that does not mean that something is wrong with God the Father or His child. In Romans 1:18-22, Paul explained why those of this world do not know the true God: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible

though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools (see also Romans 23-32). Those who are godly and truly wise know the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the children of God.

(1 John 3:2) Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The followers of Jesus Christ are children of God. However, as we read in Hebrews 5:13-14, the children of God grow from infancy into mature children of God: “Everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness [in practicing the teachings in the Bible, the “oracles of God”]. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.” As an example, think of a person’s baby picture, their picture as a twelve-year-old child, and their picture as a twenty-one-year-old adult. As individual twelve-year-old children, we had no idea how we would look when we became adults—though we knew what adults looked like. Now think of how you have matured physically and have looked differently over the passing years. In the eyes of our Heavenly Father, His mature children in the world may only look spiritually

and morally like twelve-year-old children. God has not revealed to us how we will look to God, to others, and to ourselves when God raises us from the dead and we see Jesus. From the Bible, we learn much about the nature and character of Jesus Christ as an adult. As we learn more about Jesus from our study of the Bible and our practicing His commands, we become more mature children of God mentally, spiritually, and morally. We become more loving like Jesus is loving. But when Jesus comes again and raises us from the dead and we see Him, we will become adult children of God in ways that we can only begin to imagine. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:49, “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

(1 John 3:3) All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Our hope of rising from the dead and seeing Jesus Christ face-to-face rests on God’s love for us. God’s love for us led to the sacrifice of the Son of God for us, so we could become adopted children of God and followers of Jesus Christ. When we truly understand the true God, we will purify ourselves to live pure as Jesus is and lives pure. The Holy Spirit will help us live morally pure as we study the Bible, believe the truth of the Bible, and practice what we learn from the Bible. If we love God the Father and the Son, we will obey their commandments. Remember what John wrote in 1 John 2:3, “Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments,” and

remember what Jesus taught in John 15:12, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” As loving children of God, we will not want to sin and break the heart of God our Father, the One who loves us and enjoys living within us. Pure love is not mixed with self-centeredness or selfishness. Pure love seeks what is best and wise for all concerned—for God, for others, and for ourselves. Jesus expressed pure love for God and others in everything He said and did in the world. The followers of Jesus Christ will pray that with the truths of God they are learning from the Bible and with the Holy Spirit at work within them that they will love God, others, and their brothers and sisters in Christ with a pure unselfish love—they will practice the Law of Love as Jesus did.

(1 John 3:4) Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

John now defines sin as lawlessness. Whenever anyone acts in lawlessness; that is, disregards and disobeys the commandments of God (the Law of Love), they commit sin. In the world, the children of God can see some people in every sphere of human life living in lawlessness. When the children of God sometimes do something lawless (sin), their action brings them sorrow and leads them to repent and turn to Jesus for His forgiveness and to the Holy Spirit for His help to do right in the future—living in lawlessness is not their pattern of life. The pattern of life for a child of God is loving God and others and seeking daily to purify

themselves just as Jesus is pure, but they will not do this perfectly until they see Jesus face-to-face. A child of God wants to abide in and show forth the love of God as God lives and loves within them. Today, the children of God see many whose pattern of life is lawlessness. Self-centered people disregard the laws of God, the laws of human governments, and the good laws of a good family to practice selfishness and live with impurity. Their self-centeredness instead of God-centeredness leads them to think that it is right to do whatever they want to do in order to achieve their goals and fulfill their desires. The true children of God do not practice lawlessness, selfishness, and sinfulness as a pattern of life for they are not self-centered. Because the children of God are God-centered, they do not knowingly practice lawlessness as a confirmed habit or lifestyle, and when they learn that what they are doing violates God's commands they repent immediately.

(1 John 3:5) But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

The Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to take away sins. Throughout the Gospel of John, we see how Jesus loved and obeyed His Father in everything. Jesus demonstrated perfect love and perfect obedience to God. Jesus is pure love, so there is no sin in Him. Jesus is our example, and so by prayerfully trying to follow Jesus' example and asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to do so,

we purify ourselves. In this way, Jesus takes away sin in our lives. All children of God once had sinful habits and lived lawlessly (disregarded the laws of God). Jesus removes these sinful habits and cleanses God's children from all sin. In this way, the children of God will not lead others into those sinful habits or hurt others through their sins. Remember what John wrote in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." Jesus died sacrificially on the cross to cleanse us from all sin. The Spirit of Jesus Christ now lives within every child of God to help us overcome all our sinful practices, to help us live in purity, to help us live as good examples, and to help us overcome all our temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil. As a child of God, Paul wrote in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Jesus Christ will take away our sins and strengthen us so we can live in loving, joyful obedience to God.

(1 John 3:6) No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

When a child of God is abiding in Jesus Christ, they are not sinning, and they will not sin. However, when a child of God ceases to abide in Jesus, even for a moment, they open themselves to the possibility they will sin and to the possibility of temptations overcoming them. Every sin committed by a child of God can be traced to their no

longer abiding in Jesus during that time, even for a moment. Instead, they have chosen to love themselves more than they love God and to satisfying themselves rather than satisfying God by obeying God's commandments. For the time being, they cease to remain God-centered. They sin because they have turned from God-centeredness to self-centeredness, from obeying Jesus' commands to lawlessness. For the time being, they live as though they have never seen or known Jesus. Unless practicing sin, lawlessness, and selfishness becomes a persistent habit requiring the discipline of God, a child of God will soon remember what they have seen in Jesus and what they know about Jesus and repent of their sins. They will soon turn back to Jesus and to abiding in Jesus. They will soon pray and seek once again to purify themselves and as Jesus is pure.

(1 John 3:7) Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Some have taught that if you believe in God (or say you believe in Jesus) that it does not matter how you live because God will forgive you. Some have taught that when a believer sins God sees Jesus instead of them, because they are covered by the blood of Jesus. Some think that you can be a good Christian without being moral or law-abiding according to the Bible. Disregarding what the Bible clearly teaches, some invent a theology suited to the immoral style of life they want to live. Those who think

and say that it does not matter if a believer lives in lawlessness, impurity, or selfishness deceive themselves and may deceive others, even some in the church. John clearly wrote that the Father and the Son expect the children of God to do what is right, to live moral lives according to the Bible's teachings, and to love God and others. If they do what is right, they are righteous, just as Jesus is righteous. They will purify themselves, just as Jesus is pure. Of course, they will only do what is right and practice purity because Jesus has cleansed them from all sin and the indwelling Holy Spirit helps them understand and practice the Bible's teachings. The children of God must never think they do not need to obey God or that they can live immorally and make our holy God happy with them.

(1 John 3:8) The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

John now begins again to draw a sharp contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil or between the family of God and the family of the devil. In John 8:42, Jesus described the children of God: "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me.'" The children of God love and obey Jesus and His Father. They do what is right and practice righteousness. In John 8:44, Jesus described

some as children of the devil: “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” The children of the devil do what is contrary to the Law of Love—they practice lawlessness. They will not tell the truth and they will try to deceive and destroy morally, spiritually, and physically the children of God. They hate and want to destroy Christians and the Christian faith because they prefer the works of the devil to the works of God. They want to live in selfishness and gratify themselves.

(1 John 3:9) No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

Sin is lawlessness. Sin is disregarding and disobeying the commands of God the Father and God the Son. Those who live self-centeredly, selfishly, and unlovingly abide (remain) in sin. In John 3:6, Jesus taught, “What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Those who are born of the Spirit or born of God do not practice lawlessness as a way of life. They do not disregard the commands of God. They try to practice loving and obeying God with the help of the Holy Spirit according to the Bible. Acting sinfully is the exception to the rule or practice of their lives. If they disobey God, they

immediately feel sorrowful, repent, receive God's forgiveness through Jesus, and return to loving and obeying God with the empowerment of the indwelling Holy Spirit. God's seed is the Holy Spirit and Word of truth that abide in and influence the children of God. In John 14:17, Jesus taught, "This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you." Because the children of God are born of God and the Spirit of truth indwells and remains within them, they do not live in a state of disobedience to God or practice lawlessness. If a child of God disobeys God, they will grieve before God and practice what John wrote in 1 John 1:9-10, "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." By the grace of God, the Word of God and the Spirit of God indwell and abide with the children of God, so they will confess their disobedience, receive the forgiveness of God, and be cleansed from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 3:10) This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

Whereas John wrote in 1 John 3:1 that those of the world do not know God or the children of God, in 1 John 3:10,

John wrote how we can recognize the children of the devil as Jesus and the Bible define them. First, the children of the devil do not do what is right; therefore, they are not righteous. Because they do not do what is right (what is right is obeying the commands of God and Jesus, the Law of Love), we know they are not from God. Tellingly, John warned that those who do not practice the Law of Love in relation to those who are the children of God are also children of the devil, which also explains another reason the children of the devil persecute the children of God even as they persecuted Jesus. In John 15:20, Jesus taught His disciples, “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.” Those in the church today who do not love their brothers and sisters in Christ need to examine themselves, repent of violating the Law of Love, and begin living in the church as a child of God rather than as a child of the devil—if they are truly a child of God. To live as a child of God, a person must be born again or born from above as Jesus taught (see John 3:16 and Acts 2:36-41).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. List three ways the Father has shown His love for us.
2. As followers of Jesus Christ, why does the world not know us?
3. When will the followers of Jesus be like Jesus?

4. List three things the followers of Jesus will do.
5. From these verses, why was the Son of God revealed?

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