

Important Themes in First John



Teacher's Guide

Surveying the Source

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

Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Accomplish some in-depth “mining” of a single book of the Bible (see “Preparing to Lead”).

► Be clearer about Jesus’ existence on earth “in the flesh.”

► Possess the tools and, hopefully, the desire to make life-changing decisions about their future relationship with the Jesus of the first epistle of John.

Preparing to Lead

Most often, our Sabbath School lesson surveys a topic with the help of texts from different Bible books. Lessons such as this week’s allow students to dig rather than merely survey. They have an opportunity to review 1 John in depth and to give roots to their understanding of and

appreciation for Jesus as the giver of love, light, and life.* Hopefully students will be encouraged to generate profound thoughts and conversations without being overwhelmed by the challenge of discussing a whole book in a single session.

Getting Started

A. Encourage students to quickly review Sabbath’s lesson, then “take on” Ellen Johnson. Let them imagine themselves in Larry King’s chair. How would they respond to Johnson’s assertion that there was not “a shred of secular evidence” that Jesus existed, and that therefore He did not exist? (*Possible answers:* Jesus’ existence in the writings of such secular historians as Cornelius Tacitus, Flavius Josephus, Pliny the Younger, etc. [see *Source Book for Ancient Church History* and *The Evidence for Jesus*]; prophecy, including minute details of Jesus’ life foretold in the Old Testament; scientists believing in the Bible [see the Connect in Friday’s lesson]; archaeological evidence proving the Bible to be more accurate than secular sources [“We Can

Believe the Bible,” Voice of Prophecy].)

B. Read 1 Peter 3:1. Emphasize the idea of winning over an unbelieving spouse “without a word” (KJV – margin). Mention the advice in the May 2008 editorial in *Canadian Adventist Messenger* that we must be willing to tell non-Adventists, “You may be right” even when we really want to say “You must be crazy” (www.sdacc.org/departments/messenger). Then direct students’ attention to the writer’s contention in Thursday’s lesson that Adventists “are quite good at claiming special knowledge of God, but not so good at loving our neighbors unconditionally.” With those three references in mind, lead them in a discussion on how to persuade an atheistic friend that Jesus is real.

Materials

Bibles; pencils

Delving Into the Word

A. Refer the class to the C. S. Lewis concept about “good men” and “new men” in Sunday’s lesson, under “Created in Righteousness.” Then distribute the handout, “The Good and the New” (p. 41). Have the class fill in the columns either individually, in pairs, or in groups. Then discuss.

B. Remind the class that sensory perception (taste, touch, smell, etc.) is important in experience and in memory.

Ask them to find or recall texts (from 1 John or elsewhere) that show how those who knew Jesus might remember their experiences with Him on the basis of their hearing, sight, touch, taste, or smell. (*Examples:* First John 1:1 covers hearing, touch, and sight. The transfiguration [Matt. 17:1–9] is an even more poignant example of sight. And John 21:5–13 is an excellent example of both taste and smell.)

Discussing the Ideas

1. It’s been said that the three temptations mentioned in 1 John 2:16 are the only three available to Satan. How do they compare with the three temptations he used against Jesus in the wilderness? (See Matthew 4:1–11.)

2. In 1 John 2:7, the apostle says he is not offering us a new commandment. However, in the next verse, he says he is, in fact, offering a new one. How does the second part of verse 8 clarify his message? What’s the commandment?

3. John implores us to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1–3). What does he mean? How do we do that? (See also Isaiah 8:20.)

4. How many Bible books did John write? (Most scholars say five—the Gos-

pel of John, his three epistles, and Revelation.)

5. What are some important Christian teachings reflected in 1 John? *Examples:* forgiveness of sins [1:9–2:1]; living by faith [5:4]; Christ as part of the Godhead [5:7]; eternal life through Christ [5:11].)

6. What evidence do we have that John wrote both 1 John and the Gospel of John? (*Examples:* similar message and wording, for example—John 16:24 and 1 John 1:4; John 14:15 and 1 John 2:3; John 13:34 and 1 John 2:8; John 1:9 and 1 John 2:8; John 12:35 and 1 John 2:11; John 15:12 and 1 John 3:11; John 5:24 and 1 John 3:14; John 14:17 and 1 John 4:6; John 3:16 and 1 John 4:9.)

Closing the Activity

Ask two or three students to share in a sentence or so what they learned from 1 John about the accuracy of the Bible, Jesus’ life on earth, or about love and/or forgiveness. Then ask for a show of hands by those who have learned something from the week’s study that could

make a difference in their lives right away or in the future. See if there is one person willing to give a concrete example. Then have a prayer, by you or a student, seeking God’s help to make the life changes that God wants them, and you, to make.

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*See the introduction to 1 John in *The Holy Bible: King James Version; Slimline™ Reference Edition* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), p. 1021.

"GOOD PEOPLE" AND "NEW PEOPLE"

Read the second paragraph in the section "Created in Righteousness" in Sunday's lesson of the *CQ* quarterly. Make sure you understand C. S. Lewis' distinction between "good men" and "new men," that is, the idea that "good" people are only good in their own eyes and that "new" people depend on Christ for their "newness of life." Then place each of the alphabetized items below in one of the columns. The first two items are done for you.

- A. Legalists (people who believe obeying the commandments will get them to heaven)
- B. Believing in salvation through Christ
- C. John and his brother James wanting to reserve the two spots closest to Christ in the kingdom
- D. John, when Christ told His mother, "Behold, thy son"
- E. Those who love their brethren
- F. Peter swearing He will follow Jesus even if he lost his life doing so
- G. Peter weeping after the cock had crowed twice
- H. The publican (tax collector) in Jesus' parable who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner"
- I. Those willing to engage Christ as their Advocate or Lawyer when they sin
- J. Saying we're "in the light" but hating our brothers and sisters

"Good" People

(A) Legalists

"New" People

(B) Believing in salvation through Christ