

1 John: Go Deeper in Christ

Life with Christ shouldn't be shallow.

By Bryan Wilkerson

What does it mean when we say we want to "go deeper" in our faith? What should we go deeper into? 1 John spells out exactly what a deep life with Christ looks like and why really knowing Christ is the most important piece.

Session One - Deep Joy

To know deep, lasting joy, we have to truly know Christ.

1 John 1:1-4

Sincere Christians universally want to "go deeper" in faith and knowledge of the Scripture. With this in mind, we wanted to create a Bible study that would be exegetically strong and focused on personal spiritual vitality. For a variety of reasons, 1 John fits the bill. The subject matter is simple and straightforward: truth (right doctrine), obedience (right living), and love (right relationships). The cyclical structure of the book invites deeper reflection on these themes. And the letter's original purpose was to strengthen and assure new believers.

But spiritual depth isn't simply about knowledge (a common misconception), but about everyday life and relationships. And where better to begin than reflecting on how to have deeper joy in Christ?

Session Two - Deep Walk

We were made to live substantive lives in Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:5-7; 2:3-6; 3:7-10

How do you know if someone's a real Christian? Is it the amount of time spent serving in the community or the Bible on the desk? Is it that they don't use bad words or that they go to church a lot? The problem is, lots of people don't swear, help in the community, or go to church. Are they all Christians? How do you know if you are a Christian?

Session Three - Deep Clean

Our sin is real, but our God willingly forgives.

1 John 1:8-2:2

You don't hear the word sin much these days. We're more comfortable with words like dysfunction, disease, mistakes, even failures. In fact, a few years ago, the Oxford Junior Dictionary actually removed the word sin from its contents. They

explained that it had fallen into disuse and was no longer relevant to younger generations.

We want to live deeper in Christ, but something happens. We slip backward. We fall down. We sin. What does that say about us as Christians? What do we do about it?

Session Four - Deep Desire

Let Christ fill your hunger.

1 John 2:12-17

Christians have always had a love/hate relationship with the world. On one hand, the most famous verse in the Bible tells us that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." If God loves the world that much, it seems like we should, too. But then you come to a passage like this, where John warns us not to love the world or anything in the world. So which is it—love or hate? Are we to forsake all worldly pleasures?

Session Five - Deep Truth

Jesus came to rescue and redeem his creation.

1 John 2:22; 4:1-3; 4:9-10

Most of us come to realize that what we claim to believe about Jesus has implications for our friends who hold different beliefs. In a world where so many people have such different views, how could it be possible that one view is greater than any others? Is there really only one way—one path—that leads to God? Is believing in God enough? Does what we believe about Jesus make that much of a difference?

Our understanding of Jesus is critical to our relationship with God. And these are some of the questions that are addressed in the portion of John's letter that we come to today.

Session Six - Deep Hope

We are being formed into the likeness of Christ.

1 John 2:28-3:2

As we dig deeper into this letter called 1 John, we are going to consider the kind of person we all want to be. Last week we considered the doctrinal test of our faith and discovered Deep Truth—that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man and is the only way to eternal life. This week we'll return to the ethical dimension of our faith and discover deep hope.

Session Seven - Deep Love

We show true love through sacrifice.

1 John 2:9-11; 3:16-18; 4:7-21

Sooner or later, it had to come around to love. We have been considering tests of true faith—the marks of a real Christian. John has written at length about the ethical test (how we live) and the doctrinal test (what we believe). But if you know anything about John, you know that sooner or later it had to come around to the relational test: who, and how, do you love?

Session Eight - Deep Certainty

To know Jesus is to confidently know eternal life.

1 John 5:11-20

This is the final installment in our look at John's letter—a letter that was written a long time ago to the church in Ephesus, but we've been finding that it speaks quite powerfully to our own lives and churches here in the 21st century. It's a compelling letter, strikingly simple, but it raises all kinds of questions, such as the topic of confidence as we look toward the future.