An Overview Of The Book Of 1 John

The Book Of 1 John:

The Book of 1 John is a letter although it contains no opening address or greeting typically found in a letter, which identifies the writer and the recipients to whom it was written. The Book of 1 John is not an essay or dissertation, but a teaching of God's Word in letterform. This is evident from the statement "I write to you", which addresses the writer's recipients and readers (see 1 John 1:4; 2:1; 2:7, 8; 2:12, 13, 14; 2:21; 2:26; 5:13).

Writer Of The First Letter Of John:

The author did not identify himself by name in the letter. It has been stated that copies of the First Letter of John were in many churches by the end of the first century. Already then John's authorship and the letter's authority were beyond question. Quotations of the First Letter of John, as well as allusions to passages within it, date back to the earliest times. The letter was at once included in the New Testament canon by the early Church. The Church Father and historian Eusebius acknowledged this in his Ecclesiastical history Book III, Chapter 25.

The internal evidence within the First Letter of John supports John's authorship. The letter possesses the same upward spiraling structure found within the Gospel of John, as well as similarities in vocabulary and writing style. The letter states that its author was an eyewitness to Jesus' person and ministry (see 1 John 1:1-3).

For more information about the apostle John see the Overview Of The Gospel Of John in the Gospel of John.

Recipients Of The First Letter Of John:

The recipients of John's first letter were most likely the Christians in Ephesus and its surrounding areas. They were the same Christians to whom Paul wrote his Letter to the Ephesians. It also appears they were the same Christians to whom Peter wrote his first and second letters, namely those Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Some of the Christians would have been those of the churches John mentioned in Revelation 1:11: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The church of Colosse was within the vicinity of Asia as well, which was the same Roman province in which the city of Ephesus was located. Colosse was near Laodicea, which city Paul mentioned in his Letter to the Colossians (see Colossians 2:1). The church of Colosse was started by Epaphras, who apparently learned the gospel from Paul in Ephesus. It seems probable, therefore, that John's first letter was also intended for the Christians in Colosse.

It appears relatively certain that John's first letter was a circular letter. John wrote it to strengthen and encourage the same Christians among whom Paul had labored on his first and third missionary journeys, and to whom Peter wrote from Rome. John was well known to those Christians, having ministered among them for many years. Accordingly, John wrote to them with a bond of affection, addressing them as "little children", "children", and his "beloved".

Place Where The First Letter Of John Was Written:

Since John served the Church during the latter part of his life in Ephesus, that is the likely city in which John wrote his first letter.

Occasion And Purpose Of The First Letter Of John:

John's first letter is highly polemical, that is, it speaks out vigorously against the false teachers whose heresies were attacking and undermining the true gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1 John 2:18, 19, 26; 4:1). The false teaching that John attacked was Gnosticism in its early form. Its proponent was Cerinthus, who was actively teaching in Ephesus.

It has been stated that Cerinthus was a former Jew from Egypt. He combined Jewish ideas, such as the retention of circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath Day, with his own ideas that brought forth the religion of Gnosticism (knowledge). He rejected the gospels and the letters of Paul. He denied that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God, who had become man. He believed that Jesus was only an ordinary

man born of Mary and Joseph. He asserted that Christ the Son of God entered the man Jesus at his baptism, occupied the man Jesus for the three years of his public ministry to impart his divine teachings and knowledge, but then departed from the man Jesus prior to his being crucified. In this manner Cerinthus denied that in the person of Jesus the Son of God died for mankind's sins to redeem and to reconcile everyone to God. He believed that the essential thing was, not the redeeming sacrifice of Christ for sins, but the teachings of Christ, which imparted knowledge for a fulfilling life.

John wrote his first letter to uphold the true gospel that Christ, the Son of God, became true man in the person of Jesus. In refutation of Cerinthus, who held Christ entered Jesus at his baptism in water but departed from Jesus prior to his shedding his blood on the cross, John asserted in 1 John 5:6, "This One is the One who came by means of water and blood – Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood." Since Cerinthus did not take sin seriously, John also wrote his first letter to declare the seriousness of sin as an offense against God and the need to live a holy life if one is to be in fellowship with God. Throughout his first letter John upheld the true faith that is to be believed, a true righteousness that is to be lived, and the true love that is to be shown to one another.

Date Of The First Letter Of John:

John served in Ephesus from about A.D. 70 to A.D. 100. Cerinthus, the founder of Gnosticism, was active in Ephesus and was a contemporary of Polycarp, a pupil of John's, who lived until about A.D. 150. This would place Cerinthus' activities in Ephesus late in John's life. It seems most appropriate to date the First Letter of John around A.D. 90 to A.D. 100.

Structure Of The First Letter Of John:

John wrote his first letter with the same upward spiraling thought progression that characterizes his gospel. See the Overview Of The Gospel Of John for an explanation of John's spiraling thought progression. The spiraling nature of John's first letter is not conducive to outlining. The content of the letter is best grasped, not by concentrating on its structure, but by simply letting its contents lift one's spirit to meditate on its message.

Robert Law and Theodore V. Haering did develop a useful outline that aids one's understanding of the letter. Martin H. Franzmann included this outline in his book The Word Of The Lord Grows (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO 63118; 1961). Law and Haering saw the letter as a series of three tests that examine the genuine Christian life in view of the revelation God has given in his Son Jesus Christ. Their outline served as a basis for the outline headings that were developed for this translation of the Book Of 1 John to explain the theme of how we know we are Christians in fellowship with God.

Theme Of The First Letter Of John:

By This Message We Know We Are Christians Who Have Fellowship With God.

This theme was developed on the basis of the following verses: 1 John 1:3; 1:5; 2:3; 2:12-14; 2:21; 2:24; 2:27; 2:29; 3:9-11; 3:14; 3:18, 19; 3:24; 4:2, 3; 4:6; 4:7, 8; 4:12, 13; 4:15, 16; 5:1, 2; 5:13; 5:18-20.

1 John

Part 1: The Word of Life 1 John 1:1-4

1 ¶ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked at and our hands touched, concerning the Word of Life –
2 and the Life appeared, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the Life Eternal, such as was face to face with the Father and appeared to us –
3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you yourselves also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship, moreover, is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
4 And these things we write to you, that our[1] joy may be made full.[2]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts read "your"

Part 2: Fellowship With God Means Walking in the Light
1 John 1:5-2:28

The First Standard of Fellowship Is Walking in the Light
1 John 1:5-7

¶ 5 And this is the message we have heard from him and make known to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and yet we keep walking in the darkness, we lie, and we do not practice the truth;
7 but if we keep walking in the light, just 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.

1. The First Test of One's Walking in the Light: The Test of Righteousness
1 John 1:8-2:6

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
9 If we go on confessing our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.
2 ¶ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And yet if someone *actually* does sin, we have One who pleads our case[3] with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.
2 And he himself is the appeasing sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for *the sins* of the whole world.
3 And by this we know from experience[4] that we have come to know him, if we keep observing his commandments.
4 The one who insists[5], "I have come to know him," and yet does not keep observing his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this person.[6]
5 But whoever keeps observing his word, in this person[7] the love of God has truly been brought to its goal. By this we come to know that we are in him.
6 The one who insists[8] that he remains in him is obligated to walk in the same manner as even he walked.

The Second Test of One's Walking in the Light: The Test of Love 1 John 2:7-17

¶ 7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.
8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the genuine light is already shining.
9 The one who claims to be in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.
10 The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no giving of offense in him.
11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
¶ 12 I am writing to you, little children,
because your sins have been forgiven for the sake of his name.
13 I am writing to you, fathers,

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[2] Lit. may be having been made full

[3] Lit. a Paracletos, one called along side to help; one called to plead a case before a judge

[4] The words "from experience" are included because the Greek verb means to know from experience; likewise throughout the remainder of 1 John

[5] Lit. keeps saying

[6] Lit. this one

[7] Lit. this one

[8] Lit. keeps saying to remain

because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning.
I am writing to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.
14 I have written to you, children,
because you have come to know the Father.
I have written to you, fathers,
because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning.
I have written to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God remains in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.
¶ 15 Keep from loving the world and the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
16 Because everything in the world – the craving of the flesh and the longing of the eyes and the pride in one's lifestyle, is not from the Father but is from the world.
17 And the world is passing away and its craving, but the one who does the will of God remains eternally.

The Third Test of One's Walking in the Light: The Test of True Faith 1 John 2:18-27

¶ 18 Children, it is the last hour, and just as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. From this fact we know from experience that it is the last hour.
19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us. For if they belonged to us, they would have remained with us. *But they went out from us,* in order that they would be made known that they all do not belong to us.
20 And yet you yourselves have an anointment from the Holy One, and you know all things.
21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is from the truth.
22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This one is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.
23 Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.
24 As for you, let what you have heard from the beginning continue to remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, indeed you yourselves will also remain in the Son and in the Father.
25 And this is the promise, which he himself has promised to us – eternal life!
¶ 26 I have written these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.
27 But as for you, the anointment that you have received from him remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as his anointment continues to teach you about all things, and it is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Part 3: Fellowship With God Means Being Children of God
1 John 2:28-4:6

The Second Standard of Fellowship Is Being a Child of God
1 John 2:28-3:3

¶28 And now, little children, remain in him, in order that whenever he appears, we may have cheerful confidence and may not in shame shrink away from him at his coming.
29 If you know with certainty that he is righteous, you know from experience that everyone who practices righteousness has also been begotten of him.
3 1 Look how great a love the Father has bestowed on us! That we are called children of God! And we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him.
2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. We

know that when what we will be is revealed,[9] we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is.
3 And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

1. The First Test of One's Being a Child of God: The Test of Righteousness 1 John 3:3-10

¶ 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; in fact, sin is lawlessness.
5 And you know that he appeared in order to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin.
6 No one who remains in him keeps on sinning; everyone who keeps on sinning has neither seen him nor known him.
7 Little children, let no one lead you astray; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous.
8 The one who practices sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this reason the Son of God appeared, to destroy the works of the devil.
9 Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because his seed remains in him; and he is not able to go on sinning, because he has been begotten of God.
10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are plainly seen; everyone who does not practice righteousness does not belong to God, nor[10] the one who does not love his brother.

The Second Test of One's Being a Child of God: The Test of Love 1 John 3:11-124

¶ 11. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;
12 not as Cain, *who* belonged to the evil one and slaughtered his brother. And for what reason did he slaughter him? Because his deeds were evil, but his brother's *deeds* were righteous.
13 Stop being astonished, brothers, that the world hates you.
14 As for us, we know that we have crossed over from death into life, because we love the brothers; the one who does not love remains in death.
15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him.
16 By this we have come to know what love is,[11] that he laid down his life for us; and as for us, we are obligated to lay down our[12] lives for our brothers.
17 Now whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother in need[13] and shuts off his affections from him, how can[14] the love of God remain in him?
18 Little children, let us not love with word nor with tongue but in deed and in truth.
¶ 19 And by this we will come to know that we are of the truth and will set our heart at ease before him,
20 that if our heart condemns *us*, that God is greater than our heart and knows all things.
21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn *us*, we have a cheerful confidence face to face with God,
22 that whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep observing his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.
23 And this is his commandment, that we come to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and continue loving one another, just as he gave *this*[15] commandment to us.
24 And the one who keeps observing his commandments remains in him and he in him. And by this we come to know that he remains in us – by the Spirit he gave to us.

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[9] Since the preceding sentence is an impersonal "it", this sentence is translated as the impersonal "what we will be"; other English versions translate this sentence as referring to Christ and his appearing

[10] Lit. and

[11] Lit. the love

[12] Lit the; likewise "the" brothers

[13] Lit. having need

[14] Lit. does

[15] Lit. a commandment

The Third Test of One's Being a Child of God: The Test of True Faith 1 John 4:1-6

4 ¶ 1 Beloved, keep from believing every spirit, but keep testing the spirits to learn whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you come to know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

3 But every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.

4 As for you, little children, you are from God, and you have overcome them, because the One in you is greater than the one in the world.

5 They themselves belong to the world; therefore they speak from *the viewpoint of* the world, and the world listens to them.

6 We, we are from God; the one who comes to know God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. From this *fact* we know from experience the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Part 4: God Is Love 1 John 4:7-5:12

The Third Standard of Fellowship With God Is Love

Tests of Love and True Faith Are Interwoven and Spiral in 1 John 4:7-5:12

The Test of Love 1 John 4:7-12

¶ 7 Beloved, let us continue loving one another, because this[16] love is from God, and everyone who loves has been begotten of God and has come to know[17] God.

8 The one who does not love has not come to know God, because God is love.

9 By this *fact* the love of God was revealed among us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we may live through him.

10 In this is this[18] love, not that we on our part have loved God, but that he himself loved us and sent his Son as *the* appeasing sacrifice for our sins.

11 Beloved, since in this way God loved us, we on our part are also obligated to continue loving one another.

12 No one at any time has seen God; if we continue loving one another, God remains in us, and his love has been brought to its goal in us.

The Test of True Faith 1 John 4:13-15

13 By this we come to know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

14 And as for us, we have seen and are bearing witness that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God.

The Test of Love 1 John 4:16-5:5

16 And as for us, we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for[19] us.

¶ God is love, and the one who remains in this[20] love remains in God and God remains in him.

17 By this fact this[21] love has been brought to its goal with us, that we have a cheerful confidence on the day of judgment, because just as he is, we ourselves are also in this world.

18 There is no fear in this[22] love; on the contrary, this love having attained its purpose casts out the fear, because the fear has *to do with* punishment. And the one who fears has not been brought to the goal in this love.

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[16] Lit. the

[17] Lit. knows: a knowledge gained from experience

[18] Lit. the

[19] Lit. in

[20] Lit. the

[21] Lit. the

19 As for us, we love, because he himself first loved us.
20 If someone says, "I love God," and yet he hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, is unable to continue loving God whom he has not seen.
21 And this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should also love his brother.
5¶ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, and everyone who loves
God who did that begetting[23] also loves the one who has been begotten of him.
2 By this we come to know that we love the children of God, when we love God and we carry out his commandments.
3 For this is this[24] love for God, that we keep observing his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome,
4 for everyone who has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith!
5 And who is the one who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

The Test of True Faith 1 John 5:6-12

¶ 6 This One is the One who came by means of water and blood – Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.
7 For there are three who are bearing witness:
8 the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three are in agreement.[25]
9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; because this is the testimony of God that he has testified about his Son.
10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony within[26] himself; the one who does not believe God has made God[27] a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified concerning his Son.
11 And this is the testimony, that God has given eternal life to us, and this life is in his Son.
12 The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Part 5: Concluding Christian Certainties I John 5:13-20

¶ 13 These things I have written to you, to those who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.
14 And this is the cheerful confidence that we have face to face with him *in prayer*, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.
15 And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we had asked from him.
¶ 16 If someone sees his brother committing a sin that does not result in *certain* death, he shall ask, and God[6] will give for him life to those who commit a sin that does not result in *certain* death. There is a sin that results in *certain* death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.
17 All unrighteousness is sin, and yet there is sin that does not result in *certain* death.
¶ 18 We know that everyone who has been begotten of God does not go on sinning; on the contrary, the one who was begotten of God guards himself, and the evil one does not harm him.
19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the *power of* the evil one.

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[22] Lit. the, likewise in the remainder of v.18
[23] Lit. the One who begot
[24] Lit. the
[25] Lit. for the one thing
[26] Lit. in
[27] Lit. him

20 Moreover, we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding, so that we may know the genuine One, and we are in the genuine One, in his Son Jesus Christ. This One is the genuine God and eternal life.

Part 6: Closing Encouragement 1 John 5:21

21 Little children, keep yourselves from the idols!