

Get into the Study



5 MINUTES

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, bring two objects to drop, one very heavy and one very light. Make sure neither is flat and would therefore have more air resistance (for example, you could use a roll of coins and a ping-pong ball). Invite group members to speculate as to which will hit the ground first when you drop them. Many people assume the heavy object will hit the ground first. You may have a group member explain what happens and why, or show a short video clip. Make the point that some things we may have thought were true for a long time are, in fact, not true. Then ask **Question #1**.

NOTE: A video option can be found at BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 38 of the PSG:
“When have you believed something that turned out not to be true?”



SESSION 3

Sure of the Truth

THE POINT

Truth is found in Jesus alone.

LIFE CONNECTION

Many people have the attitude: “You have your truth; I have mine.” Such reasoning is fatally flawed: two opposing “truths” can’t both be true. Much like gravity, truth remains the truth, whether we believe it or not. We discover truth when we look to God, the Author of all that exists. The truths about God, sin, judgment, and salvation are unchanging, and the surety of those truths becomes evident as we choose to live according to them.

THE PASSAGE

1 John 2:18-29

THE SETTING

John, the Beloved Apostle, wrote 1 John, perhaps from his exile on Patmos in the mid-90s AD. First John is a letter of assurance (1 John 5:13). In 1 John 1, the apostle focused on three false claims and responded with three of God’s truths about forgiveness (1 John 1:6–2:2). In chapter 2, John focused on three tests of fellowship with God:

1. The moral test: obedience (2:3-6)
2. The social test: love (2:7-11)
3. The doctrinal test: belief (2:18-27)

1 JOHN 2:18-21

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

KEY WORDS: **The last time** (2:18)—That time between Jesus’ first and second comings, often considered a time of intense conflict between God and Satan.

Antichrist (2:18)—A title used in only four verses in the Bible (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7) meaning persons who oppose Christ or substitute themselves for Christ.

Unction (2:20)—An action, process, or state of being of having the Holy Spirit live in a person and impacting his or her life.

Holy One (2:20)—A title referring to God as separate, distinct; this applies to all three Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit).

1 ▶ Verse 18. Truth secures us in the faith. John’s primary concern was with Christians and false teachers, opponents of the Christian faith. These false teachers needed to be exposed for what they really were, antichrists. John warned against their teaching. He drew a distinction between false teachers and genuine Christians, and concluded that truth keeps us anchored in the faith (1 John 2:18-21). John defined the nature and effect of the heresy and concluded that truth is grounded in who Jesus is (vv. 22-26). And he described the anointing Christians already possess and concluded that following the truth leads to righteous living (vv. 27-29).

John again demonstrated his love for his readers and hearers by calling them an affectionate term, **little children**. John then described the time in which they lived as the **last time**. This was a time of testing and suffering because evil would take one last stand. The Jews believed they were living in the present evil age and that God would

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 39 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of knowing the truth by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

RECAP: People are confused about a lot of things, which, in turn, produces doubt. It goes without saying that the struggle for truth is real. However, there is good news. Absolute truth does exist, and it is found in Jesus Christ.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 39 of the PSG: “Truth is found in Jesus alone.”

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): To illustrate how easy it is to break down the truth, play a game of Telephone. Write the following phrase on a slip of paper: *Koala bears are cute and pandas are cuddly*. Line up 8-10 volunteers and allow one person on the end to read the slip of paper silently. Take back the paper and direct that person to whisper what they read to the person next to him or her and so on, down the line. Allow the final volunteer to say what they heard and compare it to the actual phrase. Say: “As believers, we need to embrace the truth and be careful about sharing it with others accurately through our words and actions.”

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to help the group understand the truth of who Jesus is. Thank Him for revealing truth to us and for helping us share that truth with others.

Study the Bible

1 John 2:18-21



10 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 John 2:18-21 on page 40 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use Commentary **1** on pages 41-43 to help explain the difference between antichrist and the many antichrists.

RECAP: Since the coming of Jesus, believers have known they were living in the “last days.” The expression *last time* is only found here in the New Testament and is synonymous with the idea of the last days. The phrase points to the imminent return of Christ and the final judgment. For believers, this is a day of joyful expectation. However, for the unbeliever, this will be a day of judgment and punishment.

inaugurate the age to come with His Messiah. In Jewish thought, the last time was that period just before God would take control of the world from the evil powers. In Christian thought, the new age (or last days) had dawned with the coming of Christ. Therefore, the last time is that interval between the first and second comings of Jesus. Did John make a mistake in saying it was the last time? What relevance does this have for us more than 1900 years later? One commentator provides this exceptionally helpful insight.

Every hour is the last hour. In the world there is a continual conflict between good and evil, between God and that which is anti-God. And in every moment and in every decision a man is confronted with the choice of allying himself either with God or with the evil forces which are against God; and of thereby ensuring, or failing to ensure, his own share in eternal life. The conflict between good and evil never stops; therefore, the choice never stops; therefore, in a very real sense every hour is the last hour.¹

A second major topic that John addressed is **antichrist**. This word comes from the title *Christ*, which means God’s anointed (in Hebrew, *Messiah*). In the Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings of Israel were anointed. The anointing demonstrated God’s power, through His Spirit, was resting on the person. The prefix *anti* is understood in two ways: (1) against—one who is in open opposition to Christ and (2) in place of—a substitute, one who subtly tries to take the place of Christ. “Antichrist” in the Bible appears only in John’s letters (2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7). (Similar concepts appear in Matthew, Mark, 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation.) The basic idea is this: Christ is the incarnation of God and goodness; antichrist is the incarnation of the devil and evil. Christ stands for God; antichrist stands for all that is against God either by opposition to or substitution for God.

In reality, both in the sense of opposition to Christ or substitution of ourselves for God, *all of us* have been antichrists before our salvation. Only salvation from God through Christ’s life, sacrificial death, and resurrection can change us from *antichrists* to *Christians*. Throughout

history many people have identified famous figures as antichrist. Antichrist is hostile to and actively opposed to God. This principle finds reality in those persons of every generation who are either opponents of or attempt to substitute themselves for God. The sign for John that antichrist was in the world was the false belief promoted by evil teachers. John wrote that **many antichrists** were in the world; therefore it was **the last time**; it will remain the last time until Christ's second coming.

Verse 19. The false teachers withdrew from the church, thus demonstrating they were never really a part of the church. The application for us is that we can join a local church, but unless we are joined to Christ, we are not a part of God's fellowship. What was the purpose of the false teachers' departure? John explained it was to make **manifest** they were not a part of the church.

Verse 20. John wrote that the **unction** comes from the **Holy One**. The New Testament refers to God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as *holy*. Theologians describe God as trinity (a contraction of *tri*, meaning "three" and *unity* meaning "one"). Although the word *trinity* is not in the Bible, it is a good description of how God has revealed Himself to people as reflected in the Scripture—one God in three Persons.

Verse 21. John's purpose in writing was not to present a new truth, but rather to remind the recipients of two things. First, they already knew the truth. Second, they knew that no lie is a part of the truth. This reinforces not only our focus from these verses that truth keeps us anchored in the faith, but it also emphasizes our point for this session: truth is found in Jesus alone. ◀

1 JOHN 2:22-26

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 41 of the PSG: **"How does our culture reflect anti-Christian views?"**

Alternate: What truths about Christ define how we live?

RECAP: How are we to identify these false teachers? We know them by their unwavering commitment to falsehood and their departure from the church. In John's day, these peddlers of deception gave evidence of their real character by leaving the church. These false teachers were nothing more than wolves in sheep's clothing. As they persisted in unrighteousness, it became evident that they were never truly a part of the believing community.

Thankfully, true believers "have an unction from the Holy One, and ... know all things." This anointing is the Holy Spirit's presence and indwelling, which all believers receive at the moment of their conversion. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher, guiding us into all the truth (John 16:13); therefore, He teaches and leads us as we study the Bible. As we rely on the Spirit of God, we are protected against error.

TRANSITION: Truth keeps us anchored in the faith. In the next verses, we see that truth is grounded in who Jesus is.

Study the Bible

1 John 2:22-26



10 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 John 2:22-26 on page 42 of the PSG.

RECAP: John also declared that every antichrist is a “liar.” The fact that they are anti—opposed to Christ—means they deny the reality of who Jesus is. The antichrist lies because he denies that Jesus is the Christ. And whoever denies the divinity of Jesus—that He is the Christ, the anointed One from God—ultimately denies the Father as well. A person cannot believe whatever he wants about God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and think he can have a relationship with God the Father. To believe wrongly concerning Jesus is to believe wrongly about God. Why? Because Jesus *is* God. Indeed, He is God who came in human flesh.

GUIDE: Use Commentary **2** on pages 44-46 to help explain the importance of remaining.

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

2 ▶ **Verse 22.** Truth resides in Jesus. John opened this section asking **Who is a liar** (v. 22) and closed it by addressing “them that seduce” Christians (v. 26). Previously John reinforced our point for this session—truth is found in Jesus alone—by stressing that the truth found in God’s Word keeps us anchored in the faith. Verses 22-26 elaborate on this by emphasizing that truth is grounded in who Jesus is; specifically, John addressed Jesus’ incarnation (a Latin word meaning [coming] “in the flesh”).

Immediately John asked and answered his own question about defining the liars, the false teachers who plagued this church. **The liar [is] ... he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ.** These false teachers erred in teaching that the man Jesus was born and became Christ at His baptism (thirty years later). Some also taught that the divine Christ left before or on the cross and only the man Jesus died. This false teaching began to develop in the late first Christian century and was popularized in the second and third centuries. Many Christian writers of those centuries wrote against such false teaching. The church through the councils of the fourth century defined orthodox Christian teachings of who Jesus is and what He did. Unfortunately, other religions today acknowledge Jesus as a man but don’t believe He is also God. Regrettably, many Americans today do not believe the Bible’s teaching about who Jesus is and what He has done.

John next stressed the serious nature of misunderstanding Jesus’ role by stating: **He is antichrist.** John left no doubt about the identification of these false teachers by clearly explaining there is no such thing as faith in God apart from Jesus Christ. In other words, the denial that Jesus is the Christ is nothing more or less than a denial of God. Truth is grounded in who Jesus is as verse 23 reinforces.

Verse 23. Biblical truth, especially in the New Testament, is based on the relationship of the Father to the Son, and to all of creation. John reflected response to the relationship of the Father to the Son negatively (**denieth**) in the first half of verse 23 and positively (**acknowledgeth**) in the second half of the verse. We can state the truth in this way: If you think you can “have” God without believing in Jesus, you are wrong. If anyone denies the Son, this is an indication that person does not have the Father. The Christian doctrine of a personal, fatherly God is dependent on the revelation of God given in Jesus. **Acknowledgeth** does not merely affirm certain facts. This word means “to agree with,” “to declare openly,” and even “to live accordingly.” The word comes from two Greek words meaning “same” and “say” (“to say the same thing”); it is used twenty-six times in the Greek New Testament, eleven times in John’s writings. The New Testament teaches that every person’s response to Jesus is a response to God—and that response settles one’s destiny in time and eternity, forever. In other words, truth is grounded in who Jesus is.

Verse 24. Setting the basis for what John wrote is the repetition of his authority (the eyewitness account as John described in 1 John 1:1-3). The first word in Greek, **you** (plural, meaning “all of you”), is in the emphatic position; this reveals a narrowed scope from everyone (v. 23) to Christians alone (v. 24). John was addressing the ones who remained in the church (Christians, not the false teachers who had left, vv. 18-19). John revealed that only Christians had the original message taught by the apostles (who were the authority prior to the New Testament being written).

The word translated **abide**, meaning “reside,” is highly significant for John. He used it nearly seventy times in his Gospel account and letters (out of 118 occurrences in the entire Greek New Testament). The word describes a continuing relationship (not like the false teachers). Unlike it might appear in English, in the Greek New Testament the word in verse 24 is a command (not merely a permission, a wish, or a statement).

To get the correct meaning in English, it will benefit us to add a helping word such as *must*. In other words, God, through John, commanded that Christians *must* continue to call their faith to mind and it *must* affect their lives. The only way to remain in God is to remain in the truth. John stressed the importance of studying the Word and fellowship here. Genuine salvation results from a permanent relationship with God through Christ’s shed blood. Merely walking the aisle at a church service and

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 43 of the PSG. Gnosticism had two primary errors.

1. **Docetism.** *The Gnostics believed the body is evil. Therefore, God, who is Spirit, could not take on flesh. So, according to them, Jesus did not come in the flesh, it only appeared that He did. This is a blatant denial of the incarnation: God becoming man.*
2. **Cerinthianism.** *Cerinthus taught that Jesus had a real human body, but that He was not the Christ until the Spirit came upon Him at His baptism. Cerinthus taught that the Spirit remained upon Jesus throughout His public ministry, but the Spirit left Him before the crucifixion, since the Spirit could not be associated with suffering.*

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 44 of the PSG: “**What are some truths about Jesus that are difficult to grasp or believe?**”

Alternate: How would you describe false teachers today?

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that following the truth leads to righteous living.

Study the Bible

1 John 2:27-29



15 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 John 2:27-29 on page 44 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use Commentary **3** on pages 46-48 to help explain the anointing John describes.

RECAP: The proof of true salvation is not just believing the right thing. Conforming to the doctrine is not enough. Our belief should translate into right living. We are to pursue righteousness in light of the imminent return of Christ. John mentioned the return of Christ to motivate his readers to righteous living. Our attitude toward Christ's second coming says a lot about our spiritual state.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 45 of the PSG: **"How does the Holy Spirit help us discern truth?"**

repeating some words don't make us Christians any more than walking into a burger joint makes us hamburgers. Our confession *must* be demonstrated in how we live. The truth is grounded in who Jesus is.

Verses 25-26. In verse 25 John laid out the result of remaining in Jesus: **eternal life**. This type of life includes abundant life in the present as well as everlasting life in the future. John stressed the importance of the truth he was writing. He also specified that his writing was **concerning them** (false teachers) **that seduce you** (believers). John repeatedly revealed his purposes in writing 1 John. These references highlight both the Bible's truth and that truth is grounded in who Jesus is; this truth is found in Jesus alone. ◀

1 JOHN 2:27-29

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

3 ▶ Verse 27. Obeying the truth leads to righteous living, as we will see as we examine the three verses of this section. In verse 26 John wrote about the false teachers. In verses 27-28, John shifted the focus of his writing. The words **but ... ye** (in Greek, the word **ye** is plural) marks John's move away from discussing the false teachers and more pointedly toward the believers. In verse 28 John returned to a more familiar form of address, **little children** (which John used seven times in 1 John to reveal his knowledge of and love for these Christians).

But ... ye also indicates John was addressing Christians. The unction John had mentioned in verse 20

came from the “Holy One.” **The anointing** discussed in verse 27 comes **of him**; this likely refers to either God the Father or more likely to God the Son (Jesus). Here, the anointing refers to the Holy Spirit and is only used in the Greek New Testament in verses 20 (once) and 27 (twice). The words **ye have received** indicate a past action. This action occurs at the moment of conversion (salvation). All three persons of God (Father, Son, and Spirit) play a role in salvation. Put simply, the Father provides the plan; the Son provides the means; the Spirit provides the motivation (leads us to the point of conversion).

We get our English word *charisma* from the Greek word rendered *anointing*. This word literally means “something smeared on” and figuratively refers to the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament it usually referred to oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament it often referred to Christ, the “Anointed One,” the One on whom God’s Spirit rested completely. In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit seems to come and go from people. In the New Testament, following Acts 2 (Pentecost), God’s Spirit comes at the point of salvation to be the continuous presence of God in the lives of believers. The anointing and the Spirit serve as marks of genuine salvation and provide a safeguard against error.

John described four reasons to hold fast to the teaching given by the Spirit. (1) The Holy Spirit’s anointing of the Christian is the sufficient source for knowledge. John wrote: **ye need not that any man teach you.** (2) The Holy Spirit’s anointing teaches believers **of all things.** (3) The Holy Spirit’s teaching **is no lie.** This is in contrast to the false teachers John opposed. (4) The Holy Spirit’s preservation helped genuine believers to remain in the church, not to leave as the false teachers had. At the end of the verse, John reinforced God’s command that the Holy Spirit had taught them: **abide (or reside) in him** (God). John did not want the believers to listen to the false teachers and be influenced by them. Following God’s truth leads to right (righteous) living.

Verse 28. John returned to the more intimate form in addressing Christians by using the term **little children.** John next repeated the command he expressed at the end of verse 27, **abide in him.** John’s repetition in using this command in his Gospel account and his letters demonstrates its significance. Next John focused on a primary teaching of the early church: Jesus’ return. Jesus’ imminent return provided the early church with an important reason to make positive moral and spiritual

LEADER PACK: In advance, make copies of **Item 4: How to Discern Truth from Error** handout and distribute them to your group members. Use this handout to help group members apply the principles from these verses.



SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 45 of the PSG. John mentioned two of the benefits of remaining in Christ.

1. **Confidence.** *This could also be translated boldness. God desires that all will be prepared to meet Him and will have solid confidence in His return.*
2. **Not be ashamed.** *Sadly, many people do not have confidence; instead, they carry the weight of guilt and shame. However, God desires that His people would remain in Him and thus have no reason to be ashamed when Jesus returns.*

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 46 of the PSG: “What role does our group play in helping us remain in the truth?”

Alternate: What could cause someone shame at Christ’s coming?

DO: Direct group members to complete “Engage” on page 46 of the PSG to help reinforce “The Point.”

GUIDE: Refer back to “The Point” for this session: “**Truth is found in Jesus alone.**”

decisions. John also stated the reason for this command in verse 28 both positively and negatively. Positively, John stated his reason for Christians to remain in Christ is so they would **have confidence ... at his coming**. Negatively, John stated his reason was that believers would **not be ashamed before him at his coming**. The early church used the truthfulness of Jesus’ claims while He was on the earth to express confidence in what He said about His return. This confidence led the early church to anticipate Jesus’ return by how they lived. In other words, following the truth leads to righteous living.

Verse 29. The Greek word translated **if** here can also be translated “since,” depending on its context. There was no doubt that Jesus is righteous. The result of knowing about Jesus’ righteousness is knowing an additional fact that John expressed in the final part of verse 29. John wrote: **every one that doeth righteousness is born of him**. Another way to express this truth is that the ability to do right, God’s kind of right, is possible in only one way: to be born of God. In other words, our actions stem from our character, which is determined by our birth. In a similar way that our physical parents pass along our physical traits to us, our spiritual Father passes along His spiritual traits to us. Our earthly actions reflect our spiritual father. Following Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6), leads us to righteous living because truth is found in Jesus alone. ◀

1. William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible (NT)*. WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: “The Time of the Last Hour (1 John 2:18)”.

ENGAGE

Describe how you can tell the difference between a lie and the truth:

A lie is known by

Truth is known by

Offer a prayer that the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth to you about something you are struggling with.

LIVE IT OUT

Truth is found in Jesus alone. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Examine your life.** Have you genuinely embraced the truth by trusting in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? If you're not sure of your relationship with God, there's help on the inside cover of this book.
- ▶ **Prioritize your life.** In light of Christ's imminent return, are your priorities in the right order? If not, what changes need to be made to rearrange your priorities? This week do a thorough evaluation of your priorities and be honest with yourself. Ask God to help you with these priorities.
- ▶ **Invest in someone's life.** Do you know someone that needs to hear the truth? Perhaps a neighbor, coworker, a classmate, or a friend? If so, then share the truth of the gospel with them this week. Take it a step further and buy them a Bible, if you believe they may not have one.

Live It Out



5 MINUTES

READ: Direct group members to page 47 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the applications to carry out this week.

Wrap It Up

SUMMARIZE: Read or restate this idea from page 46 of the PSG:

We can be sure of our salvation, and we can be sure of the truth—the truth that is found through a personal relationship with Jesus.

PRAY: Thank God for revealing Himself as the Truth. Ask Him to help group members know the truth, love the truth, and share the truth.



TIPS & TRAINING

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