

**Lesson 1**  
**1 John 1: 1-4**  
**Life with God is real!**

**Memory verse:** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1 NIV)

As you read this fascinating letter, you will discover that John frequently repeated himself. He wove three themes in and out of these chapters: obedience, love, and truth. In 1 John 1 and 2, the apostle emphasized fellowship, and he told us that the conditions for fellowship are obedience (1 John 1:5–2:6), love (1 John 2:7–17), and truth (1 John 2:18–29).

In the latter half of his letter, John dealt primarily with sonship—our being “born of God.” How can a person really know he is a child of God? Well, said John, sonship is revealed by obedience (1 John 3), love (1 John 4), and truth (1 John 5).

Obedience, love, truth. Why did John use these particular tests of fellowship and sonship? For a very practical reason. When God made us, He made us in His own image (Gen. 1:26–27). This means that we have a personality patterned after God’s. We have a mind to think with, a heart to feel with, and a will with which to make decisions. We sometimes refer to these aspects of our personality as intellect, emotion, and will. The life that is real must involve all the elements of the personality.

Most people are dissatisfied today because their total personality has never been controlled by something real and meaningful. When a person is born of God through faith in Christ, God’s Spirit comes into his life to live there forever. As he has fellowship with God in reading and studying the Bible and in prayer, the Holy Spirit is able to control his mind, heart, and will. And what happens then?

A Spirit-controlled mind knows and understands truth.

A Spirit-controlled heart feels love.

A Spirit-controlled will inclines us to obedience.

John wanted to impress this fact on us, and that is why he used a series of contrasts in his letter: truth vs. lies, love vs. hatred, and obedience vs. disobedience. There is no middle ground in the life that is real. We must be on one side or on the other. This, then, is the life that is real. It was revealed in Christ; it was experienced by those who trusted in Christ; and it can be shared today.

This life begins with sonship and continues in fellowship. First we are born of God; then we walk (live) with God. This means that there are two kinds of people who cannot enter into the joy and victory about which we are thinking: those who have never been born of God and those who, though saved, are out of fellowship with God.

It would be a wise thing for us to take inventory spiritually (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5) to see whether or not we qualify to enjoy the spiritual experience with which John’s letter deals.

If you do not know the importance of being born of God, or if you have any doubts or questions, please review that with your church or discussion leader.

If a true believer is out of fellowship with God, it is usually for one of three reasons:

1. He has disobeyed God’s will.

2. He is not getting along with fellow believers.

3. He believes a lie and therefore is living a lie.

Even a Christian can be mistaken in his understanding of truth. That’s why John warned us, “Little children, let no man deceive you” (1 John 3:7).

These three reasons parallel John’s three important themes: obedience, love, and truth. Once a believer discovers why he is out of fellowship with God, he should confess that sin (or those sins) to the Lord and claim His full forgiveness (1 John 1:9—2:2). A believer can never have joyful fellowship with the Lord if sin stands between them.

God’s invitation to us today is “Come and enjoy fellowship with Me and with each other! Come and share the life that is real!”

To learn in this lesson: 1) Life is real in Jesus Christ 2) Life experienced through Christ 3) Life is shared in Christ

**Discussion Questions:**

1) How much do you know about God, Jesus Christ and eternal life is real (from verses 1 & 2)? (15 minutes)

2) John has seen Jesus. It is easy to say that he has experienced Jesus and know that He is real and is Life. How can we experience “real life” even though we have not seen Jesus today? (10 minutes)

3) What is in John’s mind when he wrote the letter to share Christ with us (use verses 1 John 1: 3, 4; 2:1; 2:26; and 5:13.)? (20 minutes)