

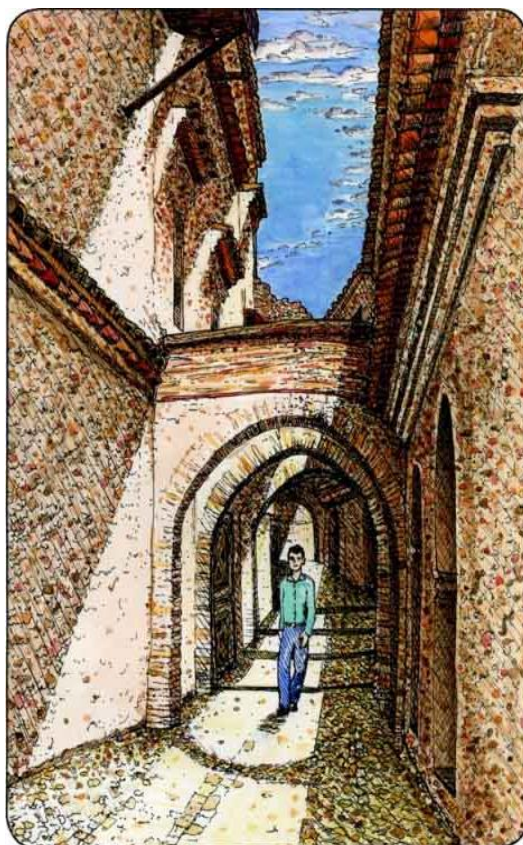
PROGRESSING TOGETHER



COURSE 102

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Group Leader Version with Notes and Answer Key



If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we will have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

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COURSE 102 – Walking in the Light

Objectives of Course 102

1. To understand the key themes of 1 John in the context of the whole letter and how they apply to our context today.
2. To grow in confident assurance of our identity in Christ and in commitment to reflect Christ's example of love.
3. To be able to identify and resist false teachers in the church through having a thorough knowledge of the word of truth and by relying on the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.
4. To maintain a spirit-filled daily relationship with Christ and to seek forgiveness and restore fellowship rapidly when we fall.

Lessons

1 Secure in Christ:	How do I know I am truly a Christian?
2 New Life in Christ:	How have I changed?
3 Victorious through Christ:	How can I resist temptation?
4 Knowing the Truth in Christ:	What should I believe?
5 Forgiven in Christ:	What do I do if I sin?

Introduction

So, you have become a disciple of Jesus! A miracle has taken place in your life, your sins have been forgiven, and everything has changed. Is your heart filled with joy so that you feel like singing and telling everyone about your experience? If so, praise the Lord!

But perhaps you do not feel anything at all. Maybe that early joy has faded and the Christian life seems rather difficult. Worse still, you have committed some sin that you thought you would never do again and a doubt has crept into your heart. What has happened? Isn't a Christian someone who is never tempted and always joyful? Perhaps it was imagination after all!

The goal of these lessons is to help you understand the change that has taken place in your life and what it means to live as a Christian. We will consider the following five questions:

1. How do I know I am truly a Christian?
2. How have I changed?
3. How can I resist temptation?
4. What should I believe?
5. What do I do if I sin?

The Historical Context of 1 John

The first epistle of John, the apostle of Jesus Christ, addresses and answers these five questions. This letter will be the basis of our study. Already toward the end of the life of the apostle, between 50 and 60 years after the death of Jesus Christ - that is sometime between 80 and 90 AD - some dangerous teachings inspired by a worldly philosophy, popular at the time, crept into the Christian communities (1 John 2:18). The so-called “antichrists” who were spreading these teachings were making themselves known as apostles and celebrated teachers of the word – a situation very dangerous and troubling to the faithful (1 John 2:18-20). Consequently, the apostle writes for three reasons:

- (1) to denounce the false teachers (1 John 2:26).
- (2) to anchor the Christians’ confidence in the teaching of the apostles (2:24, 4:6) and to encourage participation in the fellowship of the church (1:3).
- (3) to reassure those in Christ, the Son of God, of the promise of eternal life (5:13).

Christians today face these same challenges. The epistle is an encouragement to remain faithful to the original message of the eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ and a signpost on the path to eternal life for those who are “born of God” in Him.



Read the entire letter of 1 John before starting the first study.

Story

Note for the group leader:

For each Course in the Progressing Together Level 1 program, a story has been provided that illustrates the impact of the biblical teaching on the life of the disciple. Each story is based on the real-life testimony. The stories can be used to encourage faith and raise interest in the importance of studying what God’s Word has to say on the topic at hand. You can use them in your church fellowship to invite other participants to the Course, or as part of the introduction to the first lesson. Alternatively, you may read the story below to your students:

“My name is Noor. I am 39 years old. Noor means ‘Light’, but my name did not really suit me because I lived so long in darkness. Yes, utter darkness!

I was young and strong and I seemed to enjoy life. But in the depth of my heart, I had no joy. I felt that darkness was filling my life to such a point that I was even afraid to be by myself.

Then, I met with the One who is the Light, Jesus, the Lord of glory. True joy flooded my heart and my whole life began to shine. I felt so free, like a bird rising in the air after being released from a hunter’s trap. I loved the light, and, for the first time ever, I also loved my name. I had a strong desire to tell all those who know me about my new-found hope. I wanted to share the joy of my salvation and tell others what the Lord was doing in my life.

However, unfortunately, I was seduced by evil and I fell into sin. I was broken-hearted. I was filled with deep regret and with profound shame at the thought of meeting the One who loved me. My sight was my veiled and the foundation of my hope collapsed.

But then, He came to me through the light of His holy word. I realised that He was interceding for me. That His love for me had not changed. That His blood had cleansed me and that I needed to grow in maturity. I learned that I am in a constant struggle against the world, the flesh and my own evil desires. I learned that it is not true that God rejects those who have sinned. As I studied the word, I learned the meaning of repentance, accompanied with thanksgiving and praise. I now know that I have a faithful companion on the path of life, the Spirit of God. He is sustaining me and interceding for me because of my Beloved. I am the Lord's and I am in the fellowship with those who belong to God.

I also learned that the light must fight against the darkness, that this is how we will be able to walk in the light and in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. I want to let His light shine in me and bring light to those around me."



Lesson ①: Secure in Christ

How do I know I am truly a Christian?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To be certain of the historical basis of our faith.
2. To have a joy-filled assurance of salvation through believing in Jesus.
3. To understand how the new birth transforms the believer 'inside-out'.
4. To grow in appreciation of God's unconditional love and look for ways to express that to others.



A Muslim is one who holds certain beliefs ('imân') and performs certain practices ('dîn'). Is this also true of a Christian? Has he just changed his beliefs and practices, or is there something more? Let's discover the answer together in this lesson.



Read 1 John 1:1-4 carefully.



This letter bears the name of its author: John, the apostle of Jesus Christ. What do you already know about him?

He was referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved; the brother of James, the first apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2). He was the author of the Gospel, of the three letters and Revelation. He is now an older man, probably already in exile on Patmos for his faith and the last living apostle.



What does this passage tell us about John, the author?

He has been in the company of Jesus, the Son of God, and wants to announce the message of eternal life to others and thus enlarge the fellowship of the Church.



What is the source of his message?

The source is Jesus-Christ, (the man of flesh and blood whom John knew personally, verse 1). Jesus-Christ is...

- *In existence 'from the beginning' (before creation)*
- *The word of life*
- *Life eternal which is made known to the world*
- *The Son of God with the Father*



What proofs does he give to show that the message is worthy of confidence?

He heard, saw, looked upon and touched Jesus. From all the evidence, he had a profound personal relationship with Him.



Why did he proclaim it?

So that the readers...

- *might discover eternal life*
- *that they might be in communion with God*
- *and their joy might be complete (v. 3-4)*



Think about the basis of our faith and its uninterrupted transmission, i.e. where it began and how it reached us. What great confidence we can have in the source of our faith!

Note for the group leader:

(You could share the paragraph below or help the group to recall and reflect on the various encouragements to our faith mentioned.)

In this epistle of John, we have the authentic testimony of a person who lived for three years with the man, Jesus of Nazareth, who saw his miracles, who heard his teaching, who observed his every move, who shared his bread and who was chosen by Christ to be his official spokesman. His account has been transmitted faithfully to us. His teaching, with all the writings conserved by the Church from the 12 apostles/witnesses of Jesus Christ (the New Testament) and the 39 books of the Old Testament, became the only authority of the Church (the believers in Jesus). John suffered persecution and gave himself to the service of the Church because of this message. We can have complete confidence in his extraordinary and marvellous testimony, that when we believe in (the message of) Jesus-Christ we receive eternal life.



Read 1 John 5:1-5 carefully.

②



What does the one born of God believe?

He/she believes that Jesus is the Christ (the promised Messiah, Savior-King) and the Son of God.



What is their new relationship with God?

He/she is his child.



How does this new relationship affect their lifestyle/attitudes/behaviour?

Someone who is born of God loves Him as his own Father. He also loves other Christians. He puts in practice the commandments of God and triumphs over the world.



Read John 1:12-13; 3:3-7; 1 John 3:1 and think about what this relationship means.

Note for the group leader:

It is an experience which profoundly transforms and which God alone can bring about in our lives when He reveals Himself to us by his Spirit. From now on, we really belong to Him. We are different from the people of the world.



Read 1 John 5:9-13.

③



What has God given us in his Son?

Life eternal.



Who receives this gift?

- *The one who has the Son. (Verse 12)*
- *The one who believes in the Son. (Verse 13)*



Whose testimony is this - ours or God's?

This testimony is God's.



Why did John write this letter?

To assure the Christian of his salvation. (Verse 13)



As believers we are saved from God's judgement and receive eternal life simply through faith in Christ and his saving work on the cross. Our faith honours God as it rests on His sure testimony and promise.

But John also mentions a series of tests that we can apply to ourselves and that indicate that we truly are believers and can have full assurance of eternal life.

- Fellowship with a believing community that honours God's word: 1:3,7; 2:19
- Recognition and confession of our sin: 1:10
- A desire to put into practice God's commands and to love our brothers and sisters: 3:23-24
- The sweet fellowship and spiritual insight of the indwelling Holy Spirit: 2:20; 3:24



Think about how much Christ loves us: unconditionally!



Read 1 John 5:18-20.

④



What do we know about who we are?

We are the children of God.



What do we know about how we should live?

We should live in the truth and no longer indulge in sin (abandon ourselves to its pleasures).



What do we know about our security in an evil world?

God protects us. The devil can do nothing against us.



What do we know about the One who is true and our relationship to Him?

We are in Jesus Christ who is truly God and we belong to Him.



Is our faith founded on our feelings or on God's Word? Can God lie? Set your heart at rest in His presence. (1 John 3:19)



Optional activities

1. Watch the following video '[Your identity in Christ](#)'. Then discuss the following question as a group: What changes for us when our identity is truly founded in Christ?
Short video answering the question 'Who am I?' – 2 minutes
2. Look at an identification document. What does it say about the person it belongs to? Now, think of your new identity in Christ. On a piece of paper, draw your spiritual identity card. From what you learned in this lesson (and from the video, if you watched it), what would be written on this spiritual identity card?
3. Have each participant look again at section 3. Have them explain why they have the assurance of their salvation by completing the following sentence: "I am born again and I am a child of God. I am sure of my salvation because..." Then, ask the participants to share their declaration with one another.



Applications

1. Spend some time in praise and worship, thanking God for your new identity as a child of God. As you think of your relationship to the Father through Jesus Christ, pray that your joy would be complete. Then, share with the group what you discovered about your identity in Christ.
2. Memorise 1 John 5:12-13. In the coming days, whenever you face doubts or accusations from the devil, recite these verses.
3. In the coming days, pray for God to open up opportunities for you to share about God's unconditional love with those around you. When the time comes, be ready to explain the joyful assurance you have through Christ.

Note for the group leader:

Tell the students that there will be a revision activity at the end of this Course. They will be asked to perform a drama summarising what they have learned and illustrating how this has impacted their lives. Ask them to start thinking about this.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson ②: New Life in Christ

How has my life changed?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To be motivated to live a life of love and righteousness.
2. To desire to become more like Christ.
3. To establish a regular personal study and worship time.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



You have become a child of God by the miracle of the new birth. This means that you know that God is your Father and that His life is in you. Is it sufficient just to believe these things or will there be a change in the way you live? In the passages we read in the first lesson, we discovered some of the changes we can expect to see already. Can you recall any? In this lesson, we will explore the question: What is a child of God like?



Read 1 John 2:28 to 3:3.



OUR MODEL



What do we hope to be like when we finally see Jesus?

To become like Him.



How should this expectation affect us?

We must live in hope (an assurance which is sure and certain regarding the future) that we will see Jesus as He is in glory, and so become like Him.



What standard of behaviour does God expect of His children?

As children of God, we should do what is right to reflect His righteousness and purify ourselves to reflect His purity.



To find out what Jesus is like we need to read and reread the Gospels.



Read 1 John 3:4-10.



OUR PROBLEM



What is sin? (How did Jesus summarize God's perfect law in Matt. 22:37-39?)

Sin is breaking the law of God. The law directs us to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbour as ourselves. (Verse. 4)



Where does sin come from?

From the devil.



Contrast Jesus and the devil with regard to sin. (Verses 5 and 8)

In Jesus, there is absolutely no sin. He came to take our sins away. The devil has sinned since the beginning of the world, and he incites (provokes) man to sin.



For what reasons did Jesus Christ come into this world?

To take away our sins and to destroy the devil's work.



Think about how serious sin must be in God's sight for it to require such a costly remedy!



CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN



What differentiates a child of God from a child of the devil?

A child of God desires to practice righteousness and to love his brother. A child of the devil sins without concern for what is right and does not love his brother.



A child of God may fall into sin from time to time, but why is it impossible for him/her to continue in sin?

- *Because Jesus has removed his/her sin (verse 5). Whoever abides in Christ does not make a regular practice of sin.*
- *He has also delivered him/her from the grip (domination) of sin.*
- *A child of God cannot be happy as long as he continues to sin, because the seed (the new life) of God lives in him and transforms his heart to become like that of a child who loves his Father.*
- *From now on, he desires to please his heavenly Father, and he regards sin with disgust.*



What demonstrates that a person is truly a child of God?

The person's behaviour. If he/she knows God, he/she keeps his commandments of love and walks in righteousness just like Jesus did.

Note for the group leader:

Compare v 4-10 with 2:3-6 for the same emphasis on obedience to God's law as a test of true faith. We must be careful not to impose our own 'righteousness measuring sticks' on ourselves or others to disqualify or judge. Rather, we should expect and encourage growth in obedience in ourselves and others, and rejoice when we start to see this taking place.



Read 1 John 4:7-21.



How is the character of our Father described in these verses?

God is love.



What is the measure and proof of His love?

He sent his only Son into the world as a propitiatory sacrifice so that we might live by his power and grace.



What characterises His children?

Love and confidence. They love God and their neighbours. They also do not live in fear of God's judgment but in the assurance of his forgiveness.



Perhaps fear has dominated your life in the past - fear of evil spirits, of death, of the future, of failure etc. Is there any place for these fears now that you belong to God? Why or why not?

No! Perfect love casts out fear.



A child of God not only has a new identity, but also a new nature. God's life is in him and God has given him His spirit. Now his greatest desire is to bear the family likeness. He will not be transformed all at once, but he will become increasingly recognisable as his Father's child by showing the same characteristics of righteousness, obedience and love.



Optional activities

1. Make a list of the characteristics of Jesus from what you have read or heard about him in the Gospels. Then discuss what it means practically to bear his family likeness.
2. Have the participants reflect on their lives before they met Jesus and after. (If it is helpful, you could encourage them to draw pictures to illustrate the contrast.) Then have them share with the group what changed since they became a disciple of Jesus.



Applications

1. Pray and ask God to show you in which area you need to grow to become more like Jesus. In groups of two or three, share what God has shown you. Then, pray for each other.
2. In the coming days, watch the whole or part of the Jesus Movie. Alternatively read or listen to an audio-version of Mark 1-10 using the following links for instance:
 - [New International Version Dramatized US](#)
 - [New International Version UK](#)

As you do, meditate on Jesus as our model. What was Jesus' character like? How did he act? Ask God to help you become more and more like Him.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson ③: Victory in Christ

How can I resist temptation?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To be able to recognize and describe the Christian's three enemies.
2. To understand the importance of knowing the Bible and how to use it to resist temptation.
3. To better recognize when the disciple's own desires are coming from the flesh and realize the need to bring them under the Spirit's control.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



Read carefully Matthew 4:1-11; 1 John 2:15-17; Gal 5:13-25.



We have seen how our Holy Father wants His children to live and we want to live like that too. But we had not expected the Christian life to be so difficult! "If I am God's child, why do I still get tempted and sometimes yield? Does not His Holy Spirit live in me? I become discouraged and disappointed by my failures. How can I be victorious?" Right off, we must realize we have a powerful enemy. We have changed sides and transferred our allegiance from Satan to God; Satan, who is God's enemy, has become our enemy. Even though he is a defeated foe, as long as we live in this world he will spare no effort to confuse us and make us doubt the truth. As well as attacking us directly, he uses all kinds of subtle temptations to provoke us to sin.



Read carefully Matthew 4:1-11.



① TEMPTATION BY THE DEVIL



Who is the tempter?

The devil (Verse 5)



Who is being tempted in this passage?

Jesus



Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

(Respond freely)



Did Jesus sin?

No.



Is it a sin to be tempted? (See also Hebrews 4:15 and James 1:12-15.) Explain your answer.

No, because Jesus himself has been tempted, but was without sin. The sin is to give in to it.

Note for the group leader:

The temptation showed the extent to which Jesus was righteous in resisting such trials.

(Hebrews 4:15.) Temptation can be a temptation from the devil for the purpose of making a person fall. It can also simply be from our own lust (from our old nature). In both cases, one has not sinned if he has stood firm when faced with temptation. Happy is the one who does not give in. He will have a crown as a reward! (James 1:12)



How did Jesus resist?

He quoted the word of God, the truth, against the lies of Satan.

After having resisted all the temptations, he ordered the devil to go away.



Jesus also said: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation!" (Matthew 26:41) Think about the ways the devil tempts you. Do you resist him as Jesus did?



Read carefully 1 John 2:15-17.



② TEMPTATION BY THE WORLD



The word 'world' here does not mean the beautiful world that God created for us to live in but rather the system of this fallen world corrupted by sin and under the control of Satan. (See 1 John 5:19.)



What is the relationship between God and the world? On the basis of these verses, check the correct answer(s):

☐

God and the world are identical.

☐

They live together in congenial harmony: Peace!

☐

They are neutral and indifferent toward one another: Tolerance lives!

☒

They are in total opposition: It is war!



Basing your answer on 1 John 2:15-17, contrast the system of the world with the kingdom of God. Complete the table below:

	The Kingdom of God	The World
Who belongs to it?	<i>All those who love the Father and do His will. (2:17)</i> <i>Note for the group leader:</i> <i>We know that this requires that they recognize His Son Jesus-Christ (See also 1 John 2:23.)</i>	<i>Those who follow their own desires for the things of the world. (2:15-16)</i>
What is one's motivation?	<i>To love the Father (2:15)</i> <i>To obey the will of God (2:17)</i>	<i>The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life (2:16)</i>
How long will it last?	<i>Those who do the will of God will live for ever in his kingdom (2:17)</i>	<i>The world and all those who love it will pass away. (2:17)</i>



What ought to be your attitude toward the world?

We should not love the world.

Note for the group leader:

Encourage students to explain this expression. For example: We should not desire things selfishly but receive things gratefully.



It is very easy to be caught and swept along by the spirit of this world, its perspectives, values, and pleasures.



How can we resist? (Remember Jesus' example.)

We need to know our Bibles and God's priorities for us.

This takes discernment and effort. We must be watchful and prayerful. It can help to speak God's word aloud in the face of temptation, as Jesus did in Matt 4.

Note for the group leader:

Encourage students to think more widely; for example, we must warn and encourage each other, avoid situations where we can easily be tempted, etc.



Think of some of the examples around you of the 'lust of the flesh' (the wrong desires of human nature), the 'lust of the eyes' (the thirst to possess what one sees) and 'pride of life' (the boasting of what one has and does) (1 John 2:16).



How should your values and pleasures be different from those of the world?

Our values are based on the love of God and the desire to please him. Therefore, our pleasure is to listen to His word and put it into practice in our service of God. Those of the world only want to serve their own desires and interests.



The Christian soon discovers that it is not only the devil and the world who try to trip him up and draw him away from God. He must also do battle with an internal enemy. His old sinful nature – the flesh – still seeks to dominate his life.



Read carefully Galatians 5:13-25.



TEMPTATION BY THE FLESH (SINFUL NATURE)



What is the nature of the conflict?

The flesh (the old nature) is opposed to the activity of the Holy Spirit who lives inside the believer.



Contrast the acts of the sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit.

The works of the flesh and the fruit of the Holy Spirit are completely contrary and opposed to one another in their motivations and their results: the one, negative and destructive, the other, positive and constructive.



How can I cease gratifying the desires of my sinful nature?

I must 'walk by' the Spirit: listening to his voice and obeying him step by step and allowing him to work in me without condition.



I can withstand temptation and resist the attraction of the world by being alert to the danger and by using the weapons which God has given me of prayer and of His Word. I can refrain from yielding to my old sinful nature by letting the Holy Spirit, who lives in me, fill and control me. He will then produce His fruit in my life.



Optional activity

List the works of the flesh. Imagine a world where everyone behaved in this way. What would it be like? Would you like to live in this world? Discuss this as a group.

Then, list the fruit of the spirit. Imagine a world where everybody had this fruit. What would it be like? Would you like to live in this world? Discuss this as a group.

Does your small group or your church fellowship look like this spirit-led world? How can it improve in this area?



Applications

1. Pray and ask God to show you how you are being tempted. Break up into groups of two or three and share (as specifically or generally as you want). Then, pray for each other and ask for God's help to overcome this temptation.
2. During the week, keep in touch with your small group of two or three to pray for each other, to support each other and to be accountable to each other.
3. Memorise 1 Corinthians 10:13. In the coming days, recite this verse every time that you are tempted.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson ④: Knowing the Truth through Christ

What should I believe?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To recognize the importance of maintaining a watchful attitude alongside others to be able to detect and oppose false teachings.
2. To identify three dangerous teachings typically spread by false teachers.
3. To turn to the word of truth and rely on the help of the Holy Spirit when needing to discern the truth.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



Another problem that the new Christian faces is that of the multiple ideologies, religions and sects that exist in our modern world. Many of them sound plausible and attractive and some even use selected passages from the Bible to propagate their teaching. In order to be confident and stable, we need to be able to distinguish between truth and error.

The purpose of the devil, “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8.44), is to confuse people about what is truth. We have already seen some of his methods in Lesson 3. We now face a warning against his subtler strategy of deception, that of counterfeiting truth.



Read carefully 1 John 2:18-28, then 1 John 4:1-6. Take note particularly of the verses in connection with each question.



WHO ARE THESE DANGEROUS PEOPLE?



What names are used to describe them?

1 John 2:18

Antichrists

1 John 4:1 and 3

False prophets, following the spirit of the Antichrist



What do they try to do? (John 2:26)

They were trying to misdirect the Christian from the truth by seduction.



The term 'ANTICHRIST' is used to describe someone who deliberately opposes the Messiah, God's chosen One. They have existed in every generation and there will be a final, powerful antichrist at the end of the world.



HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE THEM?



What is their behaviour toward the church? (1 John 2:19)

They separate themselves from the communion of the leaders who are faithful to the apostolic teaching while making themselves seem to be true Christians.



What truths do they deny concerning the person of Jesus Christ?

1 John 2:22-23 <i>That He is the Messiah, that He is the Son of God</i>	1 John 4:2-3 (See also 4:14-15) <i>The fact that Jesus, as the Son of God, became man of flesh and bones (the incarnation)</i>
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What is their attitude toward the authoritative teaching of the Apostles?

1 John 2:19 <i>They separated themselves from the apostles, and those who followed their teaching.</i>	1 John 4:6 <i>They do not listen to the apostles.</i>
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HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS?



What is their principle weapon (tactic)? (1 John 2:22 and 26)

Lying



What are we encouraged to do to remain firm against these subtle lies and false teachings?

1 John 2:24 <i>Abide steadfastly in what we have heard from the beginning (that is the teaching of the Apostles, the word of truth)</i>	1 John 4:1 and 6 <i>Test or compare what the spirits (the prophets) are teaching against the word of truth (the teaching of the apostles) to know if they are of God.</i>
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What precious gift have we received to enable us to recognise and resist false teachers and their teaching?

1 John 2:20 and 27 <i>We have received an anointing from the Holy One that gives us the knowledge of the truth.</i>	1 John 4:4 (See also 1 John 3:24) <i>The Holy Spirit who lives in us is greater than the spirit of falsehood that is in the world. This enables us to recognize the subtle lies and false teaching of the false prophets.</i>
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Based on these passages, what two resources do we have to protect ourselves against false prophets?

- *The teaching of the Apostles (the New Testament)*
- *The indwelling Holy Spirit*



Who is the stronger the spirit of falsehood that is in the world or the Spirit of God?
The Holy Spirit of God



THE LIES THAT YOU HEAR AROUND YOU



Summarize the three dangerous errors taught by the false prophets that you have found in these passages.

- *They deny that Jesus is divine (the Son of God).*
- *They deny that God became man in Jesus Christ (the incarnation).*
- *They do not recognize the authority of the Scriptures (the writings of the apostles).*



Do you hear these lies in the world? Explain.
Yes



Do you hear these lies in the Church? Explain.
In certain churches, yes. It is very necessary to discern what type of church one attends.



In order to mislead people, the devil counterfeits that which comes from God. To teach a bank clerk to recognise false bank notes, he is required to handle wads of authentic notes which contain one or two false ones. The more familiar he becomes with the true notes, the more easily he recognises the false ones. Our best defence against error is to be impregnated with truth.



Optional activities

1. Identify one of the lies that are common in your context. Discuss how this lie is impacting people's lives and the church. Then, find Bible verses that shed truth on this issue with the help of the group leader. Discuss as a group how you would respond to these lies using the verses you found.

Note for the group leader:

If you chose this activity, prepare in advance a list of key verses that invalidate common lies that believers are facing in your context.

2. Split into groups of three. Perform a dialogue between a Christian and two people who are confused about this issue. The Christian must present the biblical truth to them in a convincing way.



Applications

1. As a group, share what you are already doing to know the Bible well. Then, discuss what else you could do to know it better and to be able to discern truth from lies. Decide on some practical steps and pray that God will help you put your decision into practice.
2. In the coming days, put into practice what you have decided. Try to set time aside each day to read and meditate on God's word. Choose an accountability partner and stay in touch during the week to check on your progress and encourage one another.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson 5: Forgiven in Christ

What do I do if I sin?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To gain a proper perspective on the danger of sin in our lives.
2. To learn to recognize one's own sin and turn quickly to God in order to receive his promised forgiveness and restoration.
3. To experience daily the freedom and thankfulness of recognizing Jesus' sacrifice for us.
4. To grow in our desire for communion with Christ (and his family) and to 'walk as he walked'.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



We have looked at our new identity in Christ and at the characteristics of a child of God. We have also seen that we have enemies who attack us on all sides and, sadly, we have to admit that sometimes they succeed in making us sin. What should we do? God tells us that nothing can separate us from His love, but we know that we have lost that close fellowship with Him that brought us such joy. Does God still love us? Can we be forgiven?



Read carefully 1 John 1:5 – 2:2.



LIGHT AND DARKNESS (1 JOHN 1:5-10)



How is God described in verse 5?

God is light. In Him there is no darkness at all.



Using your own words, what does this tell us about God?

God is perfectly just, holy and righteous.



What does it mean to 'walk in the darkness'? (1 John 1:6; see also 1:8,10)

It means that we refuse to recognise that we have sinned and we have a continual pattern of unrepentant sin in our life.



What is the consequence of saying we have fellowship with Him but continuing to walk in the darkness? (1 John 1:6; see also 1:8,10)

We pretend that we are good and holy and in fellowship with God, but we are not. We are living a lie and the truth is not in us.



What does it mean to 'walk in the light'? (1 John 1:7; see also 1:9)

We admit our sins and confess them to God. We seek His forgiveness and try to live in the way that pleases Him.



What are the two results of 'walking in the light'? (1:7)

We have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.



Reflection: Are we not encouraged to clean a room when the sunlight reveals how dirty it is?



CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (1 JOHN 1:9 – 2:2)



What does God promise to do if we confess our sins? (1 John 1:9)

To forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.



Who is our 'advocate' or 'the one who speaks in our defence'? (2:1)

Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

Note for the group leader:

The word translated 'advocate' is the Greek 'parakletos', which means defender, helper or supporter. Jesus used this word when he spoke of the Holy Spirit in John 14-16; but in the context of forgiveness Jesus himself is our defender and helper.

See also Romans 8:32-34 where Jesus is our intercessor, who pleads with God the Father on our behalf so that there is no one to condemn us before God.



Why is he able to defend us? (2:2)

He is the 'propitiation' for our sins. He has paid the penalty and taken the punishment for our sins by his death on the cross. He took on himself God's righteous anger and judgement on sin.

Note for the group leader:

The word translated 'propitiation' (or 'expiation' or 'atoning sacrifice') is the Greek 'hilasmos'. God is rightly angry against sin, but Jesus, who is God in the flesh, has taken the punishment for sin in our place. We can now enjoy God's favour and blessing. See also Romans 3:23-26 where it explains that God did not overlook the punishment for sin. Rather, since Jesus took the punishment for our sins, God is now both just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. This is the wonderful plan of salvation.

③

RECEIVING GOD'S FORGIVENESS THROUGH CHRIST



What steps should we take when we realize we have sinned?

- 1) *Acknowledge to God that we have sinned (1 John 1:9)*
- 2) *Thank God for His forgiveness and restoration through Christ (for He is faithful to his promises 1 John 1:9,2:1b-2)*
- 3) *Commit to walk in the light and resist the temptation to sin again (1 John 2:1)*

Notes to the group leader:

Concerning step 1:

We confess our sins first and foremost to God. But should we also confess our sins to other people? Sometimes, when we have sinned against another person, it will be right and necessary to confess our sin to that person and to ask their forgiveness.

At other times it can also be helpful to confess our sins to God in the presence of an older and wiser Christian believer. That person will be able to pray with us, to assure us of God's forgiveness and to advise us on what we should do next. There may be something we should do in order to put things right. Or we may need to leave it with God, accept His forgiveness and move on. James 5:16 tells us: 'Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.'

Concerning step 3:

You could encourage participants to ask God to fill them with His Holy Spirit afresh as they commit to following His guidance. Refer back to lesson 3.



Is recognizing and acknowledging our sin easy? Why or why not?

It is hard to face up to our sins and faults before God. But it is essential that we do so!

Note for the group leader:

If time permits, you could look at Psalm 51 with the students.



On what does our forgiveness depend – on our own efforts or on the sacrifice of Jesus?

It depends entirely on the sacrifice of Jesus.

Note for the group leader:

This means that we can have peace with God. Our own efforts would never be good enough. But Jesus' sacrifice is complete and perfect.



Based on your answer above, tick the box in the table below that best expresses the relationship between our good works and Jesus' sacrifice.

Our Efforts (blue)

Jesus' sacrifice (red)

100% – 0%	80% – 20%	60% – 40%	40% – 60%	20% – 80%	0% – 100%



The basis of our daily communion with God is the same as that which we had at the very beginning of our Christian life: we are accepted solely on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and his intercession constantly on our behalf.

Note for the group leader:

If time allows, study section 4 below. If not, read the passage or watch [the story of the Prodigal Son](#) (5 minutes). Ask the students to draw the parallel between this story and our relationship with our heavenly Father when we return in repentance. Then, go straight to section 5.



Read Luke 15:11-24.

④ RESTORATION



Jesus told a beautiful story that perfectly illustrates the Father's complete forgiveness and restoration of a child who repents and confesses his sin.



Was the son's sin serious?

Yes



How far did he stray?

He had insulted his father, abandoned his responsibilities toward his family, left his heritage and the people God had chosen, wasted his fortune by living in debauchery, and accepted to serve some Gentiles in some impure and degrading activities.



Did his father stop loving him?

No



How did the son obtain forgiveness? What did he do?

- He became conscious of his errors*
- He returned to his father and humbly confessed his sin before him.*



What did he confess?

That he had sinned against God and against his father.



How did the son expect to be treated?

As one of his father's servants.



What did he deserve?

Nothing (Ridicule, to be totally rejected by his family and society, a beating)



How did his father receive him?

- He ran, throwing his arms around his neck and embracing him (restoration of his personal relationship).*
- He honoured him publicly by giving him a great feast (restoration in the family, in society and in the community of the faith).*
- He removed his dirty rags and dressed him in a beautiful robe and gave him a ring (restoration of all his authority as a son).*



Did he disown him or treat him like a servant?

No. He was accepted and immediately re-established as a son.



DEALING WITH OUR SIN



What is it necessary to do when I have sinned? Check the correct responses below:

☐

To hide certain sinful pleasures for a time.

☒

To recognize my sin before God and renounce it.

☐

To compensate for my sin by doing religious acts.

☐

To be sad for a period of time.

☒

To thank God for his forgiveness on the basis of Christ's sacrifice.

☒

To resume walking in the light.



The closer I walk with Jesus, the brighter is the light that shines in my heart and the more I become like Him. As I stay in His presence and love and obey Him, I enjoy wonderful fellowship with Him and also with all who are walking with Him. I can trust Him to keep purifying my heart by the blood of Jesus and our fellowship remains unbroken.

But, when I disobey, though I am still His child and His love for me never wavers, a cloud comes between us and the fellowship is broken. I must immediately repent and confess my sin and, according to His promise, He forgives and restores me because of the blood of Jesus Christ, His son, shed for me. Thus I continue to walk in the Light, praising Him for such a wonderful salvation and bringing glory to His name.



Optional activities

1. Sing a worship song thanking God for his complete forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. You can choose your own song or play one of the following:

- [How deep the Father's love](#)
Beautiful modern hymn - 3 minutes
- [Jesus paid it all](#)
Beautiful traditional hymn - 5 minutes
- [I'm accepted, I'm forgiven](#)
Positive and uplifting chorus style hymn - 2 minutes
- [I stand amazed](#)
Beautiful traditional hymn (slow moving) - 7 minutes
- [Father, I have sinned](#)
Beautiful modern song on the theme of the Prodigal Son. Sung as a duet. Nicely illustrated - 4 minutes
- [When God ran](#)
Modern re-telling in video and song of the story of the Prodigal Son. Very moving. Not for congregational singing - 5 minutes

2. Watch this [modern version of the parable of the Prodigal Son](#). When you finished watching, spend time in thanksgiving for the Father's love for you.

Creative modern re-telling of the son's return. Set in the US rather than Europe or the Arab World, but it's good - 4 minutes



Applications

1. Pray and ask God to show you if there is any sin in your life that you have not repented of. Confess this to God. Then praise God that he is faithful and just to forgive your sin and to purify you completely.
2. In the coming days, as you continue to have your daily devotional time, confess your sin and thank God for his forgiveness and restoration. Keep walking in the light and bring glory to His name. Consider what else you want to put into practice or what habits you want to develop as a result of what you learned in this course.



Review of Course 102

Review the five lessons of this Course. Then, as a group, prepare and act out a drama showing what you have learned and illustrating how this has affected your lives.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



End of Course Evaluation

Please note:

This End of Course Evaluation is there to help you improve your skills as a group leader.

Put a check next to the issues that you need to work on.

You may want to discuss some of these with your mentor/coordinator.

Number of the Course that you finished teaching:

Title of the Course:

Think about the following questions:

A. This course

☐ Is there something that was not covered sufficiently or that you need to cover again in this course? What are you going to do about it?

B. Your role as a group leader

- ☐ Is there anything you should change in the way you prepare your lessons?
- ☐ Is there anything you should change in your teaching method? (Are you leading the students to discover the answers for themselves?)
- ☐ Is there anything you should change in your attitude as a group leader? (Are you dominating or moderating the group?)

C. Preparation and participation

- ☐ Are the students attending the meetings regularly? If this is not the case, why not? Is there anything that can be done to enable them to do so?
- ☐ Are the students preparing their answers thoughtfully before coming and eager to share what they've learned? What can you do to encourage and further motivate them?

D. Group dynamics

- ☐ Are there students who do not participate or do not feel free to share at a deeper level in the group? If this is the case, why?
- ☐ Are there some who cause problems in the group? In what way? How can you deal with that?
- ☐ Are the students taking responsibilities within the group and serving others using their gifts? If not, what can you do to encourage this?

E. Review & progress evaluation

Are you ensuring students can understand and express what they have studied? If so, how?

☐ Answers in class ☐ Review questions ☐ Oral exam ☐ Written exam

Are you keeping a record of the students' progress? If so, how?

☐ Attendance ☐ Students' workbooks ☐ Exams ☐ Course register ☐ Student register

☐ Are students achieving in their evaluations? If not, why not? How can you help them improve?

F. Application

- ☐ Are your students putting the biblical truths into practice? If not, why not?
- ☐ What difficulties are your students facing on their spiritual journey? How could you help them overcome these difficulties?
- ☐ Does anyone need personal follow-up? If you cannot do this, whom could you ask?

G. Multiplication

- ☐ Are the participants sharing with others about what they learned? If not, how could you help them to do this?
- ☐ Are others seeking to join a study group? If so, how can you best integrate the newcomers?
- ☐ Have you identified any participants who could become future group leaders? How are you going to equip them?

H. Further group leader training & equipping

- ☐ Note any areas you would like to receive further training in.
- ☐ What else would you like to discuss with your mentor/coordinator?

What next?

- ✓ Praise God and intercede for each of your students.
- ✓ Pray for your own ministry as a discipleship group leader.
- ✓ Look at each of the issues that you want to work on. Decide what you have to do to address these issues. Then start implementing the necessary changes.
- ✓ If you want to discuss something, make an appointment with your mentor/coordinator.

We would love to hear about your experiences as you taught this Course.
Please contact the Progressing Together team: info@progressingtogether.com