

LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

STUDY ONE

Living Right in a Wrong World

Selections from 1 John

When you have a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the result is a joyful life, a clean life, a discerning life, and a confident life. When you have a relationship with Christ that is meaningful and deep, the result is a joy that's overflowing. When you do not, you do not. John's letter is about having an overflowing abundance of joy.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT has gone wrong with our world? Violence fills our television screens as we watch the nightly news. People we once admired plead guilty for crimes committed under the cloak of secrecy. The moral fabric of our society has frayed, and behaviors once frowned upon now receive applause. It seems as if people today don't even know the meaning of "right" and "wrong" anymore!

Anger, lawlessness, deception, and confusion—such signs show how our world has tilted off its spiritual axis and how it desperately needs to rediscover its moral center. God did not make His creation this way. He does not delight in the corruption and destruction of His handiwork. He fashioned the earth to bless it and fill it with life and light and all that aligns with His good will.

By turning from God, humanity brought all kinds of disorder into this world. Yet, God has not sat idle and aloof. He sent His Son into this world gone wrong to bear sin's curse. Peter summed up what Jesus accomplished for us:

*He personally carried our sins
in his body on the cross
so that we can be dead to sin
and live for what is right. (1 Peter 2:24)*



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Living Right in a Wrong World

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Christians don't have to settle with the chaos of wrong living. What's the key to overcoming the chaos? *Fellowship with Christ!* The closer our fellowship with Him, the more we enjoy His benefits.

Right living through fellowship with Christ is John's central theme in his first epistle. Not much has changed since John penned his letter. People have always struggled with anger, lawlessness, deception, and confusion, but our struggle isn't hopeless. Fellowship with our Savior produces the fruit of right living. John shows us how!



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Think over what you hope to gain from this *Searching the Scriptures* study of Chuck Swindoll's series on 1 John. Make Chuck's opening prayer below your own and record a simple mission statement for why you are doing this study.

Father, help us live right in a wrong world, a world that's lost its way, a world that listens to the wrong voices; a world where the majority is rarely, if ever, right; a world that's impressed with all the wrong things and ignores most, if not all, the righteous things. Help us to live graciously and winsomely, rather than obnoxiously. Deliver us, our Father, from first impressions, judgmental attitudes, prejudices formed by previous years of wrong teaching and wrong opinions. Show us that living right in this wrong world can be done through the power of Christ. —Chuck Swindoll



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Early church tradition tells us John outlived all the other apostles. He spent decades ministering in and around Jerusalem, and then the first Jewish-Roman war (c. AD 66–73) likely caused him to make his way to Ephesus to finish his course of ministry.

Most think the veteran apostle wrote 1 John while in his nineties, living under Roman emperor Domitian who reigned AD 81–96. John may have penned the letter on the island of Patmos, where Rome had exiled him, or in Ephesus just before or after his exile.

Regardless when and where he wrote, John made his purpose for writing clear. As we will observe, John's purpose soars above the walls of time and flies to all Christians to help them live right no matter where history has them.



Observation: Grasping the Whole

Spotting repetition helps us observe John's intention, earmark his emphases, and feel the emotional force with which he writes.¹ Now, we'll look at four passages. In each, John makes explicit his right-living goals for each believer.

Repetition is one of the helpful things to observe. And that's all I did when I read through 1 John. I noticed how he repeated his purpose for writing. —Chuck Swindoll

Supernatural Joy—1 John 1:3–4

Read *1 John 1:3–4*. Note John's purpose for writing and jot down an expanded paraphrase of these verses. Putting verses in your own words requires you to better observe what the author wrote. It's a great exercise.



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Supernatural Purity—1 John 2:1–2

Read [1 John 2:1–2](#). Why did John write according to this passage? How did John tie his purpose for writing to Jesus Christ?

Supernatural Discernment—1 John 2:26–27

Mark John's goal for writing according to [1 John 2:26–27](#). Who helps Christians fulfill John's warning?

Supernatural Assurance—1 John 5:13

How did John describe Christians in [1 John 5:13](#)? Why did John write his letter according to this verse?

Our vibrant fellowship with Christ sprouts complete joy, victory in our battles with sin, discernment to know truth from error, and assurance of eternal life. John listed these benefits to light a spiritual fire in us.



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In his commentary on 1 John, Chuck wrote of John's purpose:

“The aging apostle hoped to ignite the zeal of these believers so that they might follow the Lord more closely and stand firm against those who meant to sow discord among the churches. In doing so, they would solidify their relationship with God and gain confidence in His work in their lives.”²



Interpretation: Fellowship with God

John's supernatural benefits—joy, purity, discernment, assurance—all flow from our spiritual union with God, which is expressed in the word *fellowship*.

In the New Living Translation, “fellowship” occurs eleven times. Most occurrences refer to our relationship with God. Read [1 John 2:23–28](#). How do Christians maintain and foster fellowship with God? What benefits do Christians gain from this fellowship, and how are those benefits important in day-to-day living?



Chuck's Commentary Insight

First John Theme: Fellowship

Too often “fellowship” means “coffee time” or “gabbing in the hall” or “going out with friends.” None of those things come even close to the kind of relationship John had in mind. The word *koinōnia* [2842], as used by first-century Christians, conveys an intimate, mutual participation in a life shared with one another. Let's call it communion. It's the outworking of a deep, spiritual union between God and the believer as well as between brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:3). As believers have this intimate communion “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,” they will have the same kind of deep communion with one another through the work of the Holy Spirit.³



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Before moving to correlation, review Chuck’s overview chart of 1 John. Notice the key words, *light*, *love*, *truth*, and *knowledge*. These concepts are rich with meaning and weave through John’s epistle like melodic themes through a symphonic masterpiece. Be sure to “listen” for their inspiring refrains as you read the book.

FIRST JOHN

		Walking with the God of Light		Responding to the God of Love			
		Living in the Light	Staying in the Light	Practicing the Righteousness and Love of God	Testing the Spirits	Loving Others as God Loved Us	Believing in Jesus
		CHAPTERS 1:5–2:11	CHAPTER 2:12–27	CHAPTERS 2:28–3:23	CHAPTERS 3:24–4:6	CHAPTER 4:7–21	CHAPTER 5
Fellowship with God Produces a . . .		Clean life	Discerning life	Loving life			Confident life
Emphasis		Light	Truth	Love			Knowledge
Means		Obeying	Perceiving	Sacrificing			Believing
Christ		Advocate (2:1)	Holy One (2:20)	Son of God (3:8)		Savior of the world (4:14)	
Purposes		That we may have fellowship and joy (1:3–4)	That we may not sin (2:1)	That we may not be deceived (2:26)		That we may know that we have eternal life (5:13)	
Theme		Living in fellowship with God, who is light and love					
Key Verses		1:5–7	4:10–16			5:11–13	
Christ in 1 John		Jesus is the Word of Life, who is God come in the flesh to bring eternal life to those who believe (1:1; 4:2; 5:20).					

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Correlation: The Life of John

If you do not own a Bible dictionary, the start of a new study is a good time to add one to your bookshelf. Chuck prefers the *New Unger Bible Dictionary* which [you can order](#) from our website.

John, who became known as the Beloved Disciple, worked as a fisherman with his father Zebedee. Here are a few highlights of John's life:

- 1) Jesus nicknamed John and his brother James, "Sons of Thunder" (*Mark 3:13–19*) because of their tenacity—they sought to call fire upon a Samaritan village (*Luke 9:51–56*).
- 2) John, James, and Peter formed Jesus' inner circle because they accompanied Jesus at His transfiguration (*Mark 9:2–13*), the raising of Jairus' daughter (*5:21–43*), and His agony at Gethsemane (*Matthew 26:36–46*).
- 3) John accompanied Peter who healed the crippled man at the temple (*Acts 3:1–10*).
- 4) John and Peter exemplified boldness in their faith when they refused to be silent about Jesus before the Jewish authorities (*4:1–22*).
- 5) John gave Paul the right hand of fellowship after Paul confirmed his gospel with the leaders of the Jewish church (*Galatians 2:1–10*).

Peruse a Bible dictionary entry for John the Apostle if you wish to know more. Record your notes below.

Our overview of John's life and survey of his letter serves as a map to help us navigate 1 John. A thrilling journey awaits us as we grow closer to our Lord and experience in our lives and relationships the benefits of a close walk with Him. Take the first step this week by putting into action one insight you've gained from this study.



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Application: Right Living in a Wrong World

We began our study with a list of wrongs in our world: anger, lawlessness, deception, and confusion. How can we counter these wrongs as we apply John's teaching?

- 1) *In an angry and dark world like ours, the joyful Christian is the bright light.* Hope, a sense of humor, laughter, positivity—how such traits shine!
- 2) *In a lawless society like ours, the clean Christian is a contagious witness.* Trust and attraction follow those who keep their promises and keep from debauchery.
- 3) *In a deceptive culture like ours, the discerning Christian is a convicting presence.* Often, a lonely “no” or a whispered “wrong” puts the sting of truth in a deceived conscience.
- 4) *In a confused age like ours, the confident Christian is a strong magnet.* Admirable goals and upright convictions prove rare these days. We turn heads and spark curiosity as we follow God's truth.

Choose from above one truth you find most pertinent to your season of life. Write why it's important to you and how you would like to uphold that truth in your walk with Christ.

According to John, right living . . . *real* living . . . comes down to fellowshiping with God in a vibrant, interactive, trusting relationship. This kind of connection with our Creator is the most fulfilling relationship anyone can hope to experience. And it's available to all through Christ, our Savior and Lord!



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A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for time I can spend with You in Your Word. Thank You for 1 John. I anticipate studying it with a great deal of delight. Guide me into the truth in a world that has lost its way, where confusion has become the way of life. How precious is the light of Your Word to me! In the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org or grab a *copy* of the book for your library. Also, at the start of this study is a great time to *pick up* Chuck's commentary on 1 John.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 10.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, 26–27.

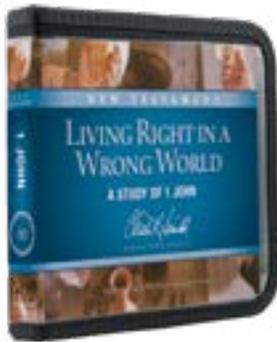


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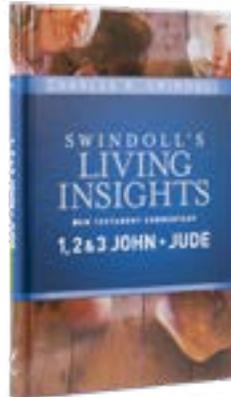
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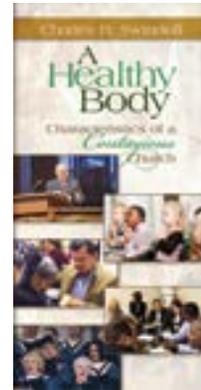
Tools for Digging Deeper



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by Charles R. Swindoll
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

