

## 1 John 2:12-14 | Sunday November 30, 2025

1 John is one of the bluntest and most loving books. I am amazed at how God's truth can call us liars and warn us that we have deceived ourselves and yet do so in a loving way to draw us to fellowship.

### 1 John 1:6; 8; 10; 2:9 ESV

(1:6) If we say we have fellowship with Him **while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

(1:8) If we say we have no sin, **we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

(1:10) If we say we have not sinned, **we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.**

(2:9) Whoever says he is in the light and **hates his brother is still in darkness.**

### 1 John 1:7; 9; 2:1; 10 ESV

(1:7) But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, **we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

(1:9) If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(2:1) My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, **we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

(2:10) Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, **and in him there is no cause for stumbling.**

**If only the left column is emphasized these truths can be taken and weaponized against believers.** They can be pulled out of context and used to cause people to doubt their salvation even though they are all about fellowship. Yet the straightforwardness of truth is balanced each time with encouragement and love. We need to keep balanced in the Word of God and so did John's audience. **They were struggling to define what true fellowship looks like.** A group of false teachers, that John will call "antichrists" (2:18) have arisen and are teaching falsehoods. They are claiming to have real truth, and the real path to fellowship with God. The false teaching had caused many to have **doubt and fear in their walk, which is dangerous because of what effective motivators they are.** John wanted to combat these falsehoods. He wanted believers to know (repeated 40 times in the book) what true fellowship is. This is why **the right column cannot be emphasized to the point of ignoring the left one. We need both truths.** Our sin takes us out of fellowship and we have an amazing God who wants to restore us to fellowship with Himself. It is in this context of doubt and uncertainty that John takes time to encourage His audience and build them up. This is not meant to be a book of doubt but certainty.

### 1 John 2:12-14 ESV

(12) **I am writing to you,** little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake.

(13) **I am writing to you,** fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. **I am writing to you,** young men, because you have overcome the evil one. **I write to you,** children, because you know the Father.

(14) **I write to you,** fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. **I write to you,** young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have

overcome the evil one.

6 times John defines who he is writing to. He references each of the three groups little children, fathers, and young men twice. He started Chapter 2 by referring to his entire audience as “**My little children.**” John feels a closeness and fatherly concern for his whole audience. **Now he is adding more details** as to who is included in that audience and gives specifics for each group as to why He is writing to them. By referencing children, fathers and young men John is making sure no generation is left out.

#### **Psalm 90:1-2 ESV**

(1) A Prayer of Moses, the man of God. Lord, you have been our **dwelling place in all generations.**

(2) Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, **from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

God is from everlasting. He has always existed. This means every generation ever to be born will have the same God to be in fellowship with. **One generation cannot reminisce of who God used to be and what the young are missing out on.** God is the unchanging dwelling place for every generation. I also find it interesting that John recognizes that each group has a unique situation and area to be encouraged in. **God does not change but we do** and we need different truth and encouragement based on what stage of life we are in.

#### **1 John 2:12 ESV**

(12) I am writing to you, **little children**, because **your sins are forgiven for His name's sake.**

There is debate over if these categories refer to spiritual maturity, or physical age. In reality it is probably a mix of the two. John is referring to the different age groups but is also implying a spiritual maturity to each group. John has a specific message for each group and their unique stage. No group is criticized, even the little children. This passage is pointing out the grace and freedom we should all feel to enjoy fellowship with God in our current season. The children cannot help being children. **There is no sin in being young. There is no sin in being a young believer.** It appears that they have just started their walk. John is welcoming them to the family by reminding them of the core truth that brought them into the family; their sins are forgiven. This was possible because of the name of Jesus.

#### **Acts 4:10-12 ESV**

(10) let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well.

(11) This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

(12) And there is salvation in no one else, **for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

Peter healed a lame man from birth and the religious leaders are demanding to know whose power or whose name enabled him to do this. Peter is very clear; it was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He was rejected and sent to the cross, and has become the cornerstone. Salvation cannot be found in any other name. Trusting in Jesus is the only way to be saved. The little children John is writing to have trusted in Jesus’ name. Their sins are forgiven. **John uses the perfect**

**tense, meaning a completed action with present results.** John is not doubting if the little children are saved but wants to encourage them to grow in that truth. Next, John the address the fathers.

#### 1 John 2:13 ESV

(13) I am writing to you, **fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.** I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

The fathers being next in order is not the progression we would expect. Normally we would anticipate little children, young men, then fathers. This would seem more natural. **John saves the young men for last due to the context of false teachers.** The young men are going to be needed in a unique way and he addresses them last to emphasize their upcoming role.

He encourages the fathers/ mothers that they know Him who is from the beginning. The fathers/ mothers, are those who have lived the longest and **have a seasoned firsthand knowledge of God.** It is the knowledge that John desires all believers to have. They have walked with God through hardships and blessings. They have learned to trust God, and are keeping His commandments. Otherwise, John would not say they know Him. Their age has given them a perspective that David shares in Psalm 37.

#### Psalm 37:25 ESV

(25) I have been young, and **now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken** or his children begging for bread.

Over all the years of David's life He has not seen God forsake the righteous. He has watched God be faithful time and time again. **The fathers/ mothers carry a perspective that is so needed.** John's audience was struggling with doubt and uncertainties. They could share the steady hand that comes from knowing God.

#### 1 John 2:13 ESV

(13) I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, **young men, because you have overcome the evil one.** I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

Lastly, John addresses the young men/ women. John is wanting to prepare these believers to stand on truth in the face of the ever increasing false teaching. **These young men/ women have an energy for the battle.** They have overcome, **been victorious, conquered, faced the obstacles,** of the evil one. The little children are just getting there feet under them and the fathers/ mothers have the wisdom needed but it is the young men/ women who have the zeal and energy to overcome.

#### Proverbs 20:29 ESV

(29) The glory of young men **is their strength,** but the splendor of old men **is their gray hair.**

There is an energy to youthfulness that is a great thing when pointed in the right direction. This energy can become their downfall if they ignore the wisdom of the older generation. The old men and woman have a splendor in their gray hair. The energy has changed, but with that comes time proven wisdom that the younger generation needs. Now that John has addressed all three groups he readdresses them, making very intentional changes.

### 1 John 2:13 ESV

(13) I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, **children, because you know the Father.**

John intentionally chooses a different word for child. The first word for little child (**teknon**) in verse 12 emphasizes **the idea of family or kinship**. While this word for child (**paidion**) emphasizes **the discipline, discipleship and instruction** that a child undergoes. The young need to be disciplined and helped to grow in the faith. The children **do not know Him who is from the beginning like the fathers/ mothers do but they know God as Father**. One of the first things a child learns is to recognize their parents. The children know the loving concern and compassion the Father has for them. Through discipleship and maturing they will come to know just how much they can trust their eternal Father. Then John repeats the exact same encouragement to the Fathers.

### 1 John 2:14 ESV

(14) I write to you, **fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.** I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

The false teachers were making changes to the truth. The fathers and mothers were to stay steadfast in their knowledge of the God who does not change.

### 1 John 2:14 ESV

(14) I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.**

As John addresses the young men and women again he adds two important encouragements. They are strong and God's word abides in them. There is a strength in youthful energy when it is directed by the truth of the word of God.

### Psalm 119:9-12 ESV

(9) Beth How can a young man keep his way pure? **By guarding it according to your word.**

(10) With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

(11) I have stored up your word in my heart, **that I might not sin against you.**

(12) Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

The Psalmists asks a very important question. How can a young person keep their life pure, unstained from the darkness of the world? By using the word of God as a guard. It is His word that shows us truth and warns us of the dangers of sin. So many wonder what chance does the young generation have. **The great news is that the word of God is still able to guide and keep us from sin.** John is encouraging the young men and women to hold the line of truth. Even as false teachers arise and unsettle people, God's truth was sufficient for them and it will be for us.

John has encouraged each group the children, young and old. He has complimented each one and been assured of the continuing effects of their walk with Jesus. Meaning each group at all the various stages of life and maturity can have a vibrant and growing walk with Jesus.

### Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 ESV

- (1) **For everything there is a season**, and a time for every matter under heaven:
- (2) **a time to be born, and a time to die**; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

Every season of life is different. Some are harder than others, some have new obstacles, and some are peaceful. Yet in each season we are called to pursue a growing walk with Jesus. Each group was encouraged differently. **In each season our walk is going to look different and we need to give ourselves the grace to accept this** and see what God has for us in this new season. For some it is a time of strength and energy and for others it is a time for steady wisdom. Solomon was very descriptive of how much life changes, and each season changes.

#### **Ecclesiastes 12:1-2; 5 NLT**

- (1) Don't let **the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator**. Honor Him in your youth **before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."**
- (2) Remember Him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars **is dim to your old eyes**, and rain clouds **continually darken your sky**.
- (5) **Remember Him before you become fearful of falling** and worry about danger in the streets; before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom, **and you drag along without energy like a dying grasshopper**, and the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire. **Remember him before you near the grave**, your everlasting home, when the mourners will weep at your funeral.

The excitement and energy of youth can be misplaced and not used to pursue a deep walk with Jesus. Solomon vividly describes the pain, and frailty that comes with old age. **Life literally takes the hope out of the grasshopper. So live for Christ today.** Each season has its pitfalls. The young have so much energy they forget God and the old do not have enough energy. Yet we can all walk with God right where we are, John just shared this truth with us. The caution is not to miss what God has in each season. The Hebrew believers serve as a warning because they were missing their current season.

#### **Hebrews 5:11-14 ESV**

- (11) About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become **dull of hearing**.
- (12) **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God**. You need milk, not solid food,
- (13) for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.
- (14) But solid food is for the mature, for those **who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil**.

These believers were not anchoring into the word of God and had become dull which literally means **lazy, sluggish, careless**. Unlike the young children John complimented these believers did not mature like they should have. It was not time to be a young child anymore they hadn't let the word grow them. Every season has its problems and if we are careless with the word we will be in the same boat. Let's not waste our current season or look with jealousy at someone else's season. **Let's be encouraged to walk with God and mature in Him right where He has us.** Each season will look different and in each one we can abide in Him.

**Colossians 1:28 ESV**

(28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**

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