



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for March 4, 2007  
Released on Wednesday, February 28, 2007**

**“The Light of Love”**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 Peter 4:1–11.**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 John 2:7–17.**  
**PRINTED TEXT: 1 John 2:7–17.**  
**READ: 1 John 2:7–17.**

**TIME: A.D. 90–95**  
**PLACE: probably from Ephesus**

**GOLDEN TEXT:** “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” (1 John 2:10).

**HOW TO SAY IT**

Gnostics. *nahss-ticks*.

Gnosticism. *nahss-tih-sizz-um* (strong accent on *nahss*).

**LESSON TEXT**

**1 John 2:7–17**

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Show how Christ set the example for believers to abandon darkness and hatred and to walk in light and love.
2. Acknowledge that love is not optional but mandatory.
3. Consider practical ways to demonstrate divine love in a perverse world system.

## LESSON OUTLINE

- I. NO NEW COMMANDMENT (1 John 2:7–8)
- II. NO DARKNESS (1 John 2:9–11)
- III. NO WORLDLINESS (1 John 2:15–17)

## INTRODUCTION

Isn't it amazing that today's lesson depicts love as a "light?" Imagine this same love lighting our lives' paths to enable us to forge ahead each and every day. Even more significant is that a Christian's example of love—Jesus Christ, Himself—is also described as a light. However, not only is He a light, the truth of the matter is that He is the *only* light that we need... spiritually and eternally speaking. *Hallelujah!*

I learned a few years ago that the moon is a bright shining star that does not emit light of its own, but rather gives off the powerfully reflected light of the sun. What a monumental parallel that we Christians are also like the moon, in that, we do not emit our own light—we have none to give off in and of ourselves; but, we discharge the supernatural light and love of the Son of God—Jesus Christ!

As we study God's Word today, let us reflect on the reality that Jesus is our perfect example of how to love and live, and the reason why we can share with others the ultimate gift of eternal life through Him. Also remember that the command for us to love reached its most genuine and fullest expression in the life of Christ. He demonstrated for us what true love is by coming into our world and giving His life to take away our sins. This is something truly worth shouting about!

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Light and love are important themes in the writings of the apostle John. (Just reflect back on the books that he is responsible for having written: John; I, II, and III John, and Revelation.) He wrote these books near the end of his earthly days—after a long life as a leader of the church. In this first of three letters, he appears to address the church at large, warning people to avoid the darkness of false teaching and to embrace the light of love.

The time of John's writing is perhaps somewhere between AD 85 and 90. At this time near the end of the first century, the church began to be troubled by a false doctrine known as *Gnosticism*. John was confronting an early version of that heresy.

Gnostics thought that they alone would be saved. They taught that following Jesus (alone) was not enough to save. The Gnostics claimed that believers had to learn a higher *secret* knowledge.

Due to the “sign of the times” with false teachers and teaching abounding, John emphasized that Christ came in the flesh (see 1 John 4:3) and declared in his Gospel, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (see 1:14). This was an important issue to address because Gnostics believed that matter was evil, and as such, they could not conceive that the Son of God could dwell in human flesh.

To set matters straight, John assured his readers that what they had received from the beginning was true. John’s epistle, however, is far more than a warning against Gnostic heresy. Its truths about light, love, and righteousness are needed in every age. Whatever a new false teaching or a new temptation confronts the church, this letter helps to keep us on course.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **I. NO NEW COMMANDMENT (1 John 2:7–8)**

#### **1. Why was the commandment to love not “new?” (1 John 2:8)**

“John was not telling his readers anything they did not already know; it is no innovation but ‘an old commandment’ which they had been taught ‘from the beginning’” (Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, Eerdmans).

Jesus told His disciples in John 13:34–35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

#### **2. What did John mean by “the beginning” (1 John 2:7)?**

For Christians, the command to love was “an old commandment,” one that they had known “from the beginning.” By “beginning,” John did not mean the beginning of the world but the beginning of the gospel message as proclaimed by Christ during His earthly minister. (See: Mark 1:1, and 1 John 1:1)

#### **3. In what sense was John’s commandment “new?” (1 John 2:8)**

In this verse, “new” does not mean “more recent,” but rather “superior, new and better in quality” (Richards, *The Victor Bible Background Commentary*, Cook).

In a perfect sense, the “new commandment” that John mentions in this verse was realized in Christ—the incarnate Word of God. What was “true in him” is true in believers as well. No Christian can claim that his love is as complete as Christ’s love. Nevertheless, we learn to love God and one another because we have experienced Jesus’ love (see 1 John 4:11, 19).

### **II. NO DARKNESS (1 John 2:9–11)**

#### **4. In what sense is the darkness past? Who is the true Light? (1 John 2:9)**

With Christ, a new era has dawned “the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining” (v. 2:8). Christ is the “true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:9). That being so, we might expect that Christ would

have been welcomed by people wanting to escape sin's darkness. Instead, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (v. 11). This was because "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (v. 3:19). Hence, those who receive Christ become "children of God" (v. 1:12), "the children of light, and the children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5).

### **5. How did John use the words "light" and "darkness?" (1 John 2:11)**

Light and darkness are used in this epistle as symbols for righteousness and sinfulness, respectively. That being so, the person who hates his Christian brother is walking in darkness, that is, is living in sin apart from Christ's light.

Just as darkness keeps us from seeing where we are and where we are going, so it is with the person who harbors hatred in his heart. Such a person has been blinded by his own sin.

"Hate destroys any window for light from God. To live without loving one's brother means to deny oneself the presence of God and the reality of fellowship with the community of faith" (Barker and Kohlenberger, eds., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan).

### **6. If someone hates his Christian brother, what does this indicate? (1 John 2:11)**

If someone hates his brother in Christ while claiming to walk in the light, there is strong evidence that this person is not a true believer and that he has grossly misunderstood the heart of the Christian message. "No one is allowed to imagine that he can get away with a claim to be a lover of God on the ground that this is an inward attitude, invisible to other men. The twin commandments of love to God and love to one's neighbour are like two sides of a coin: the one is essential to the other" (Bruce).

## **III. NO WORLDLINESS (1 John 2:15–17)**

### **7. What did John mean when he said we should not love the world? (1 John 2:15)**

The word "world" was used several ways by John. Sometimes he used it for the people of the world, as in John 3:16: "God so loved the world." Sometimes "world" can mean the physical earth, as when John declared that Christ "was in the world, and the world was made by him" (1:10). In the verse before us, however, we are told, "Do not love the world." Here, "world" stands for the world system, the prevailing unregenerate mindset and values that are opposed to God and dominated by the evil one (see Eph. 6:12, and 1 John 5:19).

It is not just the evil world system that we are not to love; we are enjoined not to love the "things" (v. 2:15) of the world, either. Of course, it is necessary to have a certain amount of things to function in the world. Even so, we can become enamored of (that is, we are not to fall in love with) such things and consumed by them—thus diminishing our love for God and the desire to do His will. Loving God wholeheartedly assures us that our material needs will be supplied (see Matt. 6:33 and Phil. 4:19).

## **8. What does it mean to be worldly? How do Christians disagree concerning a definition of worldliness?**

For some people, "worldliness" is encompassed in a detailed list of prohibitions. Others may define it in terms of using the things of the world for our own gratification rather than for the glory of God.

"There are several levels of thinking, then, that can rightly be called "worldly." At the lowest level, worldliness can refer to that way of thinking and behaving that is characteristic of fallen human beings. To think like this is to adopt the values of sinful humanity. But, this is not the only way in which one can be worldly.

"A person whose way of thinking is limited to the visible affairs of this planet and his own lifetime would be worldly in the sense of being thoroughly secular. He might be materialistic or altruistic, covetous or generous, but his life is worldly in either case because it rules out the realm of the Spirit and life beyond death" (Harrison, *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, Nelson).

While no two Christians are likely to agree on a precise definition of worldliness, we need to be aware of the world's power to draw us away from our devotion to Christ. In that sense, anything that weakens our dedication to the Lord and hinders our Christian witness can be seen as worldly (see Rom. 14:19).

## **9. What are two scriptural illustrations of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (v. 16)?**

There are two noteworthy scriptural examples of how the above are used to tempt us. The first was in the Garden of Eden and the second was Christ's wilderness temptations. (See Gen. 3:6 and Luke 4:1–13)

The world is characterized by these very popular lusts. The "lust of the flesh" refers to the desire to satisfy our sensual pleasure. The "lust of the eyes" refers to the desire of getting what we see, or materialism and covetousness. And, the "pride of life" refers to being proud of our status in the world.

## **10. How is the world passing away? (1 John 2:17)**

While many invest only in the world, they fail to realize that this world is passing away. Even now it is in a state of decay and will one day face the wrath of God (see 2 Pet. 3:10).

In contrast, however, there are those who do the will of God. Generally speaking, Scripture reveals the will of God for us. By being obedient to the Word of God, one is doing the will of God. As Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Those seeking God's will have the promise that they will abide with Him forever. "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

## **CONCLUSION**

Today's lesson discusses a theme that never gets old or tired... or, at least, it should never get old or tired for believers. The fact that we are to be known by the world by the love that we exhibit to one another and to others is a paramount characteristic. Even *unbelievers* were impressed by the love that early Christians showed and declared. As it was then, so it should be today. The Old Testament's Ten Commandments have been summarized in today's lesson: Love God and love man.

## **PRACTICAL POINTS**

1. The command to love is familiar, but it will always remain fresh and alive as we practice it (1 John 2:7–8).
2. Love for fellow believers is the identifying mark of a Christian (vs. 9–10).
3. An unbeliever is incapable of Christ-like love (v. 11).
4. One who loves this evil world system has placed himself in opposition to God (v. 15).
5. A life centered on self and fulfilling one's desires, leaves no room for God (v. 16).
6. It is foolish to make that which is temporary the focus of our lives (v. 17).

## **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

The ultimate folly (i.e., foolishness, stupidity, idiocy) is to *reject* the Light—Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER**

Father of love, we thank You for giving us the Light. We rejoice that You have shown us Your unfailing love; now help us to show that kind of love to one another. In the name of Jesus—the light of the word, we pray, amen.

## **ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

In preparation for next week's lesson (March 11, 2007), you should study 1 John 3:11–24. The time is A.D. 90–95, and the place is probably from Ephesus. The Golden Text is 1 John 3:14, and the subject is "The Test of Love." Consider the following questions in your studies: Why did Cain kill Able? Why must believers love one another? How did Jesus show His love for His brothers? Why must we help brothers in need? How can we have confidence toward God? How are obedience and prayer connected? What is God's command to us? Who helps us realize that God abides within us? This lesson will teach that "attitudes make a difference."  
*Good studying!*

## **LESSON SUMMARIZED BY**

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