



**1, 2 & 3 JOHN  
DEVOTIONAL**

**By Pastor Phil Emerson**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to ‘follow’ Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids’** environments, **men’s/women’s** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

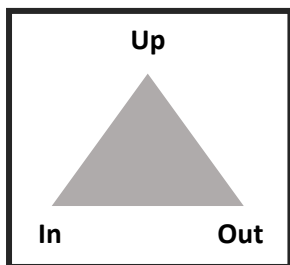
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily walk in the ways of Jesus, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus taught and modelled out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO 1, 2, and 3 John

The first epistle of John is one of my favourite books in the Bible, penned by the elderly apostle in his nineties. It's not that they haven't tried to get rid of him; he had been boiled in oil and tortured for his faith, and, as he writes these three letters, all of his peers have been dead by decades.

John brings us back not to the beginning of creation but to eternity past – to the One who always was. The implications of this are incredible. John paints a picture of this eternal God becoming accessible to man in the most basic way, a way everyone could relate to. This eternal One can be *known*. He has revealed Himself to us.

John's words have the weight of eyewitness evidence. He did not speak a second-hand or passed-down theology. He carefully and personally studied this eternal One; he knew the God he spoke about. Gnosticism had crept into the church, a pattern of thinking that allowed believers to live any way they wanted as long as their belief stayed intact. John is combatting this lie of the enemy, and this is why he uses such starkly black-and-white language: light and darkness, death and life.

So, you know the drill by now: journal, pen, and Bible ready, and don't forget your brew! Soak in the words of this elderly gent who had laid his head on Jesus' chest at mealtimes.

Love you all,  
Phil

## Read

# 1 John 1

## Live

I love how John begins his writing in this small but very powerful epistle. He talks about the Saviour whom he has heard, seen, and touched. At this point, John was the last remaining eyewitness, having outlived all the other apostles. The believers in the church at that time must have enjoyed going to his house to listen to his first-hand stories about Jesus. As the last eyewitness, John's authority would have been unquestioned. Is it any wonder the old systems wanted to be rid of him?

Gnostics were starting to come into the church and preach lies about Jesus, but John knew the truth. As an eyewitness, his testimony was strong. John's testimony directly refutes the Gnostics who taught that Jesus didn't have a real body, that His Spirit just appeared to be a human body but was more like an apparition or a ghost, which, of course, directly contradicts the teaching of Scripture. Most cults attack either Jesus' deity or His humanity and this Gnostic cult is no exception. But John heard, saw, and touched Jesus, so it's hard to refute that. It is interesting that the word *Gnosticism* means 'knowledge', but John was the one with the real knowledge about Jesus.

I love how John refers to God as being light. Adam Clark says, "Light is the purest, the most subtle, the most useful, and the most diffusive of all God's creatures; it is, therefore, a very proper emblem of the purity, perfection, and goodness of the Divine nature." Oh my word, what a God we have! My prayer is that God may intensify our awareness of His great love for us in Jesus and free us to love and serve people as unto Him, whether our kindness is reciprocated or ignored. Only the *agape* love of God is better to us than life itself.

## Pray

Father, of all the traps that are easy to fall into, being shaped by what people think of me is the easiest and deadliest. The acceptance and affirmation of some people can be as addictive as drugs or alcohol; the criticism and anger of others can be just as disorienting and paralyzing. But, reading Your Word today, I am refreshed by how You, the great God, made Yourself accessible to me. Thank You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

We were reminded in verse 8 of yesterday's chapter that sin is a fact in the life of the Christian, and verse 9 made it clear that there is always forgiveness for confessed sin, which is very good news. Today, John wants to be categorically clear that the Christian should be concerned about sin. I love how John addresses sin because of the issue of relationship with God. Sin breaks our fellowship with God. John wants us to grasp the fact that God never wants us to break fellowship with Him.

I have to say, this statement in verse 1 is one of my favourites in the entire Bible, *"But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."* The word 'advocate' simply means a defence lawyer. Sometimes we may think that our sin sets God against us. But God's love is so great that He went to the ultimate measure to make us able to stand in the face of His holy righteousness. Through Jesus, God can be *for* us, even when we are guilty sinners. This is why grace is truly so amazing. We are powerfully reminded of this grace when the beloved John says in verse 12, *"I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name."* That means past, present, and future sins are all paid for in and through the work of Jesus at Calvary.

"Thank You" seems so inadequate, but I feel that we will shout it throughout eternity. Thank You, Father, thank You, Jesus, and thank You, Holy Spirit for Your plans for us from before the worlds existed! I think their strong names will be our eternal redemption song. Look at verse 5. Imagine the love of God being made complete in you. That means 'accomplished, reached its goal, perfected and fulfilled'. Holy smoke, if that doesn't make you want to sing you must be dead!

## Pray

Father, this is one of those chapters that takes my breath away. I find it hard to read it without emotion as it is full of Your love and Your majestic plan of redemption for the souls of mankind. Thank You that when I was still a sinner Christ died for me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# I John 3

## Live

When I was a boy, I used to think that it would be amazing if someone invented a system whereby no-one ever felt unloved. Then, one day, I came upon the first verse of this chapter and realised someone already had, God! As God looked down on lost humanity, He could have merely had a charitable compassion, a pity on our plight. With this mere pity, He could have set forth a plan of salvation to save man from hell. But God went far beyond that. His plan extended to call us *“the children of God”*.

Our present standing is plain. We can know and have an assurance that we are indeed the children of God. Romans 8:16 tells us, *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”* If you are a child of God, you have an assurance of this. Real love isn't merely felt as an inward feeling; it is also shown by demonstration and the ultimate demonstration was Jesus dying for our sins on the cross.

John makes it clear that the person who sins is breaking the law. Sin doesn't always break the government's law; for example, lying is not against the law in most countries, but it is against God's law. The main thrust of these verses is that practicing sin is incompatible with a person's relationship with Christ. A believer in Christ is born again into a new life with the old life gone. There is no excuse or justification for continuing to live in sin. We must get rid of sin in our lives. In verse 6, John comes right out and says this: the person who sins does not know God and the person who abides in God does not sin. In case anyone was unsure, John records a test in verse 10 that we can use to determine someone's salvation; the test is our actions.

## Pray

Father, You have so much in store for those who willingly choose You now. Though my present standing is plain, my future destiny is clouded. I can't even imagine what I will be like in Glory. Your ultimate goal in my life is to make me like Jesus, and today John speaks of the fulfillment of that purpose. Until that day, Father, I choose You and I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 1 John 4

## Live

John gives some great advice here. Many people when first encountering the reality of the spiritual world are too impressed to ask whether it is of God. This leads to easy deception. John tells us not to believe every spirit. When it comes to prophecy, I have two rules of thumb. Number one: it is always to be judged by Scripture; God will never speak or do that which is contrary to the Word. Number two: peace in your heart; if there is no peace, then the prophecy must be questioned. It is never to be received just because it is dramatic or given by a certain person. True prophecy, and true teaching, will present a true Jesus. We trust in the principle that God will never contradict Himself, and we know what He has already said in His Word.

In John's day, there was an issue surrounding whether Jesus had truly come in a real body of flesh and blood. Teachers of Gnosticism said that Jesus, being God, could not have actually become a flesh and blood human being because God could have no partnership with impure material stuff. Again, this is why John's testimony is so powerful against this teaching; he declares how he had heard, seen, and touched Jesus.

This is a beautiful chapter where John writes all about this great God of love. Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence and work is power or popularity. But the greatest evidence of God's presence and work is love. We are told in 1 Corinthians 13 that faith, hope, and love will last forever and the greatest of these is love. Love is, therefore, the most powerful force on earth and in heaven alike, and where God is present and working, there will be love. This is a beautiful truth.

## Pray

Father, the truth of Your love really fuels my worship today and is a reminder of the truth of Your Word and the trustworthiness of Your heart. Though I can't see it with the natural eye, Your unfailing love is orchestrating and controlling every aspect of our lives, and one day, Your justice and goodness will completely fill the earth. As I grow older, I await that day more and more, but until it comes, fuel my joy, strengthen my trust, and fill me with huge amounts of hope. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 1 John 5

## Live

John's great emphasis has been on love, but he never wants anyone to believe they earn salvation by loving others. We are born of God when we put our trust in Jesus and in His saving work in our lives. We also understand that John was not talking about just head knowledge of Jesus being Messiah, for even the demons have this (James 2:19), instead, he means complete faith, a trust in and reliance upon Jesus as Messiah. Again, John attacks the false teachers' theories and makes it clear that the Jesus he speaks of is not the Gnostic, phantom Jesus who was so holy that He had nothing to do with this world. John goes on to explain how He came by water and blood, the Jesus who was part of a real, material, flesh-and-blood earth.

John then returns to a theme he started with: the real, historical foundation for our trust in Jesus Christ. In 1 John 1:1-3 the emphasis was on what was seen and heard and handled – real stuff, real people, and real things. Just as water and blood are real, so was the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I love this because it means we can have a real relationship with the God who is really there.

Jesus is the reason we don't have to be consumed with guilt, shame or fear. We don't need to drown in doubt for He took the judgment we deserved on the cross. Jesus is the reason we live and have an eternal hope of glory. We need to thank Him a thousand times over for creating a destiny and a future for us. We can rest assured that He is not slack concerning His promises.

The sin "*leading to death*" is, I think, speaking of physical and not spiritual death. Remember how in 1 Corinthians 11 some people died prematurely because of their disregard for the Lord's body? It would seem that God decided to bring these people home early before they did any more harm.

## Pray

Father, another day and more of Your fresh mercies greet me. You are so grace-full and generous toward me, so I join John the apostle in calling to mind Your great love and Your great faithfulness. I love Your steadfast love and never-failing compassions. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Theologians divide over whether John was writing to a person or addressing the church. I like to side with those who believe he was writing to a person. John did not name the elect lady or her children probably because this was written during a time of persecution. If the letter was intercepted and the authorities knew who it was written to, it might mean death for them.

These are lovely words. I love how F.B. Meyer puts it, "What deep, sweet rhythm of meaning there is in the first three verses of this letter! One reads them over and over again. Oh, that the grace, mercy, and peace may be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and in love."

John was aware that false teachers were a danger to the church so he is constantly affirming the pure love of the Father and the truth that Jesus not only came in flesh, but will return the same way. I love that we can come into God's presence both aware of our human frailty and overwhelmed by His great love for us and for mankind. It is incredible to know that there is no human experience we might walk through where His love cannot reach us. If we climb the highest mountain, He is there, and yet if we find ourselves in the darkest valley of our lives, He is there!

While John is all about love, we must not forget that he is also a man of truth. He warns us not to be taken in by false teachers; he actually goes a step further and tells us to have nothing to do with those people at all. Following after such nonsense has eternal results in that a believer could lose some of their eternal inheritance. Some people who believe you can lose your salvation quote this passage; however, I don't believe this is speaking of salvation, but rather of inheritance.

**Pray**

Father, thank You that my life and my eternal destiny is in Your hands and no one can snatch me from that eternal grip. Teach me today to love and trust You more. Help me to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

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### Live

Again, John refers to himself as the “elder”. I don’t think he is using this word in the spiritual meaning but more from the aspect of his age as he is in his nineties. His greeting is very important to note. Gaius was a very popular name at this time so we are not sure if he was the same person mentioned in the book of Acts. John greets him with a common salute, saying something like, “I hope things are going well for you.” Then he matches it by saying, “as your soul is doing well.” I find this incredibly interesting as the Greek word for soul is *psyche*, which is your mind. The ESV puts it like this, “*I would that you would prosper as your soul prospers.*”

We live in a day when mental health problems seem to be on a dramatic increase with lives pressured and speed at an all-time high. It is so important to keep our minds healthy and it is no small thing that John refers to it. It is especially hard when we are constantly bombarded by the enemy. It can even creep into the church, like this man in verse 9, “*Diotrephes, who loves to be first*”. Let’s work hard today to keep our minds pure, tender, and engaged in heaven. Do you ever wonder why our minds get disengaged between earth and heaven? It’s not always bad things that disconnect us; busyness is sometimes the biggest monster.

How we need the Holy Spirit to flood our hearts with kingdom thoughts and fresh revelation about the Father and our Saviour, Jesus. I often think I would love a seven-mile walk with Jesus, like the one He had once with two people on the road to Emmaus. We have recorded that when He talked to them, they could say that their hearts were burning within them. As we close John’s little epistle, that is my final prayer for you all: healthy minds and burning hearts!

### Pray

Father, how I needed this word today. My mind is prone to wander to things that are not good for me. Those things are primarily selfish and self-seeking so I need to refocus my heart on You today. I need to seek first Your kingdom with the fresh assurance that You will add everything else on. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

