

“The Good Life?” (1 John 2:12-17)

What is “the good life?” How would you define “the good life?” What does it look like? Is it a lot of success, money, power, and possessions? If so, how do you know when you’ve arrived? How do you know when enough is enough? These are perplexing questions. Is it possible that there is more to this life than attaining “the good life?”

We’ve been studying our way through the book of 1 John. In this power-packed book, John indicates that his passion for you and me is to experience lasting fellowship and joy in this life (1:3-4). His entire book compels his readers to pursue “the good life” that God intends for us.

Thus far in our study, John has written about some ongoing struggles we face as believers. (1) We struggle to read and apply the Bible to our lives. (2) We struggle with ever-present sin in our lives. (3) We struggle with Satan. (4) We struggle to keep God’s commandments. (5) And we struggle to love one another with the highest form of love—a love that can seem impossible. These struggles can be so persistent and so challenging that we can begin to have some doubts about ourselves and our relationship to God. It is easy to think, “I struggle so much there must be something wrong with me. Maybe I’m missing some secret key that so many other people seem to have. Maybe I’m not a Christian after all, because it doesn’t seem like true Christians would struggle like I do. Maybe the Christian thing didn’t take for me because I’m some special case of bad.” Or maybe you’re thinking, “This Christian life is just too hard for me. I’m so tired of my struggle with sin. I stepped into the light of God’s presence and it revealed so many issues I don’t know where to start. It’s easier to hide in the dark. I’ll never be able to keep God’s commandments. I’ll never be able to love like Jesus loved. Living the Christian life is impossible. I give up.”¹

These feelings are quite natural and all too frequent. Fortunately, God knows right where we are. So He inspired the apostle John to provide some much needed reassurance to those of us who are discouraged. This reassurance comes in 1 John 2:12-17 where John will argue that *the best defense is a good offense*. Thus, we must...

1. Appreciate our spiritual resources (2:12-14). John writes, **“I am writing to you, little children, because² your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.³ I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”⁴** In these three verses, John addresses his readers by three endearing descriptions: “children,”⁵ “fathers,” and “young men.” It is important to recognize that John is not subdividing his audience according to their physical age or spiritual stage. Rather, all three references are descriptions of John’s readers from different spiritual points of view.⁶ In other words, as believers we are all children, fathers, and young men.⁷ It’s as if John is saying, “From whatever perspective you look,” or “in whatever role you play” certain reassuring things are true about you as believers.

We might wonder about the word order in addressing the 1) little children, 2) fathers, and 3) young men. We would expect it to be: little children ⇒ young men ⇒ fathers, if we were trying to emphasize a progression in growth. But the word order is switched up in order to look back at ground already covered and look forward to the battle ahead:

- Little children—Forgiveness (1:5-2:2).
- Fathers—Intimacy (2:3-11).
- Young men—Overcoming the evil one (2:15-27).

Now that we understand the overall flow of this section, we can break down the particulars of the three descriptions. First, we will begin with “[little] children” (2:13a, 13c): Every reader who is a child of God is not only forgiven of their sins (2:13a), but also has come to know God in the way John has been talking about in 2:8.

We “have been forgiven.”⁸ What does it mean to be forgiven “for His name’s sake?” A person’s name includes his reputation, character, and work. I think John is saying that we are forgiven based on the character and work of Jesus Christ on the cross (cf. 5:13). The basis of our forgiveness is Christ’s payment, on the cross, for our sins. The verb “forgiven” is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense describes “a present state which has resulted from a past action.” The past action happened at a point in time; the resulting present state is ongoing. John’s use of the perfect tense confirms that there are two aspects of forgiveness that are true for believers. There is a point-in-time aspect and there is an ongoing aspect. The point-in-time aspect of forgiveness informs us that at the moment we believe in Jesus, we are forgiven, and this forgiveness is complete (Acts 10:43). When we believe in Jesus, we receive remission or forgiveness of sins. And the basis for our forgiveness is Jesus’ name or work, which includes His death and resurrection for our sins. How many of our sins are forgiven? All of them—past, present, and future (Col 2:13). All means all. If you are a believer in Jesus, you will never ever be condemned by God for your sin. All has already been forgiven. It happened the moment you believed. We might call this judicial forgiveness because it immediately and completely and permanently releases us from the penalty of our sin before God, our Judge.

But there is also an ongoing aspect to forgiveness that we might call relational forgiveness. John speaks of this ongoing forgiveness in 1 John 1:9, saying, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [lit. “the”] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Relational forgiveness involves a letting go of relational barriers that stand in the way of fellowship. The letting go allows the restoration of harmony in a relationship. Relational forgiveness is closely associated with reconciliation in which full fellowship is restored. In the analogy of God’s family, God’s *judicial* forgiveness enables our point-in-time adoption, and it’s conditioned on our belief. God’s *relational* forgiveness enables our ongoing fellowship, and it’s conditioned on our confession. The shed blood of Jesus is the basis for both.

The problem with positional forgiveness is that so many people have trouble believing and accepting it. A Bible college professor used to drive this point home with his final exam.⁹ Before giving the exam, he told the students to read the exam very carefully before they began answering the questions. He also had these same instructions written at the top of the exam. Then he handed out the exam. It was impossibly hard. As the students read through the exam with its difficult questions, you could hear the groans. The exam seemed impossible to pass.

On the last page, however, there was a note that read, “You have a choice. You can either complete the exam as given or sign your name at the bottom and in so doing receive an A for this assignment.” Wow! The students sat there stunned. Was he serious? Just sign it and get an A? Slowly it dawned on the students, so one by one they signed the exam, turned it in, and filed out. It took most of the rest of the afternoon for the students to get over what had just happened. Some of them secretly came back to the professor’s office to ask him if he was really serious.

Later on, he shared with the class some of the reactions he had received through the years as he had given the same exam. There were always students who did not follow instructions and began to take the exam without reading it all the way through. Some of them would sweat it out for the entire two hours of class time before reaching the last page. Their ignorance caused them unnecessary anxiety.

Then there were the ones who would read the first two pages, become angry, turn in their paper blank without signing it, and storm out of the room, usually bitter at the professor. They never realized what was available. As a result, they lost out completely.

One fellow, however, topped them all. He read the entire test, including the note at the end, but he decided to take the exam anyway. He wanted to show the professor how much he knew, and he didn't want any gifts. He wanted to earn his grade. And he did. He made a C+, which was amazing considering the difficulty of the test. But he could have easily had an A.

This story vividly illustrates many people's reaction to God's solution to sin. Many are like the first group. They spend their lives trying to earn what they discover years later was freely offered to them the whole time. They spend years sweating it out, always wondering if God is listening to their pleas for forgiveness, always wondering if they have finally pushed Him too far. They hope God has forgiven them; they suppose He has. They do all they know to get forgiven. But insofar as God is concerned, they do not want to be presumptuous. So they live their lives with doubts.

Many people respond like the second group. They look at God's standard—moral and ethical perfection—and throw their hands up in surrender. "Why even try?" they ask themselves. "I could never live up to all that stuff." They live the way they please, not expecting anything from God when they die. Often they decide there is no God. Their acknowledged inability to live up to His standard drives them to this conclusion. Instead of living under constant pressure and guilt, they choose to completely abandon the standard. What a shock it will be for them when they stand before God and understand for the first time what was available had they only asked.

Then there is the guy who took the test anyway. I meet people like him all the time who are unwilling to simply receive God's gift of forgiveness. Striking out to do it on their own, they strive to earn enough points with God to give them the right to look to their own goodness as a means of pardon and forgiveness. They constantly work at "evening the score" with God through their good works. "Sure, I have my faults," they say. "But God does not expect anyone to be perfect."

When it comes to forgiveness, there is no room for boasting in one's own ability. As we will see, forgiveness is not a team effort. It is not a matter of God's doing His part and us doing ours. Unlike the professor's test, in God's economy anything less than 100% is failing.

When you go into battle, our enemy, the devil, will try to get you to wallow in the past. He will try to get you to focus on your past sins, your failures. This will weaken you when it comes to facing the world with its many temptations. So John reminds his readers that they have been completely forgiven. They stand before God in their position in Christ, absolutely purified and secure. Their relationship is eternal.

Second, John discusses "fathers" (2:12b, 14) who have come to know God well, in intimate fellowship. These men (and women) have grown in their love relationship with Jesus. They have learned to practice His presence and continually abide in Him.

When I was in my senior year of Bible college, I remember one particular chapel service. It was a men's chapel, the ones that I hated the most. (I was engaged to Lori at the time.) I don't recall a whole lot of what happened during this chapel, but I do remember Duncan Sprague, the RD, posing the following question: "Do you love Jesus Christ more today than you did when you first enrolled at Multnomah?" I confess this was a hard question for me to answer. I wanted to immediately say, "Well, yes. I've learned Inductive Bible Study, Greek, Theology, and Bible. I love Jesus more than when I first arrived." But when I reflected on this matter, I began to agonize in my spirit. I realized that I was equating intellectual knowledge with experiential knowledge.

This is a great danger that we face as a church. It is easy to assume that we “know” Christ because we’re receiving plenty of head knowledge. But head knowledge does not make one intimate with Christ. This is only true of experiential knowledge—the kind that obeys God (2:3-4). Thus, it is crucial for us to ask ourselves, “Am I growing? Am I making progress? What areas of my life can I point to that are bearing further Christ-likeness?”

Lastly, John speaks of “young men” (2:13b, 14b). The maturing disciples have had victories over Satan and have grown strong by abiding so that their victories are renowned. The “wicked one” refers to Satan. Once again, the verb “overcome” is in the perfect tense, and once again we have the point-in-time perspective and the ongoing perspective on overcoming. From the point-in-time perspective, the moment we believe in Jesus we have overcome the wicked one and this world over which he temporarily holds sway. You see, Satan’s objective is to keep us from trusting Christ, to keep us from eternal life. So when we believe, we overcome Satan. His accusations against us no longer stand. He can no longer possess us. He cannot destroy us. We overcome Satan and his world (5:4). So if you have believed in Jesus, you have already won the spiritual war.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there will no longer be spiritual battles. Indeed, our spiritual struggles are ongoing and need to be overcome, even though our ultimate victory is assured.¹⁰ Our spiritual battle with Satan and his demons is ongoing. Satan is out to discourage, deceive, and derail us. But God equips us to keep on overcoming, both now and in the future. The last part of 2:14 tells us how God equips us. It says, “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” Being “strong” is not something we have to muster; it’s the power of God in us (4:4). As believers, we are strong because we have the all-powerful God of the universe living inside us. Another key to overcoming is abiding in God’s Word. All mature Christians are “Bible Christians.” Show me a person who has the power of God, and I will show you a person who is committed to the consistent reading of the Word of God.¹¹

The Christian life is not a perpetual Sunday school picnic! It is an intense battle with the enemy of our souls, who seeks to devour us (1 Pet 5:8). Therefore, we must always be on guard for *the best defense is a good offense*. With God indwelling us, we are fully capable of doing anything God calls us to do. We have overcome, and we can continue to overcome in the midst of our struggles. Ultimately, we can never be defeated; we can only be deceived. And because the danger is deception, we need to continually renew our minds with the truth of God’s Word. And this is the truth: Though our struggles are ongoing our victory is assured. We are forgiven. We know God. And we have overcome.

[Building a strong defense demands appreciating our spiritual resources, but we must also...]

2. Guard our spiritual resources (2:15-17). John writes, “**Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**” The present tense command, “Do not love the world” can be translated, “Stop loving the world!” This suggests that John’s Christian readers were to some extent caught up in loving the world. They were acting in a way that was inconsistent with their relationship with Christ. We must be very careful not to assume that this verse is written for someone else (e.g., my unbelieving neighbor or my neighbor in church). The truth of the matter is: it is quite possible for believers to love the world. That’s why John commands his Christian readers to “stop loving the world.” Now once we’ve made the decision to stop loving the world, we must fight to maintain our choice against the strong current of the world. It is an ongoing battle.¹²

What is the world? We talk about the world of sports, meaning a system of ideas and activities of people who are involved in sports. We talk about the world of politics, meaning an attitude, a system, and the activities of people who are involved in politics. When the Bible tells us, “Do not love the world,” it is talking about an arrangement of things or a system that is opposed to God.¹³

When John writes, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” he is not referring to the salvation of his readers. He is simply saying that such a believer does not love God.¹⁴ The love of the world will drive out love for God.¹⁵ Hence, he or she is not experiencing intimate fellowship with God; for love is capable of only one primary focus.¹⁶

Suppose I come home one night and tell Lori that I have a sweetheart on the side. How would she respond? Not well. I can tell you this: I would be dead after uttering those words. And I’m not speaking figuratively. But if Lori allowed me to live, what if I engaged her in dialogue and explained, “Oh, Honey, it’s not so bad; I’m going to split time between both of you, fifty-fifty.” How will Lori feel about this arrangement? Now suppose I say, “I tell you what, I’ll go the extra mile. I’ll just give her one day a week, and you can have the other six.” Would Lori go for that? Not on your life! She would try to separate my head from my body. She will not share me with anybody.¹⁷

Now here’s the question: Does God have feelings less intense than our spouse? Of course not! Yet many Christians don’t even split time with God and the world. They pay their respects to God on one day of the week (and only part of that day), while they devote the other six days of the week to the world. Now is it possible to live such a life and still go to heaven? Of course, it is. We can do nothing to deserve our eternal life. Worshipping God seven days a week could not open the gates of heaven for us. But living six days of the week for the world and one day of the week for God will not endear us to His heart. In other words, we will not be very close to Him. He won’t feel loved by us; therefore, why should He manifest His love for us? That’s what this letter is all about—getting close to God. It won’t happen if we try to love God and the world at the same time.

Now before we go on, we need to understand that we are commanded not to love the world but we are never told not to love life! Typically, Christians are known for what we are against. While God doesn’t want us to wink at sin and welcome worldly influences into our lives, He also doesn’t want us to be a group of pharisaical zealots that don’t know how to smile and enjoy ourselves.

Like most children, our three children like to tell on their siblings. On Friday night when we were in our van, Jena reported Justin’s bad behavior. Lori then said, “Jena, you don’t need to worry about Justin. He doesn’t need your help to get him in trouble. He does just fine on his own. You just need to take care of yourself. I’ll take care of Justin.”

John continues his thought in 2:16 by further explaining himself: “**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**”¹⁸ Let’s take a close look at these three areas.

- **Lust of the flesh:** This has to do with craving or desiring pleasure. It’s the pursuit of pleasure. It’s easy to think of pleasure pursuits that would be obviously worldly, such as being involved in sexual immorality or substance abuse. But there are pleasure pursuits that are easier to hide or more socially acceptable. We think we deserve to live comfortably. We deserve to be married. We deserve to own a nice home in a nice neighborhood. We deserve to be happy. We deserve to drive a nice car. We deserve to be pain free. We deserve to have a nest egg for retirement. We deserve stability and safety. We deserve to avoid conflict. We deserve to avoid anything that would push us out of our comfort zone, even if it’s for a good cause. And we count getting all these things we think we deserve as the way God blesses our efforts.

An area that is particularly convicting to me is watching sports on TV. “If somebody offered you \$2 million, could you give up sports for two years?” This was the question a sports radio station recently asked its listeners. No games on TV, radio, or in person. No sports page. No ESPN highlight films. No Tuesday morning arguing about Monday Night Football. One fan phoned in

and said no, he would definitely not give up sports, not even for \$25 million. “It’s where I turn when I pick up the paper in the morning,” he said. “It’s where I go when I’m on the Internet. It’s what I watch on television. It’s what I listen to on the radio in the car. Everywhere I go, it surrounds everything I do.”¹⁹

Potato chips, cheese curls, and candy may be some of your favorite things to eat, but for a few mule deer in Arizona’s Grand Canyon National Park, these foods proved to be deadly. Park rangers had to kill over two dozen mule deer because they became hooked on junk food left by visitors to the park. Once they get a taste of the sugar and salt, the deer develop an extreme addiction and will go to any lengths to eat only junk food. The result is the animals ignore the food they need, leaving them in poor health and on the edge of starvation. Because of junk food cravings, the deer lose their natural ability to digest vegetation. One park ranger called the junk food “the crack cocaine of the deer world.” Scripture warns us of the dangers of developing a craving for the things of this world. Such a diet keeps us from hungering for the things of God.²⁰

- **Lust of the eyes:** This has to do with wanting things we see but don’t have (e.g., greed, covetousness, materialism). The most common, contemporary manifestation of the lust of the eyes is materialism. If I see it, I must have it! Now don’t misunderstand me, there is nothing wrong with money. We must have money to live. But the Bible says, “For the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim 6:10a NET). Nothing is wrong with getting money, but the world takes a normal desire and wants us to become obsessive or use unjust methods of attaining it.
- **Boastful pride of life:** This has to do with wanting to enhance our image in the eyes of others (i.e., status, position, egotism, self-centeredness). It’s being concerned about our image. It’s being driven by what people think of us. The pride of life refers to boasting about self, possessions, and accomplishments. The person who thinks he has enough wealth and property to protect himself and insure his security has no need for God (or anything outside himself).²¹

I was talking to my next door neighbor about high school reunions and we concluded that they are all about “I’m doing this.” “I make this much money.” “I live in this size house.” “I drive this type of car.” “I’m married to…” Reunions can be painful.

You may be thinking, “Is it wrong to enjoy pleasure?” “Is it wrong to enjoy our possessions?” “Is it wrong to enjoy it when other people think highly of us?” “Is it wrong to enjoy the material perks?” Absolutely not. Here’s the point: We can enjoy them, but we should never enthrone them. To enthrone the things of the world is to make them our priority. To enthrone the things of the world is to arrange our lives around the pursuit of them. To enthrone the things of the world is to serve them.²²

In our final verse, John highlights the brevity of life. John writes, “**The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives²³ forever**” (2:17). John argues that a key reason to obey God’s commandments is the transitory nature of this world and its lusts. If we love the world or the things in the world, we will lose them all at death. All that the worldly person lives for is gone in an instant and means nothing in light of eternity. Even if we have attained our worldly desires, what good are they at death? But if we do God’s will, we will abide with Him in heaven throughout all eternity!

The will of God is everything that God makes known to us by the Word and by the Spirit, as being His will for our lives.²⁴ What are some practical examples of doing the “will of God?”²⁵ Here are just a few:

1. Finding a spouse without premarital, physical involvement (1 Thess 4:3–6).
2. Staying in a difficult marriage when your emotions are screaming at you to run away.
3. Not being dishonest and unethical in your business even though it would mean a lot more money in your pocket.

4. Not taking that promotion which would double your salary but would also cut your family time in half.
5. Not cheating on the test even though it would help you get a better grade.
6. Honoring your mother and father even though their ideas seem so old fashioned and out to lunch.
7. Giving the gift of love to a child who seems impossibly difficult.

We must remind ourselves again and again that the will of God is eternal. Beauty is fleeting. It fades with the passing of time. Wealth is uncertain because the value of stocks can rise and fall. Fame is short-lived. Popularity is precarious. If I want to invest my life in something permanent and not passing, somehow I need to connect my life to God, who is eternal, and people, who last forever. To be consumed with this life is to be unprepared for the next. What a tragedy to invest our resources in what will not last.

In 1988, a native Iranian was expelled from his country. For eleven years this man was without a country. For eleven years he lived in a Paris airport. He had no passport. He had no citizenship. He had no papers that enabled him to leave the airport or fly to another country. After being expelled from Iran he was sent away from Paris, France, because he lacked documentation. He said his Belgian-issued refugee document had been stolen. He flew to England but was denied entry and sent back to Paris. When he was returned to the Paris airport in 1988, airport authorities allowed him to live in Terminal 1, and there he stayed for eleven years, writing in a diary, living off of handouts from airport employees, cleaning up in the airport bathroom.

Then in September 1999 the situation reversed. French authorities presented this man with an international travel card and a French residency permit. Suddenly he was free to go anywhere he wanted. But when airport officials handed him his walking papers, to everyone's surprise, he simply smiled, tucked the documents in his folder, and resumed writing in his diary. They found he was afraid to leave the bench and table that had been his home for eleven years. As the days passed and he refused to leave, airport officials said they would not throw him out of the airport, but they would have to gently and patiently coax him to find a new home.²⁶

Can you imagine a more unnatural home than an airport? It is bustling, it is interesting, and it is a lot like our world, but it is not home. Most of us would never consider living in an airport, yet we live our lives with an airport mentality. We fly through life never recognizing what the good life really is.

If you have never placed your faith in Christ, I don't blame you for being worldly. I do not blame you for getting all you can out of this world, because this is the only world you are ever going to have. If you are not a Christian, all the heaven you will ever get you are going to get on this earth and then it is gone forever. I want to introduce you to a better world.²⁷

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Scripture Reading

1 John 2:12-17
1 John 4:4; 5:19
Ephesians 6:10-13
Matthew 6:19-24
Romans 12:1-2; 13:14
Galatians 6:7-10
James 4:1-10

Study Questions

1. Every Christian has been freely forgiven by God (2:12). Do I believe I have been forgiven by God? Why or why not? When have I sensed God's forgiveness in a profound way? Am I guilty of exhibiting a "ho-hum" attitude toward God's forgiveness? Why? What can I do to change this mindset?
2. Those who have believed in Christ as Savior have been called to "know" Him intimately (2:13-14). To what degree can I say I know Christ? Do I know Christ better this year than I did last year? If so, what led to this spiritual growth? How would I advise others to grow in their Christian maturity?
3. Christians are expected to overcome the evil one (2:13-14). Have I been defeated time and time again by Satan? Why do I continue to lose battle after battle when the war has been won? Read 1 John 4:4. How can I alter my battle plan so that I can regularly overcome the enemy of my soul?
4. John commands Christians to stop loving the world (2:15). Does "not loving the world" mean that it is wrong for a Christian to seek to succeed in business or a career? Why or why not? How can we who live in affluence know when enough is enough? How do we choose a permissible level of luxury?
5. John discusses three enemies that every Christian must battle: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (2:16). To fight off these enemies requires a strong defense. Am I ignoring the Lord in my quest for security in my finances, relationships, schedule, and priorities? Am I preoccupied with what I should not have (immorality) or do not have (materialism)? Am I living my life so that I have something to boast about to men rather than to God?
6. What does it mean to give something or someone first priority in my life? On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), how high of a priority is my relationship with God? What people or pursuits do I give a significant amount of time, energy or thought to (e.g., job, family, money, prestige, recreation, TV, etc.)? What place of priority does God occupy in my life in relation to these other activities? How do Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 relate to my actual priorities?

Notes

¹ Bob Kerrey, “How to Experience God More Fully: Understanding Your Position in Christ, Part 1 A Study of 1 John 2:12-14”: http://www.moonvalleybible.org/sermons/2004-12-12_1_John_02_12-14_Transcript_Christian_Life.doc.

² The Greek particle *hoti* (“because”) can have either a causal or declarative sense, and John could have intended both meanings. However the causal meaning seems a bit stronger. Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 John* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1john.pdf>, 2006).

³ The phrase “the evil one” is used in John 17:15 as a reference to Satan. Satan is also the referent here and in the four other occurrences in 1 John (2:14; 3:12; 5:18, 19).

⁴ In many ways this is a difficult text to understand. It raises several questions: (1) Why does John use “write” in the present tense three times and then shift to the aorist three times? (The NIV obscures this, translating them all the same.) (2) Why does he use different terms for “children?” (The NIV also obscures this; I recommend that you use the NASB or the ESV as a study Bible.) (3) Why does he say the particular things that he says with each group? Is there a reason for each emphasis? (4) Why does he repeat the exact words about the fathers, and almost repeat identical information about the other groups? (5) Why does he use the sequence: children, fathers, young men, rather than a chronological one?

⁵ When John includes himself in addressing his believing readers, he uses the general term, “children” (*tekna*, 3:2). When John *excludes* himself in addressing his readers, he uses a diminutive term, “little children” (*teknia* or *paidia*) to express his own loving endearment toward his readers (2:1). So, the term, “little children” (*teknia*) does not single out a subgroup of very young readers; it includes all of his readers who are beloved children of God, through faith in Christ.

⁶ “John is laying emphasis on the assured standing into which every Christian has come, whatever his stage of spiritual development.” John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John*: TNTC series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 98. See also Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God’s Love* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 93.

⁷ These three categories are repeated twice for two reasons: (1) the letter was being read out loud—for emphasis. John is writing to the ear gate; not the eye gate. (2) There is a progression of what he is asserting about each group. (“I write,” “I am writing.” John changes his verb tense for more emphasis.) See Ed Underwood, “Resist the World!” 1 John 2:12-17. Unpublished Study Notes from Cannon Beach Christian Conference Center 2005.

⁸ The perfect tense *apheontai* (“forgiven”) indicates an action completed in the past with results that continue right up until the present. Thus, the translation “your sins have been forgiven” is to be preferred over the NKJV and KJV rendering “your sins are forgiven.”

⁹ Charles Stanley, *The Gift of Forgiveness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 43-45.

¹⁰ Paul lays out a spiritual battle plan in Eph 6:10-18.

¹¹ Jerry Vines, *Exploring 1, 2, 3 John* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989), 65.

¹² On a rather practical note, it’s also not a good idea for a follower of Christ to send double signals to his world either. Compromise increases stress over the long haul. The deception, the half-heartedness tears us apart. When people aren’t sure of our stand, they keep pushing.

¹³ Vines, *Exploring 1, 2, 3 John*, 71.

¹⁴ Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 102.

¹⁵ Michael Eaton, *1.2.3 John: Focus on the Bible* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 1996), 69.

¹⁶ Jesus put it this way: “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other” (Luke 16:13). And James said, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas 4:4).

¹⁷ The seed for this illustration came from a sermon by Dr. Tony Evans on James 4.

¹⁸ Many have pointed out how the three aspects of temptation listed here parallel the way that Satan tempted Eve. She saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food (Gen 3:6), which was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. She saw “that it was a delight to the eyes.” This appealed to the lust of the eyes. She also saw “that the tree was desirable to make one wise.” This appealed to the boastful pride of life. The same pattern occurs in Satan’s temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-12). Satan urged Jesus to turn the stones into bread (the lust of the flesh). He showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth, offering to give them to Him (the lust of the eyes). He encouraged Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, which could have been a source of pride in this miraculous accomplishment. However, it should be noted that there are dissimilarities when comparing these passages with 1 John 2:16. Therefore, it is difficult to say for certain if these passages were on John’s mind.

¹⁹ Preaching Today citation: Mark Galli, “The Thirst of the 24/7 Fan,” *Christianity Today* (3-28-05).

²⁰ Preaching Today citation: Richard Young, Bossier City, Louisiana; source: *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (Spring 1995).

²¹ See NET Study Notes.

²² Bob Kerrey, “How to Experience God More Fully: Relating to the World, A Study of 1 John 2:15-17”:
http://www.moonvalleybible.org/sermons/2004-12-19_1_John_02_15-17_Transcript_Relationship_with_the_World.doc.

²³ Lit. “abides” (*meno*). The original NASB [1977] correctly translates “abides,” not “lives.”

²⁴ Eaton, *1, 2, 3 John*, 73.

²⁵ David R. Anderson, “*Simul* 1 John—Relationship or Fellowship,” Unpublished notes.

²⁶ Preaching Today citation: Adapted from: Ray Moseley, “At Last, Airport ‘Prisoner’ Gets His Walking Papers,” *Chicago Tribune* (9-21-99); Suzanne Daley, 11.

²⁷ Vines, *Exploring 1, 2, 3 John*, 79.