

# We're Gonna Mess Up

## *May 22, 2022*

### Lesson Summary

#### ***Main Passages***

1 John 2:1-2

#### ***Session Outline***

1. A New Heart (1 John 2:1a)
2. A Continued Hope (1 John 2:1b)
3. An Effective Work (1 John 2:2)

---

#### ***Theological Theme***

Christians have been saved from sin, but still battle its influence and need to repent when they give into sin. Yet, they do not despair, even when they sin, because Jesus Christ is able and willing to save them. His saving work carries on through their entire lives until glory.



## Leader Guide

# We're Gonna Mess Up

### Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever been rock climbing? What types of safety measures do rock climbers use to try and ensure they don't face ultimate harm if they do fall?
- ❓ How might we relate this to the Christian life?

Rock climbing is a popular sport around the world that attracts people from all walks of life. It provides participants with the opportunity to spend time in nature, get some exercise, and challenge themselves. There is no shortage of thrills, especially for the adventurous.

Rock climbers take numerous measures to ensure their safety before reaching for their first handhold in the rock. Most importantly, they make sure they are attached to a rope that is kept taut by a partner on the ground. This rope is the only thing that stands between a climber falling to a catastrophic injury or death if they lose their grip. When a climber falls, the rope catches them and keeps them from crashing to the ground.

Similarly, Christians are kept safe from destruction from sin by Christ. Though Christians may fall, they are kept safe by Christ's work on their behalf. Jesus's death on the cross was sufficient not only to cover the sins that a person has committed in the past but also to cover the sins they will commit in the future.

### Session Summary

The apostle John aimed to convince his audience to look to Christ and believe the truth about their need and His provision. Christians have good reason to hope and rejoice, even when they transgress the law of God, because of the work of Christ on the cross on their behalf. Christ has promised to be a Savior to all who come to Him and all who come to Him will never be cast away. Furthermore, as John wrote in his gospel, no one can snatch God's people out of His hand (John 10:28-29).

The tone of this text is hopeful, serious, and instructive. The Christian takes hope in the fact that he or she can't undo what Christ has done. The wise believer will memorize today's passage and meditate on it regularly. It is serious because there is a command here. Not only did John want the believer to live in hope, but he also wanted his hearers to walk in holiness. Christians sin, but they do so with sorrow and are pressed by their fear of God. Finally, this text is instructive because the reader is made aware of what they ought to do when they sin, namely, flee to the Advocate.

## 1. A New Heart (1 John 2:1a)



If Christians know any sin they commit is covered by the blood of Christ, what keeps them from being emboldened to sin more?

Recall that there were two thieves crucified with Jesus, one on each side of Him (see Luke 23:32-43). The criminals, of course, were justly suffering the punishment for their own sin. At the first they both ridiculed Jesus (Mark 15:32), but one later repented. The repentant thief turned to Jesus and asked Him to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Jesus said that very day the man would be with Him in paradise. Now, can you imagine that this thief would ever begin to mock Jesus again? If what he said to Jesus was genuine and he truly had faith in Jesus Christ to save him, then he would never begin to mock Christ again.

This is an illustration of the Christian life. It is just as unthinkable for a Christian who has truly recognized his or her desperate situation and looked to Christ for salvation to then have the notion to sin heartily because they have a free ticket to heaven. The fact of the matter is that a person who has truly been born again has been transformed completely. They now have a distaste for sin and a desire for the things of God.



John said he was writing to them so they would not sin. Is it possible for Christians to not sin? Explain.

People who have been made alive in Christ can now not sin. This contrasts with those who are not in Christ. Unbelievers' natural inclination is toward sin. They are enslaved to sin and children of the devil (1 John 3:10), and they are described as being dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-2).


The only way for a sin-dead soul to be made alive is for something or someone to intervene. A cadaver doesn't just wake up and start obeying God because of some monumental self-willingness. Dry bones don't piece themselves back together. It takes a supernatural work of God. God must give us a new heart. He must put His Spirit in us. And when He does, redeemed ones have a desire to know Him, serve Him, and obey Him.

### Our Advocate

Jesus's death was not the end of his ministry but the move to a new phase. Now he serves as our advocate or helper and mediator at the Father's right hand.

When people become children of God and God's Spirit indwells them, they seek after the things of God more and follow the allurements of the world less (see Ezekiel 36; Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

For this reason, Christians must be careful about how they talk to unbelievers about Christianity. It can be very tempting to say to someone who shows interest that if they want to be a Christian, then they have to start reading their Bible, praying, going to church, and avoid sin. These are certainly characteristics of a true believer, but they will never make anyone a Christian. The fundamental message that unbelievers need to hear is this: All are guilty of sin and judgment is coming. Flee to Christ, for He is the Savior of sinners!

 Application: If you are a follower of Christ, how has your view and inclination toward sin changed?


## 2. A Continued Hope (1 John 2:1b)

This text reminds us of two important theological concepts. The first is “radical corruption,” which simply means mankind is corrupted by sin. The second, which follows it, is known as “regeneration.” This is when God opens the heart of an unbeliever so they might truly hear the gospel and respond with faith and repentance as He did with Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14).

 Once a sin-dead soul is made alive, what ensures them that they will not lose their salvation?

Christians languish much of their lives under the heavy load of doubt concerning the certainty of their salvation. They wonder how God could truly love them and claim them if they still fall prey to sin. John's words in this verse are a potent remedy to the shadows of doubt that can have such debilitating influence over Christians.


A Christian has a continued hope because Jesus's sacrifice on the cross not only paid the price for past sins, but His saving work is effective for the sins we will commit even presently and in the future.

 How does it change your perspective to recognize your salvation is dependent on Jesus's work and righteousness and not your own?

The fact of the matter is that if a person could lose their salvation, they would. If it were left in the hands of a fallible human being to maintain the work Jesus started, then heaven would be empty and hell would be overflowing. Christians need Jesus Christ to justify them and to sanctify them. Christ must nourish the grace of faith in the hearts of Christians or they are lost.

Jesus Christ's work on behalf of believers can be described as that of a priest. He made atonement for His people through a blood sacrifice (His own), and He continues to intercede for His people based on that atoning sacrifice. Two times in the New Testament and once in the Old, we are told that Jesus is making intercession for the people of God (see Isaiah 53:12; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).


What an incredible thought! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, interceding for Christians. The Bible teaches that those who are truly saved will persevere. They will persevere in the faith because they are cared for and maintained by God Himself.

 Application: How have you experienced God's sustaining grace as you persevere in your Christian faith?

### 3. An Effective Work (1 John 2:2)

The perseverance of the saints is a precious and comforting doctrine that is clearly expressed in the Scriptures. The perseverance of the truly redeemed is so sure because of the surety and extent of the work of the One who guarantees it. Note that saints don't persevere because they have the ability within themselves to do so but because the Spirit of God dwells in them, the Scriptures anchor them, prayer helps them, and Christ nourishes faith and repentance in them.

In verse 2, John explained why the work of salvation is so effective. It is because Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, is Himself the atoning sacrifice for sins.

 Why has Jesus's sacrifice been effective for us in a way that no other person's ever could?

Jesus Christ was the only sufficient and adequate sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was both God and man. The eternal Son of God took on flesh and lowered Himself to be born of a woman under the law at the right time. This is important because it made Him an appropriate Mediator between God and man. Because He was fully God, Jesus could lay His hand on God. Because He was fully man, Jesus could lay His hand on man. Through His sacrificial death, He brought these two parties together for reconciliation.

Jesus's sacrifice was effective because He was able to bear the wrath of God and be a perfect sacrifice, while at the same time suffering as a true man the penalty of sin. His suffering was both physical and spiritual. He underwent tremendous anguish of soul and torment of body.

No one else could do what Jesus Christ did. He is truly and uniquely the Savior of sinners. He is able to save and He is willing.



Why did Jesus have to die to save sinners?

Jesus shed His blood to save sinners because this was the required payment. The soul that sins must die (Ezekiel 18:20). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Without the shedding of blood there is not forgiveness for sins (Hebrews 9:22).

In Numbers 35, Moses described the punishment for a manslayer. The manslayer would be punished by the avenger of blood. This was the law of God, and it serves as an illustration to help us see the seriousness of sin and that the punishment for sin is more than we can bear. All people, if left to their own devices, will die physically and then die spiritually. Every person is a manslayer and there will be no escaping the avenger of blood.

But Christ is a refuge for manslayers. Christ put on the clothes of the manslayer and stood before the avenger of blood and died. He paid the penalty; He annulled the arrest warrant.



Application: Have you ever felt as though you had to pay for your own sins by doing good deeds or suffering? Why is it impossible for you to atone for your own sins?

## Conclusion

Christians have fellowship with the Father through the Son and their joy is complete because Christ cleanses them from all sin. They can come before the Father as beloved children on the merits of the righteousness of Christ. Now that they have been made new and have been welcomed into the family of God, they ought not sin, for this is against their Father and their Savior. It grieves the Spirit. But if they do sin (for they still wage war on the flesh), they have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Their Savior's saving power doesn't stop at conversion but continues to work for them until heaven. The Advocate is able and willing to save sinners.

- ❓ When were you born again? How did your life change when you became a Christian?
- ❓ How should remembering that all who are in the family of God have needed and received the same grace that we have change our interactions with one another?
- ❓ Who can you have a gospel conversation with this week—sharing about the advocacy of Jesus for sinners?

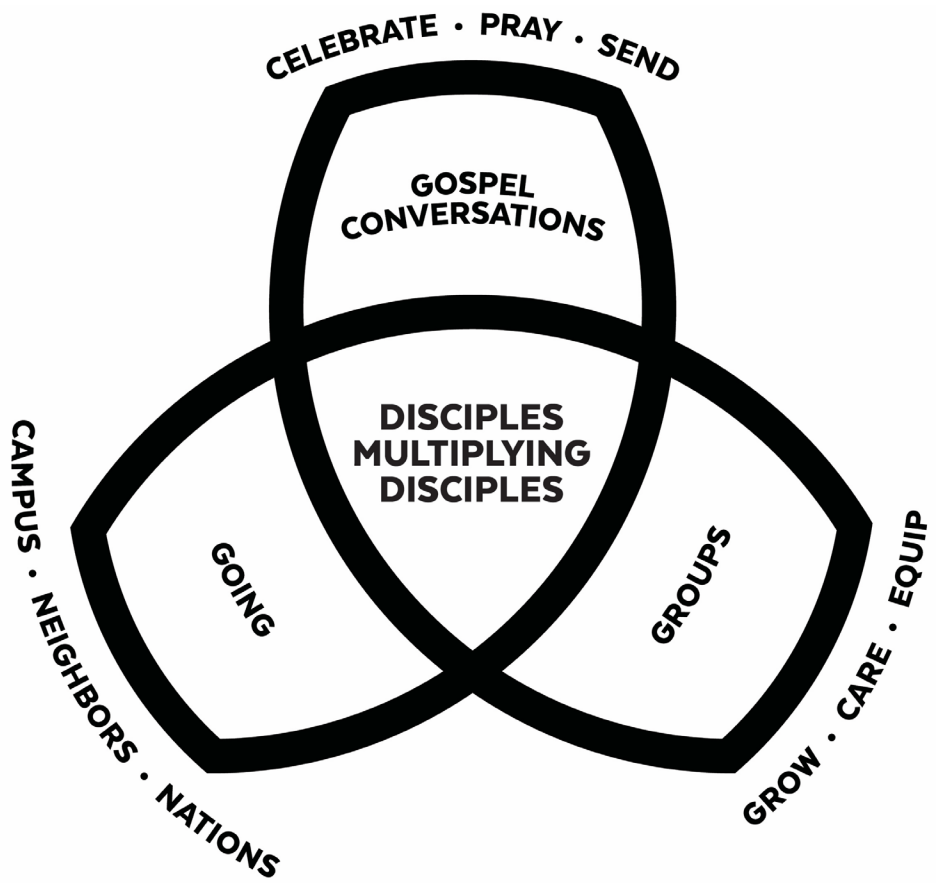
## Prayer of Response

*Praise God for His kindness and mercy in Christ Jesus. Give thanks that there is more mercy in Christ than sin in you. Ask the Lord to help you remember and rejoice in the fact that Christ's saving work continues even today and that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for you.*

## Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1,2 & 3 John* by Daniel Akin
- *1-3 John* by David Allen
- *First John* by J. Vernon McGee

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples





## For Next Week

### Session Title

- The Joy of Fellowship

### Main Passages

- 1 John 1:1-4

### Session Outline

1. Revelation of Christ (1 John 1:1)
2. Declaration about Christ (1 John 1:2)
3. Fellowship in Christ (1 John 1:3-4)

### Memorize

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

# Historical Context of 1 John

## Purpose

John made four purpose statements. First, he wrote to promote his readers' fellowship and joy. "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1:4).

Second, he wrote to help readers avoid the pitfalls of sin, yet find forgiveness when they stumbled. "My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin" (2:1).

Third, he wrote to protect believers from false teachers. "I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you" (2:26).

Finally, he wrote so they might know they had eternal life. "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (5:13).

This last purpose statement governs the other three and brings them together in a unifying theme.

In summary, 1 John was written to confirm Christians in true apostolic Christianity by helping them avoid the destructive beliefs and behaviors to which some had fallen prey.

## Author

Ancient manuscripts are unanimous in naming "John" as the author of 1 John. This was understood to be John the son of Zebedee, the "beloved disciple" who was also the author of the Fourth Gospel. The style and vocabulary of 1, 2, and 3 John are so close to that of John's Gospel that they beg to be understood as arising from the same person. Some contemporary scholars theorize that an "elder John" (see 2Jn 1; 3Jn 1), not the apostle, may have written the letters. Others speak of a "Johannine school" or "circle" as the originators of the epistles of John (and perhaps Revelation too). But the view with the best support is that Jesus's disciple John was the author.

## Setting

Second-century sources reported that around AD 70, the year the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, John left Jerusalem where he was a church leader and relocated to Ephesus. He continued his pastoral work in that region and lived until nearly AD 100. Ephesus is probably the place where John wrote the three NT letters that bear his name. They could have been composed at any time in the last quarter of the first century.

## Special Features

John's first letter addresses a setting in which some people in the local church had departed the fellowship (2:19), apparently because their doctrine, ethics, devotion, or some combination of these conflicted with those of the church. John wrote in part to stabilize the situation. He reaffirmed and enlarged on key theological truths, particularly the doctrine of Christ. He extolled love and emphasized the necessity for belief to be matched by action. A personal relationship with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life, and out from this grows obedience to divine commands. True faith, proactive ethics, fervent love for God and people—most of the epistle revolves around one or more of these three emphases as the author instructed, admonished, and encouraged his readers.

## Extended Commentary

### 1 John 2:1-2

2:1–2. Most Bible teachers agree that the first two verses of chapter 2 conclude the discussion of chapter 1. John does not change subjects until verse 3. Therefore, we will deal with those verses in this chapter.

We see in this chapter a delicate balancing act between feeling forgiven and feeling free to sin. The apostle John says in 1:9 that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven. We have no reason to be buried with guilt because of our inability to eradicate sin in our lives. Just because Jesus is willing to forgive our sins doesn't mean we can feel free to keep on sinning. This Scripture is written so we won't sin. "Do your best not to sin," we might paraphrase, "but if you do, you have help."

"Dear children" signifies a fond affection for the people to whom John wrote this letter. The exhortation to walk in the light encourages us not to sin. But we will. All is not lost when we do sin. Jesus is our advocate, one who speaks to the Father in our behalf, as a defense attorney would argue our case before a judge.

The advocate speaks with extraordinary authority before the judge, however, because his defense for us is that he, the defense attorney, has already paid any price the judge could impose. The willingness of the judge to forego judgment is not based on the life of the one on trial (us), but rather on the merits of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed his life in our place. He paid the price for our sin with his death. He is our atoning sacrifice (sacrifice that pays the price and allows forgiveness).

Jesus' atoning sacrifice is sufficient not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. Does this mean that everyone is saved? No, the Bible makes it clear that not everyone will be saved (Matt. 7:14; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21). But anyone who hears the gospel can be saved if he or she wants to be (Rev. 22:17).<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999).

## Author Bio

### **David Walls (I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude)**

David Walls serves as the senior minister of First Congregational Church, Traverse City, Michigan. He is the author of four books, a frequent speaker on college campuses and at Bible conferences, and serves as an adjunct professor at Asbury Theological Seminary. He is married to Patricia and they have two adult sons, Jeremy and Kent.

### **Max Anders (I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude)**

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling 30 Days to Understanding the Bible, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at [www.maxanders.com](http://www.maxanders.com) to help people grow spiritually.

### **Daniel Akin (Exalting Jesus in 1,2 & 3 John)**

Daniel L. Akin is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has authored or edited many books and Bible commentaries including *Ten Who Changed the World* and *A Theology for the Church*.

### **David Allen (1–3 John)**

David L. Allen (PhD, University of Texas at Arlington) is founding dean of the School of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where he also serves as distinguished professor of preaching and director of the Center for Expository Preaching. He served in pastoral ministry for twenty-one years and has been a teacher of preachers for more than twenty-five years. He resides in Irving, Texas, and has four grown children and five grandchildren.

### **J. Vernon McGee (First John)**

Dr. J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988) spent more than 50 years teaching the Bible on his “Thru the Bible” radio broadcast. He pastored for more than 40 years and has authored many best-selling books, including *Doctrine for Difficult Days*.