



# *The* **First Letter of John**

This Bible study examines what John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” has to say to us today about truth and love grounded in our relationship with Jesus.


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## Session One: *The Word of Life*

Early church history supports that the apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, John 1, 2, and 3, and the book of Revelation. The earliest confirmed use of 1 John was in the Roman province of Asia (in modern Turkey), where Ephesus was located. John likely wrote it as an elder statesman from the church in Ephesus somewhere between AD 85 and 95 to churches in the surrounding regions of Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea; the same churches mentioned in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation.

1. Get to know John: What does Matthew 4:21-22 tell us about John?
2. Read 1 John 1:1-4 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. Read Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1-5 and list below the thoughts echoed in the passage above from 1 John.
4. What does the term “word of life” refer to in verse 1, and what is John claiming about this life in verse 2?
5. Why was it important for John to state that he had heard, seen, and touched Christ?
6. What has John done with this knowledge, and for what reason?

7. What does John mean by “fellowship,” and with whom is this fellowship?

Churchy-Word Challenge: Joy

8. What is the dictionary definition of joy?

9. Read the following verses and jot down what Scripture says about joy.

Scripture	What Scripture Says About Joy
Nehemiah 8:9-10	
Habakkuk 3:17-19	
John 15:9-11	

10. In 1 John 1:4, “our joy” is alternately written as “your joy” in several early manuscripts. From reading the scriptures above, what is John saying in this verse? How is this different than the dictionary definition of joy?

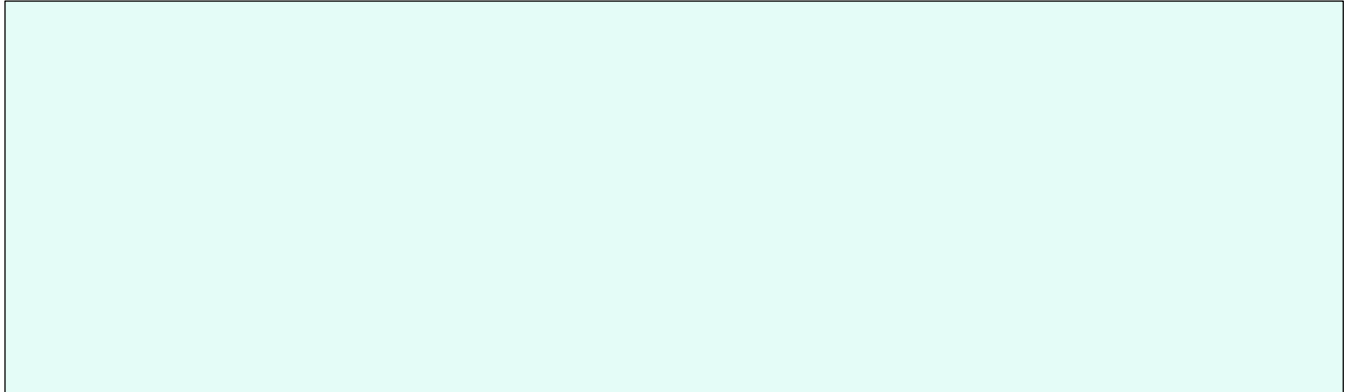
11. How have you found the joy of the Lord to be your strength?

12. What truth(s) in these first four verses of 1 John prepare or encourage you to read further?

## Session Two: *Walking in the Light*

1. Get to know John: What does Mark 3:16-17 tell us about John?

2. Read 1 John 1:5-10 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. What does it mean that God is light, and why is this important to understand? (see John 1:1-5)

4. What is darkness? What does it mean to walk in the darkness?

5. John mentions lying and deception several times in this passage (vv. 6, 8, 10; also see Romans 3:23). What is he saying?

6. What does it mean to walk in the light?

7. Does walking in the light mean we never sin? What does John say about this in 1 John 1:7?

8. What does it mean to confess our sins, and why is this critical to do?

Churchy-Word Challenge - <i>Righteousness</i>	9. What is the dictionary definition of righteousness?	
	10. Read the following verses and jot down what Scripture says about righteousness.	
	Scripture	What Scripture Says About Righteousness
	Psalm 23:3	
	Romans 5:17-21	
	James 2:22-23	
	1 Peter 3:18	
11. It has been said that righteousness can be defined as a right relationship with God. How do the above scriptures support this thought?		
12. What do we have to do to obtain righteousness? (See 2 Corinthians 5:19-21)		

## Session Three: *Christ Our Advocate*

1. Get to know John: What does Mark 9:2 tell us about John?
2. Read 1 John 2:1-6 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. By addressing his readers as “my little children”, what does John want to imply and convey?
4. What is an advocate, and what does it mean that Jesus is our advocate with the Father?

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Romans 8:31 ESV

Churchy-Word Challenge - <i>Propitiation</i>	5. What is the dictionary definition of propitiation?	
	6. Read the following verses and jot down what Scripture says about propitiation.	
	Scripture	What Scripture Says About Propitiation
	Romans 3:23-25	
	Hebrews 2:17	
	1 John 2:2	
<p>In the Bible, propitiation is a two-part act. First, God's holy wrath against our sin is appeased or satisfied. The second act is that we are reconciled to God. Not only is his anger appeased, but he brings us close in relationship.</p>		
7. How is Jesus the propitiation for our sin?		

8. How can you tell if your relationship with God is real or fake?
  
9. What are the commandments that John is referring to? (See Matthew 22:36-40 and John 13:34,35)
  
10. What does it mean to be “in Him”? What does it mean to abide in Him? (See John 15:4,5)
  
11. Why is the word “walk” used here, and what does it mean to walk as He walked?

## Session Four: *The New Commandment*

1. Get to know John: What does Luke 9:52-54 tell us about John?

2. Read 1 John 2:7-14 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. What is the commandment John is talking about, and how is it both old and new?

4. How is the “darkness passing away,” considering this was written more than 1900 years ago, and the darkness still seems as strong as ever?

5. Why would someone choose to walk in the darkness rather than the light, and what are the effects of walking in the darkness? (See John 3:19 and Ephesians 4:18)

6. Read Proverbs 4:18-19. In what situations can we, as Christians, act like a light switch?

7. Who is your brother? Is a brother the same thing as a neighbor? (See Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 10:29-37)



8. List three to five actions against a brother that would reveal the hate John is talking about.
9. In 1 John 2:12-14, who do you think the “little children” represent, and what is John’s message for them?
10. Who do you think the “fathers” represent, and what is John’s message for them?
11. Who do you think the “young men” represent, and what is John’s message for them?
12. How can we overcome the evil one?

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

James 4:7 ESV

Session Five: *Do Not Love the World*

- 1. Get to know John: What does Mark 10:35-40 tell us about John?
- 2. Read 1 John 2:15-17 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.

- 3. In the previous verses, John exhorted us to love our brother, but now he says not to love the world. What does “the world” refer to?
- 4. Verse 16 lists three categories of things in this world. In the table below, list several examples of each.

Category	Examples
Desires of the Flesh	
Desires of the Eyes	
Pride of Life	

- 5. What does it mean to love the world?
- 6. Why can’t we love this world and love God at the same time? (See Luke 16:13-14)

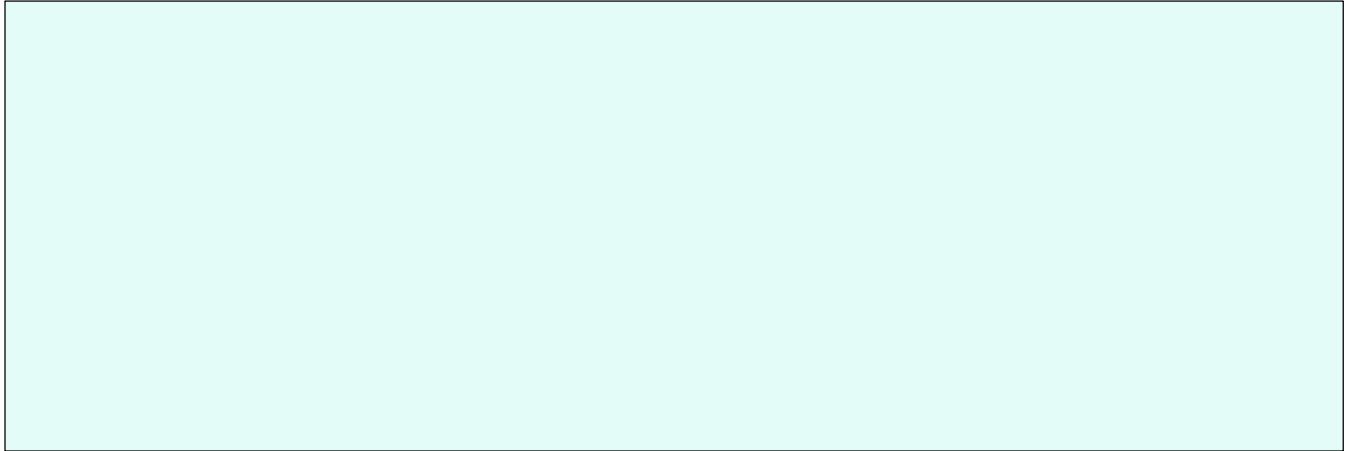
7. What should we do when we recognize we are tempted to “love the world or the things in the world”?
  
8. What is the reason given for why we should love God instead of this world?

<i>Cliche Clearing – Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin</i>	<p>The cliché, “love the sinner, hate the sin”, is often given as advice when we know someone who exhibits behaviors that are taught against in the Bible (i.e., sin), but are accepted in our culture (e.g., the world). People often do not look at these behaviors as sins or consider themselves sinners. But what does this cliché mean? How do we relate to these “sinners”?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. List below some behaviors or actions the Bible teaches against, but are generally accepted in our culture.</li>   <li>10. What is wrong with these things if they don’t hurt anybody else (or even the person doing them)? Why are they even called sin in the Bible?</li>   <li>11. Does loving the sinner mean we immediately whip out our Bible and show them the error of their ways? Does it mean we ignore the sin? Does it mean we celebrate their “way of life”?</li>   <li>12. Then, how do we actively “love the sinner” and at the same time actively “hate the sin”?</li>   <li>13. When is it our place to risk confrontation, offending, and/or rejection and voice our view of what the Bible teaches about their sin?</li> </ol>
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## Session Six: *Warning Concerning Antichrists*

1. Get to know John: What does Mark 14:32-33 tell us about John?

2. Read 1 John 2:18-27 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. What is the “last hour” that John refers to? (See Hebrews 1:1-2) When did it begin, and when does it end?

4. Who is “*that* antichrist,” and who are the “*many* antichrists”?

5. From verses 19 and 22, what are the characteristics of an antichrist?

6. What is the dictionary definition of anoint?

In the Bible, anointing was a physical act involving smearing, rubbing, or pouring sacred oil on someone's head (or on an object) as an outward symbol that God had chosen and set apart the person (or object) for a specific holy purpose. Anointing was also an ancient custom of hospitality shown to honored guests.

7. Read the following verses and jot down what Scripture says about anointing.

Scripture	What Scripture Says About How Anointing was Used and What it Means
Exodus 30:25-30	
1 Kings 19:16	
Mark 14:3	

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ reveals himself as our anointed King, Priest, and Prophet. He is God's Holy and chosen Son, the Messiah. *Messiah*, which means "anointed one," is derived from the Hebrew word "anointed." *Christ* (Gr. *Christos*) means "the anointed one."

8. Read Luke 4:16-21. What was Jesus proclaiming when he said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled"?

9. 1 John 2:20 and 27 apply the words "anointed/anointing" to Christians. What do these verses tell us? (Also see John 14:26)

10. What does John call people who deny Christ? How can we reconcile this strong word "liar" with modern-day culture, which tells us to be tolerant and understanding of people with other beliefs?

11. Who is the first liar, and what are some of the common lies that he propagates?

12. What safeguards are mentioned in 1 John 2:24 and 27 against false teaching?

## Session Seven: *Children of God*

1. Get to know John: What does John 13:23 tell us about John?
2. Read 1 John 2:28 through 3:10 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.

3. What reason does 1 John 2:28 give for why we should maintain a close relationship with Christ?
4. Is everyone a child of God? Why or why not? And, if not, how do we become a child of God? (See John 1:12.)
5. Fill out the table below to list a parent's expectations/rights and responsibilities to/from a child and vice versa in a healthy, loving relationship.

	Parent's	Child's
Expectations / Rights		
Responsibilities		

6. What does it mean in 1 John 3:1 that the world does not know us?
7. What does it mean to practice something?

8. What is the dictionary definition of sin?

People generally do not like to hear themselves referred to as sinners or told they sin. Our modern-day culture would like us to believe that sin does not exist; instead, people only make mistakes or poor choices. Furthermore, our culture supports that if what a person says or does seems good to them and doesn't harm others, no one should call it sin.

9. Read the following verses and jot down what Scripture says about sin (also known as transgression).

Scripture	What Scripture Says About Sin
Psalm 14:2-3	
Romans 3:23	
1 John 1:9	

10. List below the sins mentioned in Mark 7:20-22. Does God have a scale for sin? Are some sins worse than others to him?

11. Does God expect Christians (his children) never to sin? What does John mean then in 3:6 & 8?

12. What reasons does 1 John 3:5 and 8 give for Jesus's appearing on earth?

13. What does 1 John 3:9 mean when it says Christians cannot keep sinning because we have been born of God?

14. How do we "practice" righteousness?

## Session Eight: *Love One Another*

1. Get to know John: What does John 19:26-27 tell us about John?

2. Read 1 John 3:11-24 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. Read Genesis 4:1-10. What was Cain's sin that led him to kill his brother?

4. Describe a situation where you have felt "hate" from the world because you are a Christian.

5. How can John say that just hating a brother is murder? (see Matthew 5:21-22)

6. Does 1 John 3:15 indicate that murderers cannot be saved? What does it mean?

7. Someone might say they love you, but how do you know if they do?

8. 1 John 3:20-21 seem to contradict each other regarding our own heart condemning us. Explain what these two verses say (verse 19 sets up these two verses).

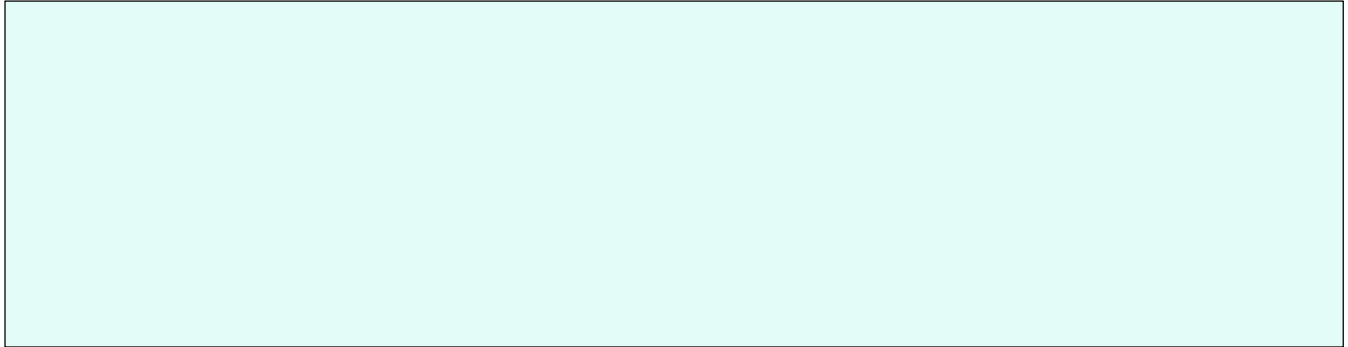


9. Verse 22 says that whatever we ask of God, we receive from him. How can this be true? I am pretty sure if I ask for a Lear Jet, I will not receive it.
10. In these verses, John lists several core marks that should distinguish us to others as Christians. List those below and reference the verses.

<b>Cliche Clearing – God Will Provide</b>	<p>The cliché “God will provide” can be well-meaning or function as a convenient dismissal of a person's needs (especially financial). No matter what we intend to convey when we say this to someone, it can easily come across as "I don't want to give you any money or help; it's God's problem, not mine."</p>		
	<p>11. List below what these verses say we should do (and/or not do) for our brothers (or sisters), and examples of how we can apply them.</p>		
	<b>Verse</b>	<b>What We Are To Do / Not Do</b>	<b>Examples of How We Can Apply</b>
	<b>16</b>		
	<b>17</b>		
	<b>18</b>		
	<b>23</b>		
<p>12. Sometimes, there is nothing we can physically or materially do to help the person in need. How can we respond to someone’s need in these cases?</p>			

## Session Nine: *Test the Spirits*

1. Get to know John: What does John 21:1-3 tell us about John?
2. Read 1 John 4:1-6 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. What are the situations today where we should “test the spirits”, and why should we do that? (See also 1 Timothy 4:1-2)
4. In what ways can we test the spirits? (See also Acts 17:11)
5. Does simply saying “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” imply that everything that person says is from God? Explain then what 1 John 4:2 means.
6. What is the “spirit of the antichrist”?
7. What (or who) have we already overcome, and how did this happen?
8. If we have already overcome, why do we still struggle with sin, evil desires, and brokenness?

9. Who is the “he” that is in us? (See 1 Corinthians 6:19)

10. Take a moment to meditate on that. What does that mean to you?

11. Someone may profess to be a Christian, yet does not want to read or study the Bible or learn from other Christians, and therefore has their own ideas of how to live (which may or may not agree with what the Bible teaches). What is the danger to this person? What is this person missing?

12. Read the following verses and paraphrase what they say in the table below.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5	
Ephesians 6:12	
1 Peter 5:6- 10	

13. By John saying in verse 6 that there is “the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error” and your reading the verses above, what is he trying to warn Christians about and give them instruction about?

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* Proverbs 119:105 ESV

Session Ten: *God is Love*

- 1. Get to know John: What does Acts 1:13-14 tell us about John?
- 2. Read 1 John 4:7-21 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.

- 3. In verse 7, John says, "whoever loves has been born of God and knows God". Is John saying that anyone who shows love to others is saved? Explain your answer.

<div>Churchy-Word Challenge - <i>Love</i></div>	<div>4. What is the dictionary definition of love?</div> <div>The dictionary definitions show that we use the word “love” to mean many different things in the English language. We can love our spouse and love coffee, but that is not the same kind of love. And loving our children, a friend, or someone we are romantically involved with, are also different meanings of love.</div> <div>The New Testament was originally written in Greek, which has several words for the different meanings of our English word, love.</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Eros</i>: sensual, romantic, passionate love</li><li>• <i>Philia</i>: affectionate, intimate, authentic friendship</li><li>• <i>Erotopia</i> or <i>ludus</i>: playful, flirtatious love</li><li>• <i>Storge</i>: familial love</li><li>• <i>Philautia</i>: love of self</li><li>• <i>Pragma</i>: practical, committed, companionate love</li><li>• <i>Agape</i>: unconditional sacrificial love</li></ul></div> <div><b>Agape</b> is the Bible's word for the type of love God displays.</div>
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5. 1 John 4, verses 8 and 16 state that God *is* love. Read 1 Corinthians 13, which describes what love is. Based on this, what are the characteristics of God?
6. How did God show his love for us? (verses 9, 10)
7. How is it possible that we can love God, and what is the evidence that we do love God?
8. What does it mean in verse 12 that God's love is perfected in us?
9. What is (and when is) the day of judgement, and what does it mean that we can have confidence?
10. What does it mean in verse 18 when John says there is no fear in love?
11. Proverbs 9:10 speaks positively of fear. Is this a different fear than is mentioned in verse 18? Explain.
12. Verse 20 says that if we don't love our brother, we can't love God. Verse 21 says that whoever loves God must also love his brother. So, what comes first, loving God or loving our brother? Can we love our brother but not love God?

## Session Eleven: *Overcoming the World and Testimony Concerning the Son of God*

1. Get to know John: What does Acts 4:13 tell us about John?
2. Read 1 John 5:1-12 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.

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3. According to verses one and two, if we say we love God, what two things show the evidence of that?
4. What does it mean that God's commandments are not burdensome? (see also Matthew 11:28-30)
5. If we feel burdened or overwhelmed by what we think God is asking of us, what different things could that indicate, and what are the remedies?

What the Issue Could Be	Remedy

6. Who overcomes the world, and what does that mean? (see also Romans 8:37-39)

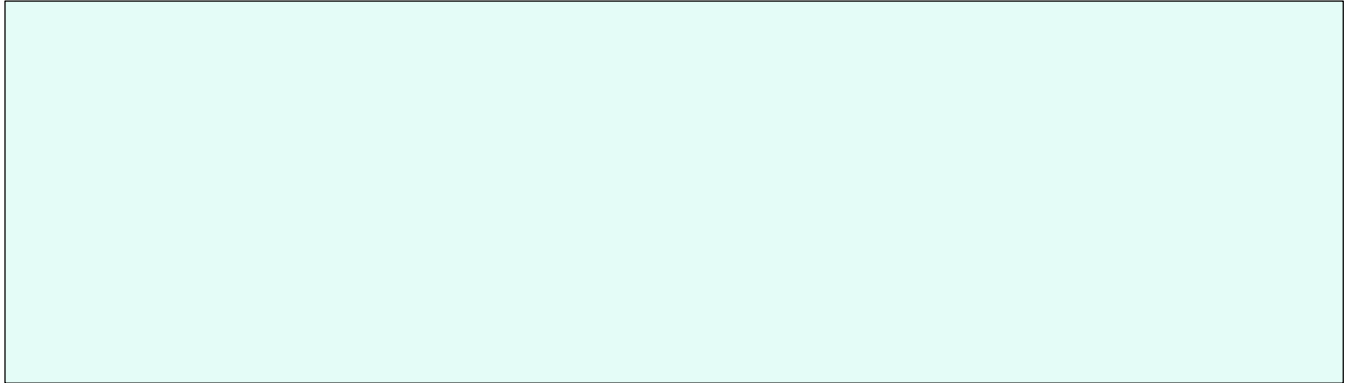
7. What does it mean that Jesus came by water and blood?
8. What/who are the “three that testify,” and why is this important?
9. What does it mean that if we believe in the Son of God, we have the testimony in ourselves?
10. How can someone be calling God a liar when they do not believe in the Son of God?
11. How would you explain what eternal life is, and how do you get it?
12. How does having eternal life affect your earthly life now?
13. According to 1 John 5:12, how many kinds of people are there, and what are they? Can there be any in-between? Why or why not? (see also Matthew 25:31-34)

*“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33 ESV

## Session Twelve: *That You May Know*

1. Get to know John: What does Galatians 2:9 and Revelation 1:9-11 tell us about John?

2. Read 1 John 5:13-21 and write below what stands out to you and any questions you have.



3. From what John has written in previous sections, how can you know for sure that you have eternal life?

4. How do we know if we are asking God something “according to his will”?

5. What is the difference between sin that leads to death and sin that does not lead to death?

6. What responsibility do we have when we see a brother or sister in Christ sinning? (also see Luke 17:3)

7. What does John mean in verse 18 when he says Christians do “not keep on sinning,” when we obviously do sin?

8. What does John mean in verse 18 when he says, “but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him”



9. What is the dictionary definition of idolatry?

The most prevalent form of idolatry in Bible times was the worship of images that were thought to embody the various pagan deities.

10. Read the following verses and jot down what Scripture says about idolatry.

Scripture	What Scripture Says About Idolatry
Deuteronomy 4:23-24	
1 Samuel 15:22-23	
Colossians 3:5	

11. According to these Scriptures, what is idolatry, and why is God so against it?

12. List below at least five “idols” prevalent in our culture.

13. Why do you think John closes his book with an admonition against idols?