

Endorsement

I love how Wendy helps us dig into Scripture so we can truly and personally grasp the deep love God has for us. This is an amazingly solid study that will get you excited to study the Bible and breathe fresh life into your heart.

—**Lysa TerKeurst**, *New York Times* bestselling author and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries



1 John

I AM LOVED



WENDY BLIGHT



HarperChristian
Resources

1 John

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❖ *Dedication* ❖

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK to Bobbie Wolgemuth, my dear friend and spiritual mom, who has now passed through the heavens to be with the One she adored. Bobbie lived loved and modeled in the most excellent way how to make expressions of that love the pattern of her life. We were beneficiaries of that love. She poured godly wisdom, countless prayers, and God's living and active Word into my mama's heart in ways that transformed my heart, my marriage, and my home. Bobbie's love has left a legacy that has had, and will continue to have, ripple effects on women, families, and generations to come.

❖ Acknowledgments ❖

THE MORE I WRITE, the more I appreciate the friends and family God has placed around me on this amazing journey called life.

Monty—From the day I married you, you’ve modeled the unconditional love and acceptance of the Father. You make every day fun, and I can’t wait to live out the rest of my days with you!

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Proverbs 31 On-Line Bible Study Team—I treasure each one of you. The impact of your friendship and support in my life and ministry is immeasurable. I love partnering with you to engage women with God’s living and active Word in a fresh way through Bible study and community.

Erik Wolgemuth—I’m grateful for your wisdom and direction as I continue on this journey of writing and teaching God’s Word.

HarperCollins Christian Publishing Team—It’s a joy and privilege to partner with you again to encourage and equip women to dig deeper into God’s living and active Word.

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Message from My Heart



I WROTE THIS MESSAGE FOR EVERY WOMAN who craves to truly understand, walk confidently in, and live out God's unconditional, extravagant, lavish love. It's a love I didn't understand, let alone live, until I exposed my heart to the words John penned in this letter. Because let's be real. It's hard to love like God does. It's hard to love a parent who abandoned us as a child. It's hard to love a girlfriend who betrayed us. It's hard to love a God who doesn't heal debilitating, chronic pain.

But God destined us for this kind of love. To know it personally. To walk in it confidently. And most especially, to live it for all to see. Spending months and months with John and his words allowed God to lovingly transform my heart in ways I could not have imagined. As I write these words, I am praying the same for you. In fact, from the very first day I sat down to write this study, I prayed for every woman who would one day hold this book in her hand. And because *you* now hold this book in *your* hand, you have been prayed for, my friend! So, although we haven't met personally, God has already connected our hearts in the heavenly places. By His Spirit, He has knit our hearts together for this moment in time as we open His Word together.

You'll find John's words highly relevant because he wrote to an audience living in a culture not unlike our own. Through his unique perspective as Jesus's last living disciple, John sets forth what it looks like to love and live authentically for Christ.

At times, John's words will be tender and encouraging. But at other times, they will be quite challenging as he warns against false teachers, instructs us how to identify and confront them, and exhorts us to live lives of obedience.



1 John

Because we'll invest much of our heart and time in the words of this disciple, we should get to know him better. I always pictured John as gentle and tenderhearted. Reserved and introspective. As I came to know him through his writings, I discovered another side of this man of God. One far different from the John I just described.

I found him to be bold, direct, even demanding at times. A man who had a strong presence among the disciples. A leader. Absolute in his thinking.

But one thing is certain. Whether reading the words penned by the younger, brasher John or the older, wiser John, his words are trustworthy. They are the words of a man who walked with Jesus. Spoke with Jesus. Prayed with Jesus. Did life with Jesus. A man who gazed into Jesus's eyes. Heard His voice. Held His hands. Felt His heartbeat.

John's words also stand the test of time. He unabashedly proclaims truth . . . always. But he proclaims it in love and with love . . . always. Our world needs this balance today because love spoken without truth is hollow and empty. It carries no weight. Truth spoken without love is legalism and rules. It leads to condemnation.

Over the years, John's time with Jesus transformed his heart. Jesus softened it and reined it in. He shifted John's teaching methods to master the task of speaking the hard truths with great love.

More than any other New Testament writer, John wrote about love. Here is a sampling of His words on love:

- ♥ God is a God of love.
- ♥ God is love.
- ♥ God loved the world.
- ♥ God loved His Son.
- ♥ Jesus loved the disciples.
- ♥ Jesus loves us.

♥ We are called to love one another.

That's a lot of love, ya'll!

Yet, John made clear God's love is a love that is never compromised. It never tolerates deception, lies, or any type of sin. So, at times, you might find John's words harsh. You might even strongly disagree with him. When you find yourself in that place, remember John's heart. John teaches truth in no uncertain terms. But those truths are bathed in and delivered from a heart of love.

Friend, I'm sure you would agree, now more than ever our world desperately needs to hear, know, and understand God's truth spoken in love. Let it begin here. With us. Today.







WEEK
ZERO

INTRODUCTION



*J*f you are doing this study with a group, use these questions as a guide for your group discussion before you dig into the first week of study!



1. I love new beginnings. The start of a new Bible study is a great new beginning. Opening God's Word with fresh eyes and asking Him to speak personally to me brings greater anticipation to my study time. What are you asking God to do in your life as you begin your journey through the pages of 1 John?



2. Each week of the study begins with a prayer written from my heart to yours. I encourage you to write your own prayer as you begin this study. Using your answer to Question 1, take a few minutes to write a prayer. Invite God to meet you each time you open His Word, and invite His Holy Spirit to give you a spirit of wisdom and understanding and to teach you how to practically apply what you are learning to your everyday life.



1 John



3. As we begin this book written by John, the disciple Jesus loved, share facts you know and any thoughts you have about him.

4. God's Word fills nearly every page of this study. Not a day will pass that you won't meet God in His living and active Word. That Word brings with it unsearchable riches and treasures. Look up the following truths, promises, and commands, asking God to bring them alive in your heart as you meet Him each day.

- a. Deuteronomy 6:6-9
- b. Deuteronomy 8:3
- c. Psalm 119:130
- d. Jeremiah 15:16
- e. Isaiah 55:11
- f. Hebrews 4:12
- g. James 1:22





WEEK
ONE

WALK IN THE LIGHT



PRAYER: *Oh God, I'm excited for a new journey through Your Word. Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my heart to understand eternal mysteries that only You can reveal on this exciting adventure through the book of Your "beloved," John. Carve out time for me each day to spend with You. Give me the discipline to do my work, the perseverance to continue when I want to give up, and the mind to practically apply all that I learn. Reveal marvelous new truths and promises from Your Word. Draw me close. Speak into my life and transform my heart and mind in fresh new ways. I ask all this in Jesus's name, Amen.*

DAY ONE



Meet John

MEMORY VERSE: *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)*

*D*o you remember the first time your parents left you alone? I do. I don't have many vivid childhood memories, but this night I remember. Our neighbors had invited my parents to a dinner party. They gave me fair warning and encouraged me to "be a big girl" and stay home by myself. The very thought terrified me. I wanted to jump up and down, stomp my feet and scream, "No!" But I didn't.

The dreaded night finally arrived. Orange and purple hues adorned the sky as the sun began to slip behind the horizon. Heart pounding, I watched my parents walk out the door, down the sidewalk, and into the fading light.

This won't be so bad.

I shut and locked the door. I was alone. All alone.

My stomach twisted and turned as darkness consumed the sky. I remembered my Dad's last words, delivered through kind eyes, "Don't forget. We're just a phone call away."



1 John

But I wouldn't call. I couldn't call. I needed to do this.

In the quietness, I walked over to the television and turned it on. Yes, in those days you had to actually walk over to the television to turn it on! I'm giving away my age here. I then hopped onto the couch, grabbed a pillow, and curled up with my favorite blanket. My selection for the night, *The Carol Burnett Show*. What better way to take my mind off my fears?

But my stomach continued to churn.

Familiar furniture, plants, and bushes took on strange shapes and sizes. I imagined bad guys lurking inside and out. Crouching . . . watching . . . waiting for me to go to bed.

Why did they have to leave me tonight? I'm not old enough. I don't want to be alone.

Bedtime arrived and that meant walking through the scary shadows.

Why didn't I close the blinds? Why didn't I turn those lights on before it got dark?

Tears spilled down my cheeks. *I hate this.* Clutching my blanket, I tiptoed through the dining room. *If I could just reach the light switch.* It seemed miles away. *What if someone's watching?* Again, I envisioned the scary man waiting . . . watching me outside the window.

The imagined terrified me.

I wanted my parents.

Finally, I reached the light switch, flipped it up, and light flooded every dark space. Everything looked familiar again. I felt safe.

The real replaced my imagined. The imagined fears that held the little girl in my story captive dissipated the moment light flooded the room.

It's a simple fact, my friend. Light dispels darkness. With light, there are no more illusions . . . no more imagined fears. Light brings clarity, safety, and security.

My little-girl fears perfectly illustrate a scriptural nugget tucked in the first chapter of John's letter.

But, before going any further, let's get to know the author of 1 John, the man with whom we will become intimately acquainted over the next

five weeks. His name is John. He often called himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23).

We first meet John in Matthew 4:21. Not long after Jesus called His first two disciples, Peter and Andrew, He encountered two brothers named James and John (also called the sons of Zebedee). Like Peter and Andrew, they were fishermen. Simple, hardworking men going about their business. Jesus called them by name while they were with their father getting ready to cast out their nets for the day. Upon hearing Jesus’s call, they did not ask questions or give excuses. Scripture says, “[I]mmediately they left the boat and their father and followed him” (Matthew 4:22).

Wow! Immediate obedience. Wish I could say I always react that way when Jesus calls out to me. All too often, I don’t.

James and John left family and all that was familiar to follow this man they barely knew. For the next three years, John and eleven other disciples walked alongside Jesus, watching Him turn water into wine, heal the sick, feed thousands with nothing but a few loaves and fish, and—most amazingly—bring the dead back to life.



Read and record what the following passages reveal about John.

♥ Luke 9:51–56

♥ Mark 9:33–37

♥ Matthew 20:20–28 (What do these verses communicate about John’s relationship with his mother?)





1 John

♥ What was Jesus's response to her request?

I can so relate to John because I am quick to take offense. Quick to lose my temper. What about you? And don't we all at one time or another long to hold that place of honor in someone's heart or at their table?

Those were John's younger days. An amazing transformation occurred between the time Jesus found him fishing and the time he wrote this letter. In 1 John, we see a different man. A gentler man. A kinder man. A man motivated by deep love for God and for God's people.

John matured over the years as he walked alongside Jesus, observed His ways, experienced His love, listened to His teachings, and obeyed the call to full-time ministry.

My favorite image of John comes near the end of Jesus's life as He gathered His disciples around a table to share a message and meal. Scripture describes John as leaning into Jesus (John 13:23–25), resting his head upon Jesus's chest, so near he could sense the rhythm of our Lord's heartbeat. John loved Jesus with all his heart and knew Jesus loved him just the same.

In that moment, John had no idea it would be his last meal with Jesus. No idea he would witness his beloved teacher's arrest, unjust trials, beatings, and crucifixion. No idea he would look upon his teacher's beaten and bloody body, hanging limp and lifeless from a criminal's cross.

But, the tide turned three days later. John walked into an empty tomb to discover Jesus had defeated death and risen from the grave (John 20: 1–10)! And a few weeks after that beautiful resurrection moment, John's last glimpse of Jesus would be his beloved Savior, arms lifted toward the heavens, toes dangling from beneath his white robe, speaking words of blessing over His friends, ascending into the clouds (Luke 24:50).

“Then [Jesus] leads them out to Bethany. He lifts His hands and blesses them, and at that moment, with His hands raised in blessing, He leaves them and is carried up into heaven. They worship Him, then they return to Jerusalem, **filled with intense joy**, and they return again and again to the temple to celebrate God” (Luke 24:50–53 The Voice, emphasis added).

Don’t miss Luke’s words. John and the disciples returned to Jerusalem “filled with intense joy.” I believe it’s this unspeakable joy that fueled John’s ministry for the remainder of his days. Despite decades of persecution and struggle, hard work and loneliness, John persevered. His love for Jesus and for the call God placed on his life never waned. His heart never wavered.

Over time, John’s hair grayed. His skin bore the deep creases of his decades of serving and suffering for the One who had called him by name. John spent years recording the rich and treasured memories tucked deep in his heart and mind. Church tradition holds that he authored the gospel of John, the three epistles of John, and Revelation.¹

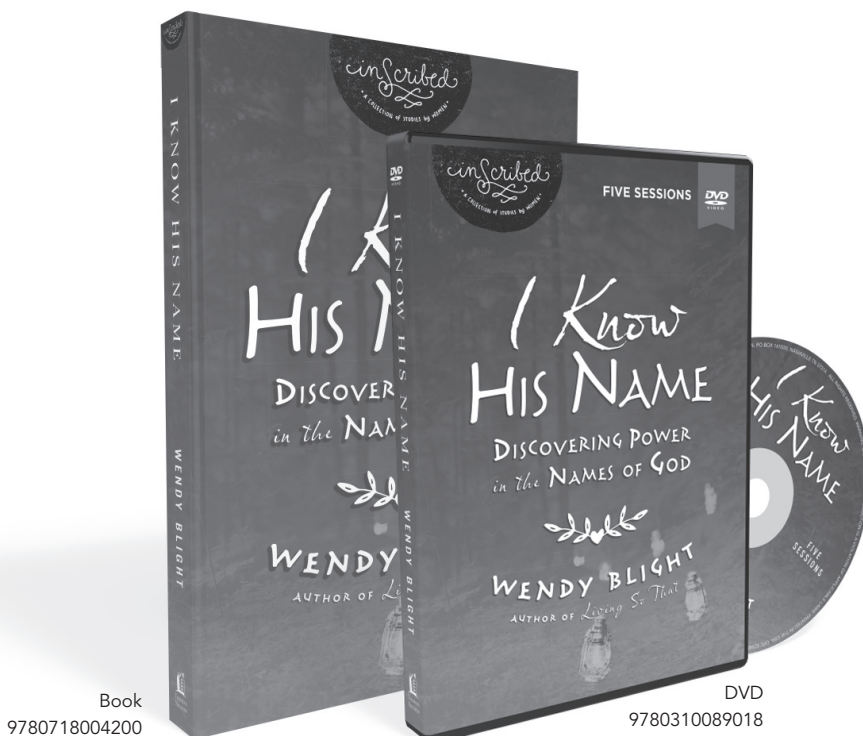
As we begin our journey with John, we sense his deep and abiding joy in his opening words in 1 John chapter one.



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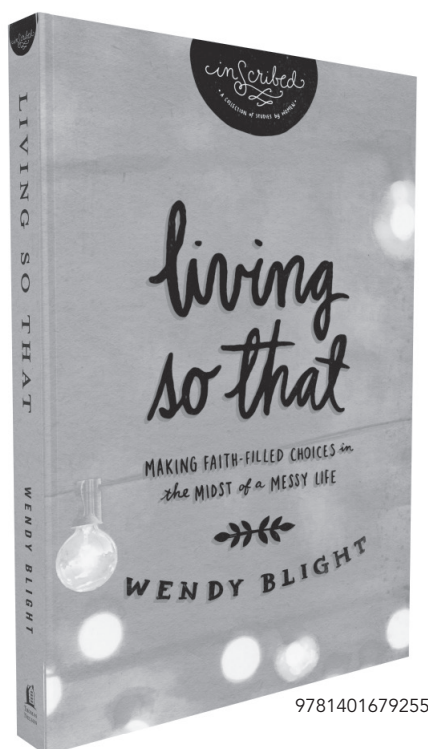
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