



Northwestern Ohio Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2026

**THE WAY
OF LOVE**

1 JOHN 4:19



**1 John Scripture
Resource**

“ —

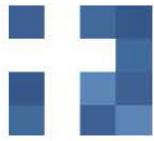
| **We Love because**

he first loved us. |

— ”

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Northwestern Ohio Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Dear Friends in Christ,

The 2026 theme for the Northwestern Ohio Synod is the Way of Love, which is the Way of Jesus. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus shares the Greatest Commandment. ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*** Many of us remember learning this beautiful teaching of Jesus in Sunday School or catechism class. Many of us have committed these words to memory. But learning the words of love is not the same as living the Way of Love.

The Way of Love that Jesus calls us to is unconditional. This is a love that is not based on our worth or our ability to reciprocate. The Way of Love is an active love that shows up in deeds and not simply words. *“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action”* (1 John 3:18). The Way of Love is enduring, as St. Paul reminds us, *“Love never ends”* (1 Corinthians 13:8a). Finally, the Way of Love is transformative, and calls us to reflect God's love with and for the neighbor, the community, and the world. Here is a love that has the power to change the world.

The Way of Love always begins with God. Here is God's self-giving love, fully revealed in Jesus, poured into us by the Holy Spirit, and lived out in our lives for the sake of the other. As we read in the 2026 Way of Love Memory Verse, *“We love because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). 1 John provides a beautiful glimpse into the Way of Jesus, who is the Way of Love.

Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
The Presentation of the Lord
(February 2026)

We love because he first loved us
1 John 4:19



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Part One: An Introduction to 1 John

What is 1 John?

1 John is not a letter, but a homily or an early Christian essay that was written and circulated to address the fallout after a painful split occurred in the local church in the ancient city of Ephesus. 1 John has none of the opening and closing rhetorical formulas of an ancient letter. Many New Testament scholars argue that 1 John is a circular message, sent by the author to be read aloud in several small house churches that are directly connected to the author's congregation.

Who wrote 1 John?

This message has traditionally been attributed to the Apostle John (a son of Zebedee). Or to an anonymous writer from the School of John, who adheres to the language and the traditions of the Gospel of John. Simply compare the Prologue of 1 John 1:1-4 with the Prologue of the Gospel of John 1:1-18. The similarity is quite apparent. Though most New Testament scholars argue that the author of 1 John is John the Elder, who also writes 2 John and 3 John. John the Elder is an elder / pastor who oversees several early house churches in and around Ephesus, the geographic center of Johannine Christianity, at the end of the first century A.D.

When was 1 John written?

Most New Testament scholars agree that 1 John was written in the last two decades of the first century (between 85-95 A.D), and certainly after the Gospel of John. Many of the dualistic themes and phrases of John's Gospel (light and darkness, life and death, truth and lies, love and hate) are recorded in 1 John.

What is the occasion and purpose of 1 John?

The author of 1 John writes with a 3-fold purpose. First, to oppose false teaching regarding the true nature of Jesus. Second, to encourage the followers of Jesus to faithful living through love and obedience. Third, to confirm the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

First, the author of 1 John opposes false teaching and offers guidance to a community of faith that has recently experienced a painful split. Certain people “who went out from us” (1 John 2:19) are now trying to deceive the congregation (1 John 2:26), by breaking with traditional Christian teaching (1 John 2:24) regarding the true nature of Jesus. The author of 1 John opposes those who deny both the Incarnation (1 John 4:2) and the Messiahship of Jesus (1 John 2:22). The author encourages and commends those who adhere to traditional Christian teaching and believe that Jesus is the Messiah (1 John 5:1), and the Son of God (1 John 5:5).

Second, the author of 1 John, encourages the followers of Jesus to live out the Christian practices of love and obedience. People of faith do not respond to hostility, with more hostility. People of faith are called to reflect the self-giving love of God (1 John 3:11). As our 2026 Way of Love Memory Verse reminds us, “We love, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

As followers of Jesus, we are also called to obey God’s commandments and do what pleases him (1 John 3:22). “And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us (1 John 3:23). 1 John reminds the reader that our love for Jesus is put into practice when we live out our Christian faith through love and obedience. It is this call to love and obey that has kept people reading 1 John down through the ages.

Finally, the writer of 1 John concludes the message with one explicit purpose statement, “*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life*” (1 John 5:13). The recipients of this message need the reassurance of the Gospel after their confidence is shaken by a church split and the false teaching of the secessionists. We also need the reassurance of the Crucified and Risen Jesus, and the promise of the Gospel.

How is 1 John structured?

(see the [Bible Project poster](#) on page 8)

- 1) Introduction: The Witness of the Incarnation of Jesus (1:1-4)
- 2) This is the message... that God is Light (1:5–3:10)
 - a) Followers of Jesus reflect the Light of God
- 3) This is the message... that God is Love (Ch. 3:11–5:17)
 - a) Followers of Jesus reflect the Love of God
- 4) Conclusion: The Gift of Hope and Assurance (5:18-21)

A Structure Summary Statement

1 John teaches us that our Christian faith is not simply something we believe, but a sacred gift that we put into practice as we live in the light and love of Jesus.

Why does 1 John matter today?

The message of 1 John remains deeply relevant as it addresses questions of truth, love, and Christian identity. Its message continues to offer Godly guidance in a complex and challenging world. Written to a local faith community facing internal conflict and theological confusion, 1 John offers a pastoral and theological framework of perseverance and hope for followers of the crucified and risen Jesus. 1 John offers a vision of Christian life rooted in truth, shaped by love, and sustained by the gift of God's grace.

The Bible Project Resource

Scan the QR code below to access the resource



<https://bibleproject.com/guides/books-of-1-3-john/>

Part Two: 12 Key Monthly Memory Verses

January 2026

1 John 4:19

“We love because He first loved us”. (Memory Verse of the Year)

February 2026

1 John 1:1

“We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life”.

March 2026

1 John 1:5

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all”.

April 2026

1 John 1:8–9

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”.

May 2026

1 John 2:17

“And the world and its desires are passing away, but those who do the will of God abide forever”.

June 2026

1 John 3:11

“For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”.

July 2026

1 John 3:18

“Little children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth”.

August 2026

1 John 3:23–24

“And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us”.

September 2026

1 John 4:7

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”.

October 2026

1 John 4:10–11

“In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another”.

November 2026

1 John 5:2–3

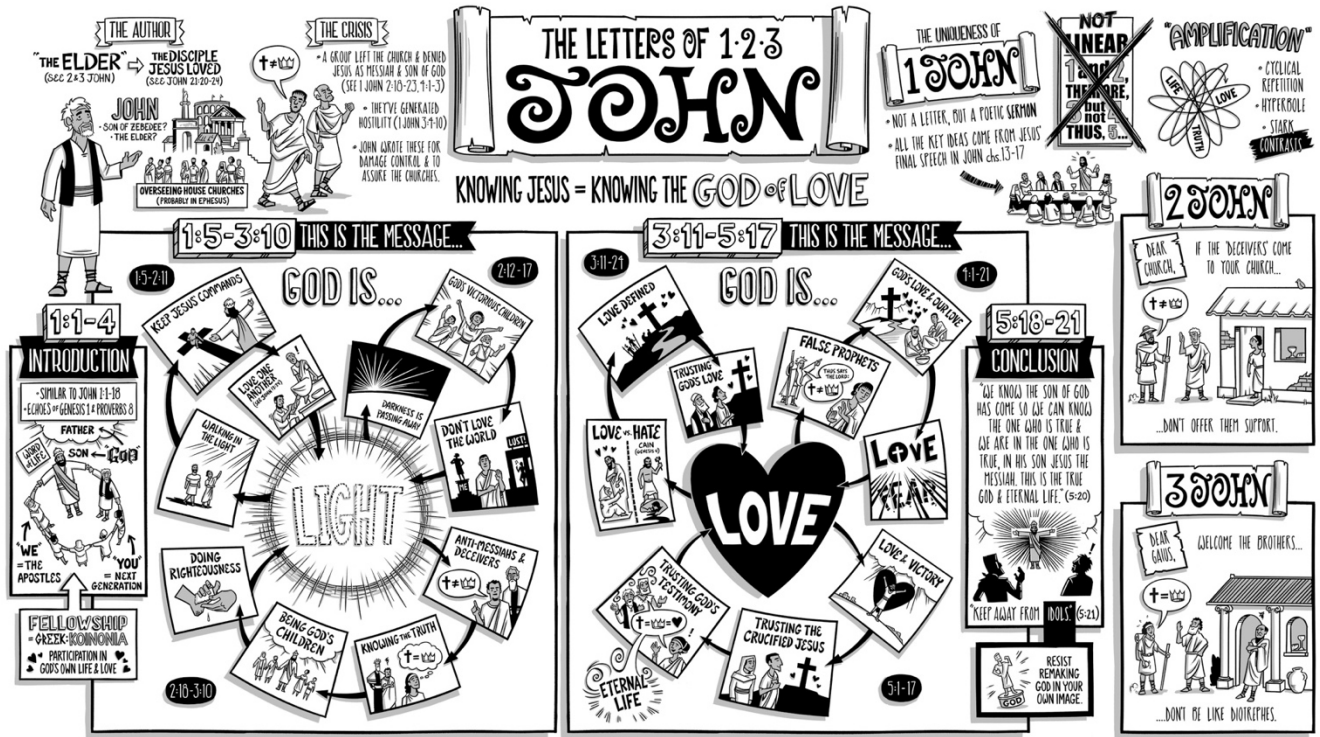
“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome”.

December 2026

1 John 5:13

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life”.

Part Three: The Bible Project 1, 2, 3 John Poster

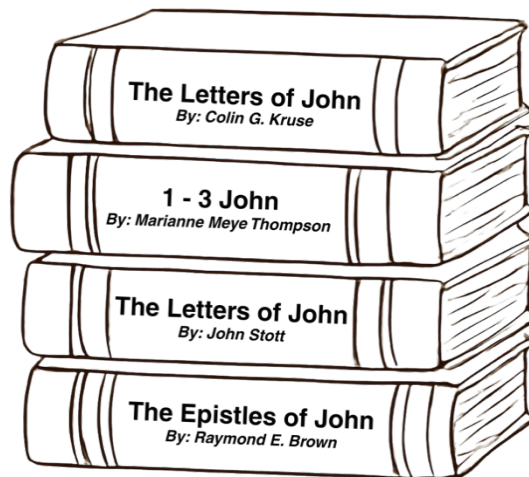


Access and download the resource by scanning the QR code below:

<https://d1bsmz3sdihplr.cloudfront.net/media/Posters%20Download/67-123-John.jpg>



Part Four: The 1 John Core Shelf (4 Volumes)



(1) Colin G. Kruse – The Letters of John (Pillar NT Commentary / 2000)

Role: Primary exegetical anchor

Tradition: Evangelical Anglican (broad, ecumenical)

Why it's essential

- Best balance of **Greek exegesis, theology, and readability**
- Strong on **Christology, love, truth, sin, assurance**

Use it for

- Sermon prep / Teaching outlines
- Clarifying difficult passages (sin, "antichrists," testing the spirits)

**If you only owned one commentary on 1 John, this would be it.*

Buy it here

<https://www.eerdmans.com/9780802876676/the-letters-of-john/>

(2) Marianne Meye Thompson – 1–3 John (IVP New Testament Commentary / 1992)

Role: Theological and ecclesial interpreter

Tradition: Mainline / ecumenical

Why it's essential

- Excellent on **community, love, identity, and assurance**
- Very usable for **adult formation and leadership development**

Use it for

- Bible studies
- Lay leader and Synod Authorized Minister formation
- Theological framing for sermons

**This is the most ELCA-friendly volume on the shelf.*

Buy it here

<https://www.ivpress.com/1-3-john-ivpntc>

(3) Raymond E. Brown – The Epistles of John (Anchor Yale Bible / 1982)

Role: *Historical-critical foundation*

Tradition: Roman Catholic (critical scholarship)

Why it's essential

- Definitive treatment of the **Johannine community and schism**
- Explains why 1 John sounds pastoral *and* polemical
- Deepens understanding of **truth, secessionists, and authority**

Use it for

- Background work
- Difficult or contested texts
- Teaching clergy or advanced learners

Buy it here

<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300140279/the-epistles-of-john/>

(4) **John Stott – The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary (Volume 19: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries / 2009)**

Role: *Pastoral and devotional voice*

Tradition: Evangelical Anglican

Why it's essential

- Clear, warm, and deeply faithful
- Helps translate theology into **lived Christian discipleship**
- Still unsurpassed for **teaching and preaching tone**

Use it for

- Sermon illustrations
- Confirmation or adult classes
- Personal devotion while studying the text

**This keeps the shelf grounded in proclamation and the care of souls.*

Buy it here

<https://www.ivpress.com/the-letters-of-john-tntc>