

Study Guide: 1 John: Lesson 61

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This study guide examines the biblical teachings found in 1 John regarding the essential characteristics of true Christians. The primary focus is the commandment to love one another and the stark contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil, using the historical account of Cain and Abel as a central example.

Understanding the Lesson

The document outlines that love is an indispensable feature of those who belong to God. While love is a command from God, it is also described as a privilege because He provides believers with the special capacity to carry it out. Through the Spirit of God, a person's soul is purified by obeying the truth, which produces a genuine love for other believers.

John, the author of the epistle, presents a "black and white" contrast to help believers identify the marks of a true Christian:

- **Children of God:** Characterized by love, respect, and sacrificial actions toward others.
- **Children of the Devil:** Characterized by hate, resentment, and selfishness.

The ultimate demonstration of the absence of love is murder, which John illustrates through the story of Cain. The lesson emphasizes that Cain was not an atheist but a religious man who worshiped God in a self-styled, wrong way. His hatred for his brother Abel stemmed from the fact that Abel's works were righteous, which exposed Cain's own evil deeds.

Review Quiz: Short Answer

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences based on the information provided in the lesson.

1. What is the main memory verse for this lesson, and what is its primary command?
2. According to the discussion on 1 Peter 1:22, how is a Christian's soul purified?
3. How does the lesson define the Greek concept of loving "fervently"?
4. What is the primary purpose of the Epistle of 1 John according to this study?
5. In the contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil, how do their attitudes toward others differ?
6. Why is it significant that the lesson describes Cain as a "religious man" rather than an atheist?
7. According to the text, why did God respect Abel's offering but not Cain's?

8. What evidence does the lesson provide to suggest that Cain's murder of Abel was premeditated?
9. Why do unrighteous people often feel hatred toward those who are righteous?
10. What is the primary function of government and capital punishment as described in the lesson?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The main memory verse is 1 Chronicles 16:24. It commands believers to declare the glory of the Lord among the nations and His wonders among all peoples.
2. A Christian's soul is purified through obeying the truth, which is the Gospel. This purification is made possible through the Spirit and results in a sincere love for other believers.
3. To love fervently means to stretch one's capacity to love to the maximum. It is compared to a muscle being pulled and stretched to its full extent to reach as far as possible.
4. The entire epistle is written to identify the "marks" or characteristics of true Christians. One of the most essential marks identified is the presence of genuine love for others.
5. The children of God show love, respect, and sacrifice for one another. Conversely, the children of the devil are characterized by hate, resentment, and selfishness.
6. Cain knew the true God as the Creator and Judge because of the testimony of his parents. Describing him as religious shows that outward rituals and "self-styled" religion are not proof of being born of God.
7. God had revealed that He required an animal sacrifice, which Abel obediently provided. Cain rejected this and instead brought the fruit of the ground, which represented his own human accomplishments rather than obedience to God's command.
8. The lesson notes that Cain "talked" with Abel and induced or invited him to go out into the field specifically to kill him. This suggests the act was not a spur-of-the-moment accident but a planned event.
9. Unrighteous people hate the righteous because the lives of the godly expose the beliefs and behaviors of the ungodly. This creates a jealousy of God's acceptance and an anger at being indicted for their own wickedness.
10. Government is a Divine institution intended to protect people from the "children of the devil," who are liars and murderers. It uses the threat of severity and consequence, such as capital punishment, to restrain evil and prevent anarchy.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Use the themes from the lesson to provide detailed responses to the following prompts.

1. Describe the relationship between "obeying the truth" and the "capacity to love." How does the Holy Spirit enable a believer to fulfill the command found in 1 John 3:11?
2. Analyze the character of Cain as a "religionist." How does his "self-styled religion" compare to the "clear waters of truth" mentioned in the lesson regarding false teachers?
3. Discuss the lesson's interpretation of the murder of Abel as an "act of defiance against God." How does the specific method of the murder connect to the sacrificial system?
4. Explain the concept of *ponēros* (active evil). How does this definition help explain why the "children of the devil" seek to influence or pull others down with them?
5. The lesson states that "the human race learned how to murder when it was taught how to worship." Evaluate this statement based on the contrast between Cain's heart and Abel's righteousness.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Anarchy:** A state of society where everyone is set loose without consequences for their actions, often resulting from the failure of government.
- **Atheist:** A person who does not believe in the existence of a god; the lesson clarifies that Cain was not one of these.
- **Capacity:** The ability or power to do something; specifically, the God-given ability to love others fervently.
- **Capital Punishment:** The legally authorized killing of someone as punishment for a crime; described as a tool for government to restrain evil.
- **Countenance:** A person's facial expression; Cain's countenance fell when he became angry with God and Abel.
- **Epistle:** A book of the New Testament in the form of a letter, such as 1 John.
- **Indispensable:** Absolutely necessary; something that cannot be done without.
- **Premeditated:** An action that is thought out or planned beforehand.
- **Righteous:** Acting in accord with Divine or moral law; free from guilt or sin.

- **Sacrificial:** Involving the act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else; in the Bible, this often involved animal offerings to God.
- **Sovereign:** Possessing supreme or ultimate power; used to describe God's control over the world and His plans.

Greek Terminology and Phonetic Guide

The following terms were used in the lesson to provide a deeper understanding of the original biblical text:

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Ektenōs ¹	ek-ten-OCE	To stretch a muscle to its full capacity; used to describe loving others fervently.
Ponēros ²	po-nay-ROSS	Actively, aggressively, or determinately evil; wanting to pull others into corruption.
Sphazō ³	sfad-ZO	To butcher or slaughter, specifically by slitting the throat; used to describe how Cain killed Abel.

¹ *Ektenōs* appears in the context of 1 Peter 1:22 regarding the "fervent" nature of Christian love. ² *Ponēros* is used to describe the "wicked one" (Satan) and those who actively oppose good. ³ *Sphazō* is the specific, strong word John uses in 1 John 3:12 to describe the violent nature of Cain's act.