

1 John 5:8 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 5

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

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1 John 5:8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement

Greek - to pneuma kai to hudor kai to haima kai oi treis eis to en eisin (3SPA1):

BGT τ πνεμα κα τ δωρ κα τ αμα, κα ο τρε ς ε ς τ ν ε σιν.

NET the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement.

CSB the Spirit, the water, and the blood-- and these three are in agreement.

ESV the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

NIV the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

NLT the Spirit, the water, and the blood-- and all three agree.

NRS the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree.

NJB the Spirit, water and blood; and the three of them coincide.

NAB the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and the three are of one accord.

YLT and three are who are testifying in the earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are into the one.

MIT The spirit, the water, and the blood. These three coalesce into one certification.

GWN the Spirit, the water, and the blood. These three witnesses agree.

BBE There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and all three are in agreement.

RSV There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree.

NKJ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

ASV For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.

- **there:** 1Jn 5:7
- **the spirit:** 1Jn 5:6 Mt 26:26-28 28:19 Joh 15:26 Ro 8:16 Heb 6:4
- **the water:** Ac 2:2-4 2Co 1:22
- **the blood:** Heb 13:12 1Pe 3:21
- **and these:** Mk 14:56 Ac 15:15
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE THREE WITNESSES OF JESUS CHRIST

Note: If you use the older version of the NAS (1977), you will find that the new version (1995) shifts the first clause of verse 8 (*For there are three that bear witness*) to verse 7. Here is the 1977 Version of 1Jn 5:8 "**For there are three that bear witness** (this clause in bold green is shifted to verse 7 in the 1995 NAS), the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."

For discussion of meaning of **the water and the blood** see (See discussion on 1 John 5:6)

The Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement ([heis](#)) - His testimony regarding Jesus Christ is discussed in the comments on 1Jn 5:6 (See discussion of how the Spirit testifies). Whereas water and blood were mentioned before the Spirit in 1Jn 5:6, John now mentions the Spirit first. **Henry Alford** explains that "**The Spirit** is, of the three, the only living and active witness, properly speaking: besides, **the water and the blood** are no witnesses without Him, whereas He is independent of them, testifying both in them and out of them."

Glenn Barker adds another reason the Spirit is mentioned first noting that "The Spirit opens eyes and ears to perceive what God is declaring through his proclaimed word.....**the Spirit** provides what humanity is unable to acquire for itself. This witness of the Spirit accompanies every presentation of the word whether that presentation comes as a personal message or as the apostolic or inscribed word." (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition](#))

The water and the blood - Although not every writer agrees, it seems most reasonable to see these have the same meaning as in John's previous mention in 1Jn 5:6 where he stated that Jesus came "**by water and blood.**" As discussed earlier the **water** refers to Jesus' baptism marking the inception of His earthly ministry and the **blood** refers to the crucifixion marking the fulfillment of the redemptive purpose of His earthly ministry. For more discussion of the other interpretative views of **water and blood** see Steven Cole's note on 1Jn 5:6.

THREE WITNESSES: ONE MESSAGE

The three are in agreement ([heis](#)) - Literally the Greek reads "the three are into the one." The verb (**are**) is in the **present tense** signifying the three witnesses are continually of one accord, in perfect agreement that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

As discussed earlier, the validity of personal testimony in the OT was linked to a specific number of credible witnesses, specifically "two or three witnesses" were necessary to establish guilt or innocence on criminal charges (Dt 19:15) and only on this basis could a person be sentenced to death (Dt 17:6). Jesus applied the principle of "**two or three witnesses**" to his instructions for resolving disputes in his church (Mt 18:15-16). Paul used the standard to determine whether an accusation could be sustained against an elder (1Ti 5:19). In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul sees his thrice repeated testimony alone, whether in person or by letter,

as satisfying the requirement of two or three witnesses" (2Cor 13:1-3). The writer of the book of Hebrews alludes to this pattern writing that "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on [the testimony of] **two or three witnesses**. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:28-29+) In this passage the writer points out the "greater testimony" of two witnesses, **the Son of God** and **the Spirit of grace**.

Vincent says that **the three are in agreement** ([heis](#)) signifies that "they converge upon the one truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh." **Henry Alford** adds that the three witnesses "Concur in the one, contribute to one and the same result, namely, the truth that Jesus is the Christ, and that we have life in Him."

Kistemaker - John writes that "the three are in agreement." He means that all three witnesses say the same thing; before a court of law the factual evidence of Jesus' baptism (water) and death (blood) is in complete agreement with the testimony of the Holy Spirit. A person cannot accept either one or two of the witnesses and omit the third. All three stand together. Many scholars suggest that the terms water and blood in verse 8 refer to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, the difficulty with this view is that the Spirit, whom John mentions first in rank, cannot become a third sacrament. Because John gives no indication that the phrase water and blood has a meaning different from that in verse 6, we do well to accept the same interpretation for 1Jn 5:6 and 1Jn 5:8. (Baker's NT Commentary)

Stephen Smalley comments that John is "implying that the Spirit, water and blood converge on the same point, and work together toward the same result: that of establishing the truth that Jesus is Messiah and Son of God." (Borrow [1,2,3 John page 282](#))

As **Hiebert** says "The agreement of these three witnesses is in striking contrast to the response of the false witnesses at the trial of Jesus who could not agree in establishing a valid charge against Christ (Mt. 26:59-61; Mk 14:55-59). But these three witnesses unite in bearing a consistent witness "to the reality of God's work in Christ by the Spirit, both in the believer and in the world; they declare jointly that through Jesus good is ultimately shown to be stronger than evil (cf. 1Jn 5:5).

John Stott - The false witnesses at the trial of Jesus, seeking to discredit him, did not agree (Mark 14:56, 59); the true witnesses, however, the Spirit, the water and the blood, seeking to accredit him, are in perfect agreement. (Borrow [The Letters of John page 182](#))

Steven Cole - John's point is that God's threefold witness to His Son—the **Spirit, the water, and the blood**—is trustworthy. In a court of law, truth is established when numerous witnesses say the same thing and when those witnesses are shown to have credible character. John shows us that the three witnesses all agree, and they are not just the testimony of men, but of God Himself. ([1 John 5:5-13 Is Christianity Merely Psychological?](#))

Daniel Akin - On August 9, 1874 Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled "[The Three Witnesses](#)" on 1 John 5:8. He began that message with these words, "Christianity puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men... Now, to justify such his claims, the gospel ought to provide strong evidence, and it does so. It does not lack for external evidence." Spurgeon's statement anticipated the spiritual fog and declension we now find ourselves in.

"Prince Charles Launches Campaign for Interfaith Cooperation"

LONDON (RNS) A campaign for members of all the different faiths in Britain to go out of their way to aid those of other faiths has been launched by Prince Charles, heir to the British throne. "Over the past year we have seen -- internationally, nationally and locally -- all too many examples of intolerance to others," the Prince of Wales said Monday (April 29, 2002) in Birmingham, England. "Tolerance is an easy word to pronounce, but it seems to be very difficult to enact in our lives. And yet it is such a tragedy that, when the various faith communities have so much in common, its members should so often be divided by the different ways we have of interpreting the inner meaning of our existence."

Non-believers on Rise, Conference Hears

MONTREAL (RNS) The number of Canadians who claim to have no religion at all more than doubled in 13 years to 27 percent in 2000, according to a senior social scientist with Statistics Canada. "By any means this is an extraordinary shift," Paul Reed told last week's Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy conference at McGill University. British Columbia led the country with 55 percent of residents claiming to be non-believers, Reed said. It was followed by the Prairies at 33 percent, Ontario (28 percent), Atlantic Canada (17 percent) and Quebec (7 percent). Reed said that while 43 percent of Canadian adults say they never attend church, a growing number is looking outside organized religion for spiritual fulfillment.

Agreement (one)(1520) **heis** W. E. Vine - the first cardinal numeral, masculine (feminine and neuter nominative forms are *mia* and *hen*, respectively), is used to signify (1) (a) "one" in contrast to many, e.g., Mt. 25:15; Ro 5:18 "one (trespass)," i.e., Adam's transgression, in contrast to the "one act of righteousness," i.e., the death of Christ; (b) metaphorically, "union" and "concord," e.g., John 10:30; John 11:52; John 17:11, 21, 22; Rom. 12:4, 5; Phil. 1:27; (2) emphatically, (a) a single ("one"), to the exclusion of others, e.g., Matt. 21:24; Rom. 3:10; 1 Cor. 9:24; 1 Tim. 2:5 (twice); (b) "one, alone," e.g., Mark 2:7 (AV, "only"); Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19; (c) "one and the same," e.g., Rom. 3:30 "God is one," i.e., there is not "one" God for the Jew and one for the Gentile; cp. Gal. 3:20, which means that in a promise there is no other party; 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:5; 1 Cor. 12:11; 1 John 5:8 (lit., "and the three are into one," i.e., united in "one" and the same witness); (3) a certain "one," in the same sense as the indefinite pronoun *tis*, e.g., Matt. 8:19 "a (scribe)," marg., "one (scribe)," AV, "a certain (scribe);" Matt. 19:16, "one;" in Rev. 8:13, RV marg., "one (eagle);" *heis tis* are used together in Luke 22:50; John 11:49; this occurs frequently in the papyri (Moulton, Prol., p. 96); (4) distributively, with *hekastos*, "each," i.e., "every one," e.g., Luke 4:40; Acts 2:6, "every man" (lit., "every one"); in the sense of "one ... and one," e.g., John 20:12; or "one ..." followed by *allos* or *heteros*, "the other," e.g., Matt. 6:24; or by a second *heis*, e.g., Matt. 24:40, RV, "one;" John 20:12; in Rom. 12:5 *heis* is preceded by *kata* (*kath'*) in the sense of "severally (members) one (of another)," RV (AV, "every one ... one"); cp. Mark 14:19; in 1 Thess. 5:11 the phrase in the 2nd part, "each other," RV (AV, "one another"), is, lit., "one the one;" (5) as an ordinal number, equivalent to *prōtos*, "first," in the phrase "the first day of the week," lit., and idiomatically, "one of sabbaths," signifying "the first day after the sabbath," e.g., Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2. Moulton remarks on the tendency for certain cardinal numerals to replace ordinals. (Pdf - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words)

1 John 5:7 Commentary <> 1 John 5:9 Commentary