

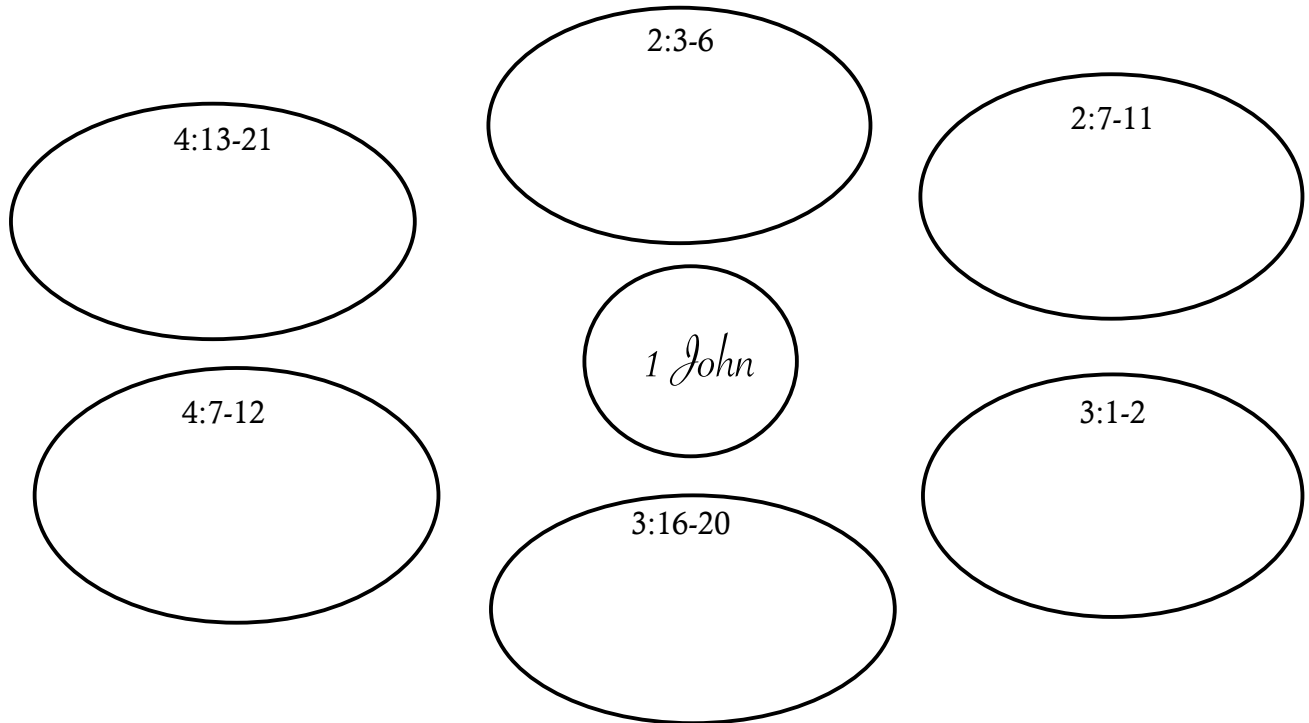


## *Imitating His Steps*

*Not many of us have probably ever climbed a snow covered mountain. But from my husband's experience and books I've read, I've learned that climbers generally try to follow the footsteps in the snow of climbers who have gone before them. It's much easier to step in another's prints and not have to "break through" the snow yourself to find a footing. The other advantage is that the person who has gone ahead has already discovered the safest route to take. He's discovered the deep crevices and unsure footings. He's avoided the potential slides and thin ledges. This is the way to the top.*

*Let us begin with some direction from 1 John.*

Read and highlight the key thoughts from each of the following passages in 1 John.



## *Where Jesus Leads*

1. What kind act(s) did Jesus perform in each of these passages? *Skim for the key thoughts.*

- † Mark 6:34-44
- † Luke 8:43-48
- † John 8:1-11
- † Titus 3:4-6

2. What does Jesus teach us in the following passages?

† Luke 16:19-25

† Luke 10:27

† Matthew 25:35-40

3. What attitudes do we need to have toward others according to Philippians 2:3-5.

† *<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*

*Our encouragement. . .*

4. What is one act of encouragement someone did for you that you will never forget?

5. Who doesn't thrive on encouragement? Where does our encouragement come from?

† Romans 15:5 *<sup>5</sup>May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,*

† 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 *<sup>16</sup>May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup>encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.*

† Matthew 14:14-17

6. In the New Testament, Jesus reached out and changed the lives of many people. He brought new strength and healing to those who were suffering. Take a look at these two verses in Matthew:

† Matthew 9:2 *<sup>2</sup>Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."*

† Matthew 9:22 *<sup>22</sup>Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.*

† Why do you suppose Jesus' first words to these two people were "be encouraged"? What did they have to be encouraged about?

7. Encouragement is there for us, so long as we know how to find it.
- † John 20:31 <sup>31</sup>*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
  - † Romans 15:4 <sup>4</sup>*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*
8. As we talk about encouraging others, whether it's specifically encouraging them in their faith or generally encouraging them in their Christian lives, why is it so important for us to be regularly "in the Word" ourselves?
9. If we remain in the Scriptures, receiving encouragement and knowledge from God's Word, what effect will it have on us?
- † 1 Peter 2:2 <sup>2</sup>*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,*
10. What does it mean to "grow up" in the Lord?
- † Ephesians 4:11-16 *be prepared for works of service to build up the body of Christ - attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ – become firm on our foundation*  
Becoming more and more like Christ – stronger and finding that firm foundation.
  - † 2 Peter 3:18 <sup>18</sup>*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*
11. How does this "growing up" appear in our everyday lives?
- † 2 Thessalonians 1:3 <sup>3</sup>*We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.*
12. According to 1 John 4:7-8, what is God, and what is the characteristic of a woman who truly knows God?
- † 1 John 4:7-8 <sup>7</sup>*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
13. How are we supposed to love each other?
- † John 15:12 <sup>12</sup>*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*
  - † Romans 12:10 <sup>10</sup>*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

† 1 Peter 1:22 <sup>22</sup>Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

*Because our LORD encourages us, we are better able to give encouragement to those around us.*

*Now, some women are much better at encouraging and comforting people than others. Maybe you know some of those women? They always have a kind word or a gentle response. They are quick to compliment and give others a “boost.”*

*And the wonderfully spiritual nature of their encouragements tend to give us that gentle nudge toward the Scriptures...whether it's for guidance or a desire to delve into the Word ourselves. It shouldn't surprise any of us that encouragement is listed as a spiritual gift in Romans 12:8.*

† Romans 12:9-13...recipe for an encourager:

<sup>9</sup>Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup>Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

† 1 Corinthians 14:12 <sup>12</sup>So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

*Learning to follow. . . Discuss and answer the following questions in groups of 3-4.*

14. As Christians, we should aspire to lead God-pleasing lives. How does Paul describe the ministry of encouragement a believer should have in

† Titus 1:9?

† In Titus 2:3-5?

15. Paul knew the value of encouragement. He was always sending messengers back to the churches he'd planted. (*And who doesn't find encouragement from a piece of “real” mail from friends?*) Who did Paul send out in Colossians 4:7-9? Why does he send them?

16. Paul was a great encourager. He begins many of his Epistles with a very sincere and honest encouragement.

† Philippians 1:2-5

† Colossians 1:2-4

† 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

† What example does Paul set for us?

17. How does the writer to the Hebrews encourage us to live?

† Hebrews 10:24-25 <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

What do you know about spurs?

18. What else can we take unexpected encouragement from according to Hebrews 12:5?

<sup>5</sup>And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

*Is there anything from your group's discussion that you'd like to share with everyone? Any observations or thoughts? Any encouragements?*

19. Is your faith a part of your daily life? Do you talk about it with your friends? Do you discuss it with your children? Acquaintances? Do you encourage others in their faith? Or is it just for Sunday mornings?

*Is your faith work? Or is it a joy welling up inside you and bursting to share?*

20. How can we encourage the faith of our sisters in Christ if we never talk about the faith we share? Often, it's difficult to share our faith because we've never really considered what it means to us or how to put that meaning into words. Take a moment now to consider...

† Why am I a Christian?

† What do I believe about who Jesus was/is? Why?

† Why do I go to church and study the Bible?

† Why is it "such a big deal"?

† What does Christianity mean for my everyday life? What comfort do I receive?

What strength?

*Your testimony of God's faithfulness may be all a person needs to give them the determination to persevere through trials they are facing right now.*

## *Be an Encourager!*

21. Often we hope people will be encouraged by our mere presence. After all, it takes a good amount of effort just to show up some days! What excuses do we have for avoiding a commitment to encouraging others?

22. Name some of the cultural influences that may be distracting you from other's needs.

23. Contrast today's cultural influences with what the following Scriptures say.

† Romans 8:6-8 <sup>6</sup>*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup>the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup>Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

Philippians 4:8 <sup>8</sup>*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Contrast to the movies, music, TV, etc.*

† Colossians 3:1-2 <sup>1</sup>*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Contrast to materialism*

24. What does Jesus ask us to do in John 13:5-17?

† What does this mean for us as Christian women? How will this instruction be carried out in your life?

*<sup>24</sup>since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

*Colossians 3:24*

25. How many lives touch yours on a regular basis? How many people are you "connected" to?

26. What does encouragement "look like"? *Skim these passages for the answers.*

In each of these passages, who is the encourager and what are they doing?

† Judges 4:4-9

† Job 2:11-13

† Mark 14:3-9

† Acts 4:36-37

† Hebrews 12:1

† Consider what aspects of people’s lives would benefit from encouragement?

† How can we give them that needed boost?



27. Encouragement may take a little effort, but it’s fun! Let’s get creative.

† Our husbands:

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 *<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup>We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*

† Our family:

Proverbs 31:28  
her:

*<sup>28</sup> Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises*

† Friends:

2 Corinthians 9:13 *<sup>13</sup>Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.*

† Our members:

Ephesians 4:16 *<sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

† Strangers and Unbelievers we meet:

Colossians 2:2 *<sup>2</sup>My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,*