Notes on 1 John

Various Insights into this marvelous epistle:
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Similarities between John 14-17 & 1 John:

1. The Godhead and the Christian:
   - The love of the Father: John 14:21  1 John 4:16
   - The abiding of the Son: John 15:4  1 John 3:24
   - The gift of the Spirit: John 14:16-17  1 John 4:13

2. The Christian and the Godhead:
   - Mutual Indwelling: John 14:20  1 John 3:24
   - Forgiveness: John 15:3 (13:8)  1 John 1:9
   - Eternal life: John 17:2  1 John 2:25
   - Righteousness: John 16:10  1 John 2:29

3. Conditions for Christian Discipleship:
   - Renounce Sin: John 16:8  1 John 1:8; 3:4
   - Be Obedient: John 14:15  1 John 2:3; 3:10
   - Reject Worldliness: John 15:19  1 John 2:12; 4:1
   - Keep the faith: John 17:8  1 John 2:18; 5:5

Adapted from Stephen S. Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984, xxx.)
Similarities of Style between John & 1 John:

- Frequent Use of Disconnected Sentences
- Restricted Range of Vocabulary
- Frequent Use of Contrasts:
  - Light & Darkness
  - Life & Death
  - Christ and the devil
  - The Holy Spirit and error
  - Love and hatred
  - Children of God and children of the devil
  - Knowing God and not knowing God
  - Truth and falsehood
  - Righteousness and sin
  - Obedience and disobedience
  - Believers and world
Life of the Apostle John:

1. Born in Bethsaida (John 1:44).
2. Father was Zebedee (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; Mark 1:19-20).
3. Brother was James (Matt. 10:2; Mark 1:19).
4. He was a fisherman (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19).
5. He and his brother James were fishing partners with Peter (Luke 5:10).
6. He and his brother were called Boanerges by their father, which means “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17).
7. He and his brother left their fishing to become followers of Jesus (Matt. 4:21-22).
8. He and his brother were called to be two of Jesus’ 12 apostles (Luke 6:13-16).
9. He was one of Jesus’ inner circle of three apostles (Mark 5:37).
10. He was Peter, James, and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1).
Life of the Apostle John:

11. He and James asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire on an unbelieving Samaritan village (Luke 9:51).

12. He was with Peter, James, and Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37).

13. He and Peter were sent by Jesus to make preparations for the Passover (Luke 22:8).

14. He asked Jesus at the Lord’s Supper who was going to betray Him (John 13:25).

15. He was ‘the disciple whom Jesus Loved’ (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20). In contrast to Paul, the apostle of faith, and Peter, the apostle of hope, John is known as the apostle of love.

16. He knew the high priest (John 18:15).

17. He took care of Mary, the mother of Jesus, from the day of the crucifixion (John 19:25-27).
Life of the Apostle John:

18. He went fishing with five other disciples after Jesus’ resurrection (John 21:2).

19. He and Peter were used by God to heal a crippled man at the Temple (Acts 3:1-11).

20. He and Peter were put in jail overnight by the priests and Sadducees and the next day the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law questioned them about their authority to preach (Acts 4:1-22).

21. He and Peter reported to the believers what had occurred (Acts 4:23).

22. He and Peter went to Samaria to pray with the new believers there (Acts 8:14-17).

23. He met with the other apostles at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6).

24. He, James, and Peter welcomed Paul, who called them ‘pillars’ (Gal. 2:9).

25. He was an eyewitness of the Lord Jesus (1 John 1:1-2).

26. He was the author of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:4) on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9).
First, 1 John seems to have been a letter that was circulated among believers in Asia Minor. Evidently, John endeared himself to his readers in view of calling them:

- “dear children” (teknia) seven times: 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21;
- “dear friends” (“agapetoi”, literally “beloved” six times: 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11.

Second, three times John referred to “our brothers” (3:13, 14, 16) and 12 times to “his brother” (2:9, 10, 11; 3:10, 12 (twice), 15, 17; 4:20 (twice), 21; 5:16).
Were the Initial Readers of 1 John Christians”?

And third, we have numerous statements made by John that are true only of Christians:

1. “your sins have been forgiven” (2:12);
2. “you have known Him who is from the beginning” (2:13, 14)
3. “you have known the Father” (2:13)
4. “you have overcome the evil one” (2:13, 14)
5. “the Word of God lives (abides) in you (2:14)
6. “you have an anointing from the Holy One” (2:20)
7. “all of you know the truth” (2:20, 21)
8. “this is what He has promised us-even eternal life” (2:25)
Were the Initial Readers of 1 John Christians”?

And third, we have numerous statements made by John that are true only of Christians:

9. “the anointing you received from Him remains (abides) in you” (2:27)

10. “when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming” (2:28)

11. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us” (3:1)

12. “When He appears, we shall be like Him” (3:3)

13. “Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you” (3:13)

14. “We know that we have passed from death to life” (3:14)

15. “We know it by the Spirit He gave us” (3:24)

16. “You dear children, are from (of) God” (4:4)
Were the Initial Readers of 1 John Christians”?

And third, we have numerous statements made by John that are true only of Christians:

17. “we are from (of) God” (4:6)
18. “we live (abide) in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit (4:13)”
19. “we know and rely on the love God has for us” (4:16)
20. “we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him” (4:17)
22. “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (5:4)
23. “God has given us eternal life” (5:11)
24. “you...believe in the name of the Son of God” (5:13)
25. “This is the assurance we have in approaching God” (5:14)
26. “We know that He hears us” (5:15)
27. “We know that we are of God” (5:19)
28. “We are in Him” (5:20)

- In studies of 1 John there is a major debate regarding whether the apostle was emphasizing certain “tests” to know if one is a believer or whether if a believer is walking in fellowship with Christ.

- “Tests of life” interpretation focuses on whether one is in “union with God whereas the “tests of fellowship” stresses one’s communion with God.

- Though this debate focuses on “salvation” vs. “intimate fellowship” both positions are about righteous conduct, love, and truth.
Tests of Salvation:

“if you have righteous conduct, then you know you are saved”

1 John 5:13: “So that you may know that you have eternal life.”

“fellowship” and “abiding” refers to being saved, being in union with God (“in Christ”)

“Knowing God” refers to possessing eternal life.

“Eternal life” refers to “salvation” (as in John 17:3)

“light” or “darkness” refers to being saved or being lost.

Debate:

Summary of Views:

Purpose Statement of 1 John:

How is “fellowship” and “abiding” interpreted?

How is “Knowing God” interpreted?

How is “eternal life” interpreted?

What does “light” or “darkness” refer to?

Tests of Fellowship:

If you have righteous conduct, love, and truth, then you are in fellowship with God.

1 John 1:3, “so that you also may have fellowship with us (and) with the Father and with His Son.”

“Fellowship” and “abiding” refers to communion with God (walking in the Spirit).

“Knowing God” refers to enjoying fellowship with God.

“Eternal life” denotes “quality of life (as in John 10:10)

“Light” or “darkness” refers to being in fellowship with God or being out of fellowship with God.
Literary Outline of 1 John:

I. The reality of our message (1:1-4)

II. Three Cycles:
   A. Righteous Conduct
   B. Brotherly love (love)
   C. Right Christology (truth)

III. Conclusion: The Reality of Our Knowledge (5:13-21)
Evidences and Conclusion: 11 times John wrote of conclusions that can be drawn from evidence:

**Conclusion:**

2:3: “We know that we have come to know Him

2:5-6: “This is how we know we are in Him

2:18: “This is how we know it is the last hour

**Evidence:**

If we obey His commands.”

(we) walk as Jesus walked.”

Many antichrists have come.”
Evidences and Conclusion: 11 times John wrote of conclusions that can be drawn from evidence:

**Conclusion:**

3:10: “This is how we know who is the children of God are and who are the children of the devil are:

3:14: “We know that we have death passed from death to life

3:16: “This is how we know what love is

**Evidence:**

Anyone who does not do what is right and is not of God.”

because we love our brothers”

Jesus Christ laid down His life for us.”
Evidences and Conclusion: 11 times John wrote of conclusions that can be drawn from evidence:

**Conclusion:**

3:18-19: “This then is how we know that we belong to (lit., are of) the truth.

3:24: “This is how know that He lives (lit. abides) in us:

4:2: “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God

**Evidence:**

(We) love … with actions and in truth.”

We know it by the Spirit He gave us.”

We know it by the Spirit He gave us.”
Evidences and Conclusion: 11 times John wrote of conclusions that can be drawn from evidence:

Conclusion:

Evidence:

4:13: “We know that we live (lit., abide) in Him and He in us,  

5:2: “This is how we know that we are the children of God:  

Because He has given us of His Spirit.”  

By loving God and carrying out His commandments.”
Bibliography:


4. Notes from “1 John Fellowship with God” by Dr. Roy Zuck.