

## LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

### STUDY FOUR

## Family Rules for “Little Children”

*1 John 2:1–6*

*I don't care how old you are chronologically. I don't care how mature you think you are psychologically or even spiritually. You need these simple rules for the family of God.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE apostle John walked this earth for nearly a century by the time he wrote 1 John. Nothing this world hurled at him surprised him. He knew persecution. It had sent him to jail, scarred his skin, and banished him away. He knew heartbreak. He wept over beloved brothers and sisters in the faith as they turned their backs on Christ to bow before other gods.

But through it all, John patiently disciplined hundreds of Jesus-followers, perhaps thousands, to help them press on in maturity and discernment. According to tradition, he had to be carried into the house of worship in his last years because he couldn't walk. Then, he repeated over and over, “Little children, love one another.”

All John's disciples dearly loved him for his godly leadership style. He led not as a CEO commanding his employees. He led not as a master ordering his servants. Nor did he lead as a politician who threatens and deceives the commoners.

Instead, John led as a beloved family patriarch teaching his grandchildren. In the passage of this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we explore how John passed on household rules for the family of God. You'll find no rebuke or mockery, chiding or sophistry. John's words flow, rather, from a heart of love and concern for the community of faith.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Family Rules for “Little Children”

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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

God’s Word always proves itself true. The psalmist wrote:

*As for God, His way is blameless;  
The word of the LORD is tried;  
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.  
For who is God, but the LORD?  
And who is a rock, except our God? (Psalm 18:30–31 NASB)*

We study God’s Word because it protects us and guides us. And it’s the Spirit who makes our study beneficial. We depend on Him to ignite spiritual understanding and fuel belief. Before you explore His truth, pray for the Spirit’s help as you seek the Rock of Ages.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Discerning an author’s tone assists our Bible study.<sup>1</sup> Authors not only wish to communicate ideas but also emotions attached to those ideas. Divine truth becomes personal as our feelings about God’s truth align with the feelings of the biblical authors. John’s emotional tone shifts from chapter one to chapter two. Examining the context reveals this shift.

In chapter one, John included the word *we* twenty-two times (NLT) to describe his membership among Jesus’ authoritative witnesses, which enables him to distinguish between true and false teaching about Christianity. Deceivers were assaulting his flock. John wrote with an exacting tone, forceful in clarity—highlighting his spiritual authority and the deceivers’ errors.

In chapter two, John began with *I* to emphasize the solid familial bridge between himself and his readers. He expressed a gentle tone of affection exemplified in his use of the term “dear children.”



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Before beginning observation, think of yourself as a humble child on a cold night sitting by a warm fire before the feet of this grandfatherly apostle.



### Observation: My Dear Children

Observe *1 John 2:1–6*. Every passage contains a myriad of observations. Good Bible study begins by observing as much as we can see. You always want to leave time at the end, however, to prioritize the most significant observations pertinent to the author’s subject.

Boil down your observations to the five most important.

One	
Two	
Three	
Four	
Five	



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*We resonate with John’s simple rules because they make good sense and because we tend to forget them. I am convinced the sooner we return to them, the easier we will be to live with. When we were little kids, we didn’t take ourselves all that seriously, but we took God seriously. But as we grew up, there was a strange reversal of roles. We began to take ourselves far too seriously and we wouldn’t take God all that seriously. No! John wants us to get back to the simple rules of the faith. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: Making John’s Elementary Rules Your Own

Like a protective guardian, John displays two key concerns in [1 John 2:1, 6](#). These concerns fit both sides of the same coin. What are those concerns, and why do they function as John’s primary household rules?

In the application phase, we will explore Chuck’s rendering of John’s household rules. For now, express in your own words John’s key concerns.

John wants Christians to guard against sin. He urged, “Don’t mess with stuff that gets you in trouble!” As Christians, we serve and represent God. Our obedience to Him shows our respect for Him and brings honor to Him.



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Nevertheless, believers still fall into sin’s trap during this dark age because we still have a sin nature. But sin does not engulf God’s children. According to *1 John 2:1–2*, how is Jesus a help to believers who sin? Then translate this vital truth into a household reminder or principle for following Christ.



### Chuck’s Commentary Insight

#### First John Theme: Advocate

Like a defense attorney, Christ constantly pleads our case before the heavenly court. But a couple of key differences distinguish our divine Advocate from an earthly attorney. An attorney tries to defend a client’s innocence. Our Savior comes to our aid as we acknowledge our guilt. An attorney works within the law, arguing the merits of our case and trying to persuade a judge or jury. Our Savior came to our aid by becoming “the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 2:2). He paid the penalty for the sins of humanity. As the one perfect God-man, He took the place of all humanity through His atoning sacrifice on the cross.<sup>2</sup>

The second half of 1 John 2:2 is notoriously difficult to interpret. But don’t avoid it. Wrestle with it. Use your Bible study resources in your own library, or you can consult [NetBible.org](http://NetBible.org) and *Constable’s Notes* as online Bible study *resources*. What did John emphasize by stating that Christ’s sacrifice atones for our sin—“and not only our sins but the sins of all the world”?



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In chapter one, John wrote that true believers walk in the light as God is in the light. In chapter two, John got more specific as if he were writing a bullet-point list on a chalkboard hanging on a wall in a home. What household rules did John use in [1 John 2:3–6](#) to define “walk in the light”? What makes these rules important for the family of God?

We have in Jesus not only the once-for-all atoning sacrifice and forever-advocate with the Father, we also have in Jesus a model for how we are to live. John never tired of pointing people to Jesus. Our faith, our hope, our love, our life, our example—all depend upon Christ.



### Correlation: The One-Time Sacrifice for All Sins

Two important passages offer us a firmer mental grip of Jesus’ advocacy on our behalf.

*God the Just and the Justifier—Romans 3:21–26*

What does [Romans 3:21–26](#) emphasize about Christ’s death? How did Jesus’ death both satisfy God’s justice as well as justify those who put their faith in Christ?



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Our Mediator—1 Timothy 2:5–6

Read *1 Timothy 2:5–6*. How does Christ’s role as mediator bridge the gap between sinful humanity and our holy God?

Through Christ, God our Father proved He wants to meet with us regularly. In Christ, God Himself awaits us at our door wanting to come into our home. Our time with God and enjoyment of His presence depends not upon the time available in His schedule but upon our childlike humility and desire to seek our Father in heaven.



### Application: Family Rules

We never want to end our study without applying what we learned. Through application, the Spirit conforms us more into the image of Christ. Application might change how we pray, what we think, how we act, or what we desire. We want the fire of the Holy Spirit to light every fiber of our being and burn away any impurities tarnishing our relationship with Christ.

For this reason, Chuck crafted John’s message in 1 John 2:1–6 into six household rules to help us integrate this biblical truth into our lives.

- 1) *Don’t mess with stuff that gets you into trouble.* John wrote to keep us away from sin’s doorstep. In fact, he wrote to keep us out of sin’s neighborhood!
- 2) *When you foul things up, remember you have Someone who’s always in your corner.* With Christ as your advocate, you can always return home and sit at God’s table.
- 3) *Behave yourself since you’re a member of the family.* Live in a way that brings honor to your heavenly family since you carry the name of the Divine King.



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- 4) *No matter what you say, your actions reveal your true motives.* The deeds prove the Christian. John didn't hesitate to slap the label “phony” on a wrong-living, self-described Christian.
- 5) *Always remember your obedience reveals your respect for God the Father.* God made the universe and upholds it with power of His Word. What awe and respect this inspires! We demonstrate such feelings through humble obedience.
- 6) *When you're looking for a hero to follow, choose Jesus.* Jesus lived a perfect life. He exemplified walking in the light. He displayed perfect communion with the Father and joy in the Father.

Choose one rule above that's most germane to your situation. Why do you find it so relevant? How can you use it to help you walk in the light? Remember, *specificity produces quality application.*

John's simple yet rich teaching on faith serves as a reminder that we have not outgrown our spiritual trousers. No one graduates from the basics! Most of us do not need bigger brains. Rather, softer hearts.



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### A FINAL PRAYER

End this study with one final reflection upon 1 John 2:1–6 and record your prayer below. Thank God the Father for sending His Son Jesus to be your righteous advocate. Ask Him to pour into your heart His truth as revealed in Scripture that you might walk as Jesus Himself walked.

#### ENDNOTES

1. If you already know Chuck’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](http://sts.insight.org) for a review. For the best explanation, *buy his book*. If you do not have Chuck’s commentary on 1 John in your library, *grab a copy* at the Insight for Living Ministries web store.
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 42.

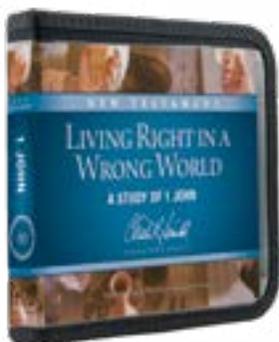


Family Rules for “Little Children”

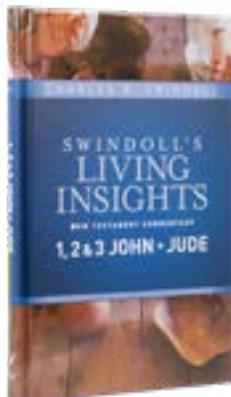
1 John 2:1-6



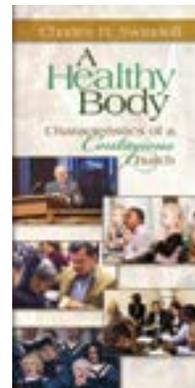
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

