

3 Terms to Consider:

graphō (γράφω): “to write” – used 13x in 1 John

hina (ἵνα): can show purpose or goal: “in order that” – used 19x in 1 John

hoti (ὅτι): can indicate why: “because, since” – used 76x in 1 John

1. John’s Overall Reason for Writing 1 John (1:4)

1:4 And these things **we write** [we are writing] to you **that** (*hina*) your joy may be full.

a. **And these things (the entire letter)**

b. **We are writing (as they are being written)**

c. **In order that (shows purpose)**

d. **The joy of you (plural – you all)**

e. **Might come to be full (or fulfilled)**

What you might find interesting is that John uses the term “write” (γράφω | *graphō*) a total of **13 times** in this book. John continues to share reasons for his writing of his letter which support his primary reason. These all help bring the joy of believers to fullness.

2. Additional Reasons for Writing (other instances of *graphō*)

a. **To have a right view of committing sin (2:1)**

2:1 My little children, these things **I write** [I am writing] to you, **so that** (*hina*) you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

b. **To remind of the old/new command [love one’s brother] (2:7-8)**

2:7 Brethren, **I write** [I am writing] no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 2:8 Again, a new commandment **I write** [I am writing] to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, **because** (*hoti*) the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

c. **To encourage believers of various maturity levels (2:12-14)**

2:12 **I write** [I am writing] to you, LITTLE CHILDREN, **because** (*hoti*) your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.

2:13 **I write** [I am writing] to you, FATHERS, **because** (*hoti*) you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. **I write** [I am writing] to you, YOUNG MEN, **because** (*hoti*) you have overcome the wicked one. **I write** [I wrote] to you, LITTLE CHILDREN, **because** (*hoti*) you have known the Father.

2:14 **I write** [I wrote] to you, FATHERS, **because** (*hoti*) you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. **I write** [I wrote] to you, YOUNG MEN, **because** (*hoti*) you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

d. **To clarify what is true and false (2:21)**

2:21 **I have not written** [I wrote not] to you **because** (*hoti*) you do not know the truth, but **because** (*hoti*) you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

2:26 These things **I have written** [I wrote] to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you.

e. **To assure the certainty of having eternal life (5:13)**

5:13 These things **I have written** [I wrote] to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **that** (*hina*) you may know **that** (*hoti*) you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.

3. A Sampling of More Purpose Statements that Support the Main Reason for Writing

(ἵνα | *hina* – can show purpose or goal: “in order that” – used 19x in 1 John)

(ὅτι | *hoti* – can indicate why: “because, since” – used 76x in 1 John)

a. **To encourage believers to abide in Jesus**

2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, **that** (*hina*) when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

b. **To reinforce our present position as children of God**

3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, **that** (*hina*) we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, **because** (*hoti*) He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

c. **To properly understand sin and Jesus’ work for our sins**

3:5 And you know that He was manifested **to** (*hina*) take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, **that** (*hina*) He might destroy the works of the devil.

4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, **that** (*hoti*) God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

4:10 In this is love, not **that** (*hoti*) we loved God, but **that** (*hoti*) He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, **that** (*hina*) we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

d. To encourage believers to love one another

3:11 For (*hoti*) this is the message that you heard from the beginning, **that** (*hina*) we should love one another,

3:14 We know **that** (*hoti*) we have passed from death to life, **because** (*hoti*) we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death.

3:16 By this we know love, **because** (*hoti*) He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

3:23 And this is His commandment: **that** (*hina*) we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, **for** (*hoti*) love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: **that** (*hina*) he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

e. To declare the love of God towards us

4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, **that** (*hina*) we might live through Him.

4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; **because** (*hoti*) as He is, so are we in this world.

f. To explain how we love God

4:19 We love Him **because** (*hoti*) He first loved us.

5:3 For this is the love of God, **that** (*hina*) we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

g. To reveal God's truthfulness and absolute holiness

1:5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, **that** (*hoti*) God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; **because** (*hoti*) many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The Reason (and Reasons) for the Writing of First John

(1 John 1:4+)

In this study we will look at the primary reason that John wrote 1 John, and additional/supporting reasons found throughout the letter. Why is this important?

To properly interpret any book of the Bible, we need to understand why the book is written – it's purpose. If we misunderstand a book's purpose, we will likely misinterpret its message. This has been true of the book of 1 John. The main purpose of 1 John is often cited to be found in 1 John 5:13:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may [continue] to believe in the name of the Son of God.

By taking this verse from the last chapter of 1 John, the purpose of 1 John is taken as proofs of salvation (also called "genuine fellowship" which is understood to be "genuine salvation"). MacArthur equates fellowship with salvation and according to his study Bible note for 1 John 5:13, understands 1 John to be written in order "to give believers confidence that they possessed eternal life." He goes on to explain in the same note that the Apostle John "assured those who remained that since they adhered to the fundamentals of the faith (a proper view of Christ, obedience, love), their salvation was sure. eternal life." One erroneous idea from this is that works evidence true salvation.

This view, however, ignores the primary statement at the very beginning of John's letter, in 1 John 1:4:

And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

Since the Apostle John gives this reason at the beginning of the book, it is this general theme that should be understood as the primary, defining reason for the writing of 1 John. Furthermore, we can see that John gives a number of reasons for writing – additional reasons, that appear to support this overall reason.

As we looked at in our study of 1 John 1:1-3, John declares these things that we may fellowship – a close relationship – with each other and with God the Father and Jesus, His Son. John then states his primary reason for writing is that our joy may be full.

John cannot be writing of whether one is saved or not, as it would require joy to be present or not present, as opposed to joy being made full. John wants full joy for believers and writes this letter to help believers have this full joy.