

# 1 JOHN

*with* Derek Morphey

## **Introducing the lecturer**

Derek Morphey is the founding pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Kenilworth, Cape Town, South Africa. He has been a pastor since 1973 and has often been involved in church planting. Derek serves on the national leadership team of the Association of Vineyard Churches in South Africa and is the international director of Vineyard Bible Institute, having obtained a BA in Theology from Rhodes University and a Ph.D. in the field of New Testament Studies from the University of Cape Town. He has written two published works, *South Africa; the Powers Behind*<sup>1</sup> and *Breakthrough; Discovering the Kingdom*,<sup>2</sup> one E Publication, *The Spiritual Spider Web, a Study of Ancient and Contemporary Gnosticism*,<sup>3</sup> and various in house publications for Vineyard Bible Institute.<sup>4</sup>

## **Introducing the course**

This course is not intended as a commentary or introduction to 1 John per se. Rather, it is an interpretation of 1 John that dialogues with two other focal points namely,

- first and second century Gnosticism and
- contemporary Gnostic parallel movements influencing the evangelical church.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally published by Struik Christian Books, it is now available as an E Publication from Vineyard International Publishing, [WWW.Vineyardbi.org/vip](http://WWW.Vineyardbi.org/vip)

<sup>2</sup> Vineyard International Publishing, Cape Town, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> [WWW.Vineyardbi.org/vip](http://WWW.Vineyardbi.org/vip)

<sup>4</sup> Christology I, Hebrews I & II, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Romans II, The Church and Its Leaders.

One could describe it as applied biblical studies. Since writing the *Spiritual Spider Web*<sup>5</sup> I have often wondered how to present this rather obscure yet crucial subject in a relevant and simple framework. Those who know something of ancient Gnosticism will immediately think of Colossians as a crucial book for presenting and understanding Gnosticism. That is true. However, the letters of John are related in some significant way, perhaps by common authorship, certainly by reflecting the same tradition, to the Gospel of John, where many of the same concerns and issues are to be found. If one places 1 John within this wider context one has a most comprehensive biblical teaching on the problem of Gnosticism.

I believe this subject is crucial to sound evangelical belief and practice. In particular, wherever evangelicalism embraces the charismatic dimension, the danger of Gnosticism will increase. Sadly, the twentieth century witnessed a major ‘back door’ entry of Gnostic beliefs and practices through the influence of E.W.Kenyon and in turn, his influence on Kenneth Hagin. While some excellent publications have attempted to address this influence, my view is that far too little work has been done.

The Vineyard movement is vulnerable to these influences in a number of ways. In many cities across the world there are popular local churches that have absorbed Gnostic beliefs to varying degrees. We often have people joining our churches who have imbibed such ideas. Local Christian bookstores continue to stock numerous popular books written by leaders who wittingly or unwittingly reflect Gnostic thinking. Opponents of the Vineyard have used the ‘guilt by association’ argument to attempt to finger the Vineyard itself for harbouring unorthodox beliefs and practices. This is dealt with in some detail in *Renewal Apologetics*.<sup>6</sup>

All this leads to the decision to allow the defence of orthodox faith and practice in 1 John to dialogue with ancient and contemporary Gnostic beliefs and thereby to equip Christians to discern the difference between real biblical spirituality and some unreal and unhealthy alternatives.

To obtain the whole picture, students are therefore encouraged to link this course to

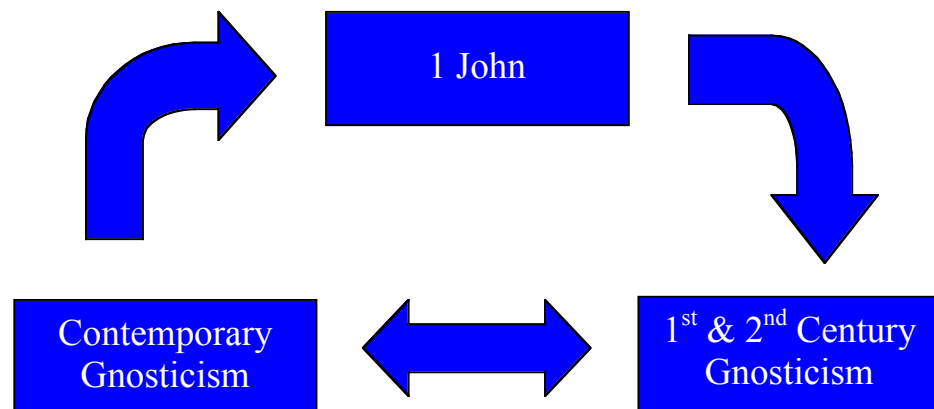
- *Position Papers 5-6* which includes *Renewal Apologetics*, and
- *The Spiritual Spider Web*.

The following diagram explains the subject matter of this course.

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<sup>5</sup> VBI course and VIP E Publication, [WWW.vineyardbi.org/vip](http://WWW.vineyardbi.org/vip)

<sup>6</sup> Derek Morphey, *Renewal Apologetics*, Vineyard Position Paper, VBI Course and VIP E Publication.



### Course instructions

Biblical Studies modules in VBI are designed to make the student interact with the text of scripture itself. You are advised to read the text more than you read the course material. Study the analysis of each passage by reading the biblical text thoroughly before, during and after reading the relevant notes.

This course can be used in different ways.<sup>7</sup>

- You can complete the course on your own as an individual student.
- A bible study small group can work through the material. This in turn can be done in two ways. If you have an obvious leader this person can prepare each section and lead the study, always making sure that maximum participation takes place from the group. Alternatively a different person in the group can be made responsible for each session. The course can be worked through over 8 sessions, but you could easily combine some of them and complete the material in 5 or 6. The questions for discussion at the end of each section are included for this purpose. The group leader should look over these before you begin. You may want to obtain some extra materials ahead of time.
- A lecturer in a local church or school of ministry can lecture the course live. In this case both lecturer and students should have the course material at hand. Advantages of group registration will be outlined in the VBI registration procedure.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive description of the various mentoring methods recommended, see the *Mentors Manual*, which is a free download from the VBI Web Site.

### **Completing the assignment**

You will have received a file attachment with the assignment along with the course material. You are encouraged to work through the whole course and then do the assignment. If you attempt to answer certain questions earlier on, you may get them wrong.

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Introduction to Gnosticism

Gnostic Teachings

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The Message of 1 John

Jesus Christ: Son of God, Word Become Flesh, Atoning Sacrifice

Witness, Faith, Confession

Believing and Eternal Life

Certainty of Salvation

Reality: Walking in the Truth

Discernment: The Spirit of Anti-Christ

Bibliography