

## Finding *Renewal* in the Love of God

### Unit 6: Living Renewal as a Testimony to the Eternal Life

#### Unit Introduction

Have you seen the full-page ads that appear in newspapers around the country periodically? The huge headlines exhort readers: “Claim Lost Money!” The first time I saw one of these pages, I thought they had to be joking. Could *all these people* retrieve money they had forgotten? Though the type is minute, the names fill the page(s). How could you forget an asset? One internet site claims that there are billions of dollars in unclaimed money in my state of Texas alone. People don’t claim their money because they don’t know it exists. It has been left in some estate; some interest has been paid they never realized; there was a check that never cleared after an account was closed. There are hundreds of reasons; still, the fact remains that money—and lots of it—remains unclaimed.

It is no news to anyone that many of the assets of a spiritual life in Jesus also remain unclaimed. John said, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may *know* that you have eternal life” (NIV; italics mine). These words occur near a end of a book (5.13) that opens with a multi-layered testimony about Jesus—one that encompasses sight, sound, and touch, in which the writer lays his experience and personal veracity on the line. Truly, this epistle lives and breathes testimony—all for the benefit of calling readers to fully claim the most valuable valued fellowship of believers—“We write this to make our joy complete” (1.4).

But what of life that is not joy? What about the Christian who lives day to day with a sense of doom or failure? What does 1 John have to say that Christian? And what does that Christian testify with her life to those around her? Can one who lives in the throes of defeat, overwhelmed by life, effectively proclaim eternal life in Jesus?

Anyone who has walked with Jesus for a significant period of time recognizes that *every Christian life* includes trial. Most of the gospel story is filled with the struggles Jesus himself faced. Yet one cannot read a story of Jesus’ life without the sense that He walked in joy, with confidence in the Father. He died on the cross, yes. But He died committing himself to the Father’s keeping (Luke 23.46) and extending the Father’s love and forgiveness (Luke 23.34, 43) to everyone around Him. And people noticed (Mk. 15.39).

What Truths must one claim to live a life of renewal amidst the struggles of life? What must one believe about herself and her relationship with God? What must one understand about God Himself? John wants us to *know* that we possess *eternal life*. What is eternal has no beginning and no end. What is eternal *exists*. The life that John deems *eternal* speaks to a *quality* of life, more than a *quantity* of life. In *life*, there is *no* death, and men and women of God must claim these truths in order to testify to that life every day.