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## God's Love Language is Obedience: Structure and Substance of 1 John 5:1-5

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### Abstract

*This study aims to present the structure and substance of 1 John 5:1-5, in light of various interpretations and even disagreements over whether 1 John 5:1-5 constitutes a single structural unit. The main issue discussed in this study is: what is the structure and what is the substance of 1 John 5:1-5? Within the post-positivist paradigm and the evangelical theological perspective, the author will employ a stylistic analysis to examine chiasmus and repetition in 1 John 5:1-5. The study's results affirm strong evidence that 1 John 5:1-5 forms a single structural unit, and its substance is 'obedience as the language of love toward God.' Although borrowing the language popularized by Gary Chapman regarding the language of love, this study does not employ his theory. Future research could delve into systematic theological aspects such as the concept of being born again, or integrate it with social factors in terms of related to love for others.*

**Keywords:** 1 John 5:1-5; Structure; Substance; Love; Obedience

### INTRODUCTION

This article is motivated by multiple interpretations of the structure and substance (main theme) of 1 John 5:1-5. This fact is not only found in commentaries and theological articles, but is even shown in the critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament, namely NA28. NA28 verses 1-4 as one paragraph and verses 5-12 as another.<sup>1</sup> This choice appears to be made because verses 5-12 discuss the Son of God. In other words, NA28 implicitly disagrees that 5:1-5 is a single structural unit. Then, scholars such as Marshal, Brown, Talbert, Strecker, Kruse, Lieu, and Jensen emerged who considered that verse 5

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio Critica Maior, IV Catholic Epistles* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2013), 724–725.

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has a different topic from verses 1-4 and chose to combine it into the next section.<sup>2</sup> Marshall argues that 4:14-5:4 is a single structural unit that discusses Christian assurance and love.<sup>3</sup> There is no in-depth argument behind the determination of this single structural unit other than the explanation that in this unit John repeatedly speaks of love. Brown sees 4:7-5:4a as a single structural unit that speaks of loving one another as a way of abiding in God and loving God.<sup>4</sup> Like Marshall, the topic of love is also highlighted. Regarding the formulation of this structure, Raymond does not provide any notes. Strecker believes that 4:7-5:4 is a unified structural unit as a parenthesis that emphasizes that God's love revealed in Christ obliges Christians to love their fellow believers.<sup>5</sup> Strecker sees love as a unifying structure, though the argument presented is not very clear or detailed.

Meanwhile, Kruse sees 4:7-5:4a as a structural unit like Raymond, but with the main idea that the unit emphasizes the claim that love for God is tested by love for fellow believers.<sup>6</sup> Kruse mentions the increased thought in structure, but does not explain the relationship between 4:7-21 and 5:1-4a. Next, there is Talbert who chooses to present 4:16b-5:4 as a structural unit that focuses on the ethical exposition of the criteria for someone to have an intimate relationship with God,<sup>7</sup> namely that a relationship with God produces love for fellow Christians.<sup>8</sup> In detail, Talbert sees the pattern of ABA'B' with A and A' representing assertions (4:16b-19; 5:1) and B and B' representing statements about implications (4:20-21; 5:2-4a).<sup>9</sup> The parallel structure can be seen as follows

**A      Assertion (4:16b-19)**

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. We love because he first loved us.

**B      Implication (4:20-21)** using an adversary statement (cf. 1:6, 8, 10)  
If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his neighbor, he is a liar  
... And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

**A'      Assertion (5:1)** using *pas ho* + participle (cf. 3:3, 4, 6, 9, 10)

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<sup>2</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 218–229; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Yale Bible (New York: Yale University Press, 1995), 512–568; Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 142–180; C. G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, Pillar New Testament commentary (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 156–172; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, Reading the New Testament series (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publication, 2005), 43–45; Judith M. Lieu, *I, II, & III John: A Commentary* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 176–177; Matthew Jensen, "The Structure and Argument of 1 John," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35, no. 1 (July 31, 2012): 68–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X12453662>.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 218–219.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 512.

<sup>5</sup> Strecker, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*, 161–180.

<sup>6</sup> Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 156.

<sup>7</sup> Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, 43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–44.

Everyone who loves the parent (God) loves the child (other Christian)

**B' Implication (5:2-4a)**

By this (the principle given in 5:1 above), we know that when ever we love God we love the children of God.

For Talbert, 4:16b-5:4 shows synonymous parallelism. Then, Lieu appeared with a division similar to Strecker's, that 4:7-5:4 is a structural unit, but Lieu emphasizes 'love that comes from God' as the main idea of the structure.<sup>10</sup> The basis of Lieu's argument regarding the structure is also not clear. Finally, Jensen held that 4:7-5:4a is a structural unit, as did Raymon and Kruse. Jensen also emphasized the topic of love arguing that the structure begins and ends the believer's identity as 'born of God,' and that this idea wraps up the discussion of love.<sup>11</sup> Thus, these scholars reject 5:1-5 as a structural unit.

However, scholars have emerged who agree that 5:1-5 is a structural unit, such as Culpepper, Sherman & Tuggy, Griffith, Wendland, MacArthur, Yarbrough, Akin, and Seglenieks, although each offers a different argument.<sup>12</sup> Culpepper sees the inclusion of Christological recognition in verses 1 and 5, namely Jesus as the Christ and Jesus as the Son of God. Still, he emphasizes the concept of 'children of God'.<sup>13</sup> From this inclusion, he forms a unified structure of 5:1-5. Sherman & Tuggy suggest the existence of a chiasm pattern ABCDC'B'A' in 5:1-5 with an emphasis on two themes of 'love and obedience' that appear in part D or the chiasm axis in the middle position.<sup>14</sup> Griffith shares a similar view with Culpepper, who also sees the inclusion of Christological confession in verses 1 and 5 as forming the structure. Still, Griffith more closely observes the occurrence of the marker ὁ πιστεύων and for him 5:1-5 is more related to 4:7-21.<sup>15</sup> However, Griffith does not mention the theme or central idea of his proposed structure. Meanwhile, Wendland sees the repetition of key terms in 4:21 and 5:1 (love), and then again in 5:5 and 5:6 (Jesus) as indicating that 5:1-5 forms a unity.<sup>16</sup> For him, this structure is a rhetoric of reinsurance that emphasizes the themes of faith, love, and obedience.

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<sup>10</sup> Lieu, *I, II, & III John : A Commentary* , 176–177.

<sup>11</sup> Jensen, "The Structure and Argument of 1 John," 68–69.

<sup>12</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 1 (1980): 25–26; GE Sherman and JC Tuggy, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of the Johannine Epistles* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994), 93; Terry Griffith, *Keep Yourselves From Idols: A New Look at 1 John* , Journal for the study of the New Testament: Supplement series (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 83; Ernst Wendland, "THE RHETORIC OF REASSURANCE IN FIRST JOHN: 'DEAR CHILDREN' VERSUS THE 'ANTICHRISTS,'" *Neotestamentica* 41, no. 1 (October 5, 2007): 207; John MacArthur, *1-3 John* , The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 173–186; Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John* , Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 268; DL Akin, *Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, 3 John* (books.google.com, 2014), 119; Christopher Seglenieks, "The Rhetoric of Faith in 1 John," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 33 (July 24, 2023): 20–21.

<sup>13</sup> Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 25–26.

<sup>14</sup> Sherman and Tuggy, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of the Johannine Epistles* , 93.

<sup>15</sup> Griffith, *Keep Yourselves From Idols: A New Look at 1 John* , 83.

<sup>16</sup> Wendland, "THE RHETORIC OF REASSURANCE IN FIRST JOHN: 'DEAR CHILDREN' VERSUS THE 'ANTICHRISTS,'" 207.

Next, MacArthur sees 5:1-5 as part of the unity with 'Victory Over the World.'<sup>17</sup> MacArthur see the text as a progression that culminates in victory over the world. No structural approach is involved here. Yarbrough, on the other hand, sees 5:1-5 as a unity because of the theme of faith in verses 1 and 5 that frames it, and argues that the central theme is "Faith as Fides Qua Creditur," that is, faith that produces action.<sup>18</sup> Akin, who believes 5:1-5 is a structural unit, sees its theme as "the birthmark of the children of God," emphasizing that true Christians will show evidence of their status, namely true belief and a holy life before God.<sup>19</sup> There is no discernible argument regarding the structure's formation. Finally, Segleineks sees 5:1-5 thematically similar to 4:7-21, which focuses primarily on love, and to 5:5-13, which focuses more on trust, so that 5:1-5 serves as a transition between the two, connecting the themes of love and trust. The central theme of 5:1-5 is a call to ethical action.<sup>20</sup> Segleineks also sees inclusion as a structural unit. While supporting 5:1-5 as a structural unit, there are still fundamental differences and thematic emphases between them.

There is no single consensus among scholars about the structural division of 1 John, particularly where a section like 5:1-5 fits within the argumentative structure. The core message of 1 John 5:1-5 can be viewed from various angles: as a test of faith and regeneration, as a manifestation of love in action (including obedience and love for one's brother), and as a guarantee of faith's victory over the world. Determining the structure and theme of 1 John 5:1-5 is crucial because this section is the theological knot (theological node) of the entire Epistle of 1 John. Rhetorical and literary studies (such as inclusio, parallelism, and the use of key themes) are crucial for interpreting the structure and substance of this section. The structure of this passage helps reveal how the author unites the three main identities of the community: faith, love, and obedience. Without a clear structure, the logical relationship between these three aspects can become obscured. Establishing a structure helps readers see how the author ties all the characteristics of a true community together in one concise paragraph. In addition, the theme of the passage influences the reading of the entire letter. If the primary theme is "birth from God," then the focus is identity. If the primary theme is "love and obedience," then the focus is community ethics. And if the theme is "faith that overcomes the world," then the focus is the community's relationship to the world and the conflict of opposition. This study aims to explain the structure and substance of 1 John 5:1-5. The novelty of this article lies in the discovery of the chiasm structure and the substance of the message in 5:1-5. The author aims to prove that 1 John 5:1-5 forms a structural unity, and its substance is 'obedience as a language of love towards God.'

## METHOD

The method used in this research is stylistic analysis. Stylistic analysis is the process of identifying various literary devices used to present material such as chiasm, inclusio, repetition, and other literary characteristics to deepen the structure of a unit of

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<sup>17</sup> MacArthur, *1-3 John*, 173-186.

<sup>18</sup> Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 268.

<sup>19</sup> Akin, *Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, 3 John*, 119.

<sup>20</sup> Segleineks, "The Rhetoric of Faith in 1 John," 20-21.

ideas.<sup>21</sup> The primary focus will be given to the chiasm structure, which is a rhetorical device in which the grammatical arrangement of the first line is repeated in the last line parallel to it in reverse order.<sup>22</sup> Lund proposes seven "laws" of chiasmic structures: (1) the center is always the turning point, (2) a change in the trend of thought or antithetical idea is often introduced at the center, (3) identical ideas are often distributed in the extremes and at the center of the system and nowhere else in the system, (4) ideas will shift in many cases from the center of one system to the extremes of a corresponding system, (5) certain terms definitely tend to gravitate toward particular positions in a given system, (6) larger units are frequently introduced by frame-passages and (7) chiasmic and alternating lines frequently occur within a single unit.<sup>23</sup> According to Welch there are four possible purposes of chiasmus, highlighting the main point by placing it in the center, marking the middle, marking a significant contrast, helping memorization, or providing a sense of closure in the selected passage.<sup>24</sup> The chiasm structure will generally produce a pattern ABB'A' or ABXB'A' which looks like a mirror with the main emphasis in the center of the structure.<sup>25</sup> The stylistic analysis will not ignore the Greek grammatical elements, but rather involves grammatical research according to the portion needed to support the interpretation. The objects analyzed are the text of 1 John 5:1-5 in the Indonesian manuscript of the New Translation version and the Greek text of the NA28 edition (Novum Testamentum Graece). Regarding the steps, first the author will try to find the chiasm structure in 1 John 5:1-5 by paying attention to the parallels and repetitions; second, based on the structure the author will try to find the main idea (substance) of the text and how John organizes his thoughts; third, the findings are arranged expositively and systematically.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Context of 1 John 5:1-5

The writing of 1 John was triggered by the emergence of heretical teachings spread by a group of former members of the Johannine community who had separated from the fellowship, including Christological teachings and deviant moral practices.<sup>26</sup> Understanding the context is necessary to prevent interpretations that go beyond the

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<sup>21</sup> Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2018), 252–253.

<sup>22</sup> DE Grudzina and MC Beardsley, *3 Simple Truths and 6 Essential Traits of Powerful Writing* (Clayton: Prestwick House, Inc, 2007), 113; Razzaq Naif Mukheef Al-Shafie and Ibtihal Jasim Abbas, "A Pragmatic Study Of Vow In Biblical Verses," *Journal Human Sciences* 1, no. 24 (2017): 22.

<sup>23</sup> Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiasmic Structures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 40–41.

<sup>24</sup> John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999), 162.

<sup>25</sup> Paulus Dimas Prabowo, "Synergy Amidst Institutional Struggles Based on an Analysis of the Literary Structure of Psalm 20," *Phronesis: Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2022): 268, <https://jurnal.sttsetia.ac.id/index.php/phr/article/view/317>.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 49–55. These heretics denied Jesus as a man, as the Christ, and as the Son of God; morally, they claimed to be sinless, lived with worldly desires, were antinomian, and without love for their neighbors.

author's intent. Contextual analysis ensures that interpretations remain coherent and on track. In this section, contextual analysis examines the position of 1 John 5:1-5 within the book as a whole. Thus, an outline of the book is necessary to understand its position. Haring, as cited by Jensen, makes a valuable contribution to the outline of 1 John's letter according to the letter's thematic pattern as follows:<sup>27</sup>

Prooemium		1: 1–4
I. First Division	A. Ethical Section 1	1:5–2:17
	B. Christological Section 1	2: 18–27
II. Second Division	A. Ethical Section 2	2:28–3:24
	B. Christological Section 2	4: 1–6
III. Third Division	A. Ethics Section 3	4:7–21
	B. Christological Section 3	5: 1–12
Postscript		5: 13–21

Ethical and Christological commentaries emerge in a balanced way to counter the ethically problematic lifestyles and teachings of opponents as well as Christological doctrines. Haring places 5:1-5 the final Christological commentary in 5:1-12. Therefore, 5:1-5 must be understood within a Christological framework.

### Chiastic Structure of 1 John 5:1-5

This section will specifically examine the possibility of chiasm patterns (cross-structures) that characterize the passage. This action aims to reveal how the author arranges his ideas rhetorically to emphasize certain teaching points. The chiasm structure of 1 John 5:1–5 has the following ABCC'B'A' pattern:

A	Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς	(ay. 1a)
B	ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ	(ay. 1b-2a)
C	Ὡς τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν	(ay. 2b)
C'	Αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖται οὐκ εἰσὶν	(ay. 3)
B'	ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον· καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν. Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον	(ay. 4-5a)

<sup>27</sup> T. Häring, *Gedankengang Und Grundgedanke Des Ersten Johannesbriefs*, *Theologische Abhandlungen Carl von Weizäcker* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1892); Matthew D. Jensen, "The Structure and Argument of 1 John: A Survey of Proposals," *Currents in Biblical Research* 12, no. 2 (February 1, 2014): 196, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X13484122>.

A' εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (ay. 5b)

To understand the main ideas (substance) of 1 John 5:1-5, one important step is analyze the text's structure carefully. By examining the chiasm structure, it is hoped that insight will be broadened into the logical and thematic relationships among the text's parts, as well as the theological emphasis author wishes to convey to his readers. Sections A-A' show parallels as well as inclusions marked by the repetition of the words ὁ πιστεύων, ὅτι and the phrase Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν in each section.<sup>28</sup> However, there are differences in the way Jesus' titles are included accross the section. In section A, Jesus' identity is as ὁ Χριστὸς (The Christ) while section B writes Jesus' identity as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (The Son of God).

Part B-B' shows parallels through the appearance of the phrase ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ and variations of the word γεννάω in the form γεγέννηται, τὸν γεννήσαντα, τὸν γεγεννημένον (part B), and τὸ γεγεννημένον (part B'). But each part shows differences. Part B relates γεννάω to ἀγαπάω. The word appears several times with the variants ἀγαπῶν, ἀγαπᾷ, ἀγαπῶμεν (2x), and ἀγάπη, so that in total there are 5 times the word 'love' with all its variations is repeated. The concept of love is very dominant, namely love for God and fellow believers. Thus, section B' links γεννάω with νικάω, written with the forms νικᾷ, νίκη, νικήσασα, and νικῶν, so that, in total, there are four occurrences of the word 'win' and all its variations. The phrase 'victory over the world' itself appears three times in the forms νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον, ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, and ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον. The concept of victory is very dominant, namely victory over the world. Thus, section B links the idea of spiritual birth (new birth) with victory over the world.

Section C-C' is seen as an axis dominated by God's command through the words ἐντολὰς and ἐντολαὶ (2x) and the concept of obedience through the word τηρῶμεν (2x). The ideas in sections C and C' are similar. Section C reads τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν while C' reads ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. The structure places the idea of 'love for God through obedience to the commandments' right in the middle and is repeated twice.

Based on the chiastic structure of 1 John 5:1–5, obedience to God occupies a central theological position as the objective evidence of love for God rather than a secondary moral consequence. By explicitly defining love for God as obedience to His commandments (5:2b–3) at the structural center of the passage, the Johannine author emphasizes that love is not measured by religious affection or social relationships alone, but by concrete and sustained ethical practice. Hermeneutically, this demands a reading that avoids any dichotomy between faith and obedience, since love for God can be legitimately verified only through a life aligned with His will. Consequently, obedience functions as an epistemological criterion that discloses the authenticity of love for God, while simultaneously affirming that regenerated life is expressed in obedience that is non-

<sup>28</sup>Inclusio is a rhetorical device in the form of a circular composition that marks a linguistic unit ( AB Du Toit, "New Testament Exegesis in Theory and Practice: The Various Stages of the Exegetical Programme," *Acta Theologica* 24, no. 1 (2004): 72. )

legalistic, arising from a living relationship with God. The table below clarifies the emphasis of each element in the structure.

Table 1. The emphasis of each element in the structure of 1 John 5:1-5

Part	Paragraph	Text	Emphasis
A	1a	Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς	The doctrinal belief that Jesus is the Christ
B	1b-2a	ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ	Birth from God and love for fellow believers
C	2b	Ὡς τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν	Love of God and obedience to commandments
C'	3	Αὕτη γάρ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖαι οὐκ εἰσὶν	Love for God is the same as obedience to commandments
B'	4-5a	ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἢ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἢ πίστις ἡμῶν. Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον	The birth of God and the victory over the world
A'	5b	εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ	The doctrinal belief that Jesus is the Son of God

### Unity of Structure 5:1-5 Based on Inclusion

Inclusion can be seen in verses 1a and 5b (A-A') which are marked by the repetition of the phrase ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν in each verse. In general, inclusion serves to mark the beginning and end of a text, so it is called " *bracketing* " and " *envelope figure* ." <sup>29</sup> Some scholars have proposed another function of inclusion, namely indicating a theme. <sup>30</sup> Lund provides a middle ground: inclusion is primarily a framing device used to delimit parts of a composition, but it can also function to emphasize the ideas contained. <sup>31</sup> Inclusion in 1 John 5:1-5 plays more of a role as a boundary for a composition, considering that the purpose of this analysis is to prove 5:1-5 as a unity. John's argument in 5:1-5 is framed by a powerful doctrinal nuance: faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God.

<sup>29</sup> D. Grossberg, "The Disparate Elements of the Inclusion in Psalms," *HAR* 6 (1982): 97; Chris Wyckoff, "Have We Come Full Circle Yet? Closure, Psycholinguistics, and Problems of Recognition with the Inclusion," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30, no. 4 (June 1, 2006): 475-477, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089206066317>.

<sup>30</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew, *Reading Proverbs with Integrity* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2011), 8; John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, Fifth rev. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), 120; Warren Carter, "Kernels and Narrative Blocks: The Structure of Matthew's Gospel," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (October 12, 1992): 281, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43722257>.

<sup>31</sup> Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiastic Structures*, 40-41.



Verse 1 opens with Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων. The word πᾶς is a singular masculine nominative adjective. This word is followed by the noun article (ὁ πιστεύων) so the translation is 'all'.<sup>32</sup> John does not emphasize the individual aspect, but the plurality of those who believe in Christ. The word πιστεύων is an active present participle verb. The type of participle is substantival because appearance of the article marks it and its function is to change the verb into a subject, thus emphasizing the doer of an action.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the present function is *the customary present* which describes a continuous action from the beginning of believing in Christ until forever.<sup>34</sup> The emphasis is on 'continuing to believe.' Wallace himself explains that the present participle of πιστεύω is used in a soteriological context with a gnomic and continuous sense.<sup>35</sup> The phrase Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων can be translated as 'All those who continue to believe.'

John then mentions the name Ἰησοῦς (including in verse 5b). The name Ἰησοῦς is the Greek form of the Hebrew name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (*Yehoshua*) which was widespread among the Jews both before and after the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>36</sup> The meaning of the name is 'Yahweh is salvation'<sup>37</sup> or 'Yahweh saves.'<sup>38</sup> This name emphasizes the humanity of Jesus Christ. The word ἐστὶν that follows it is the third-person singular active present indicative of the verb εἰμί. Literally, this word means 'to be' (describing existence/being).<sup>39</sup> This word is placed after Ἰησοῦς in both verses 1a and 5b to emphasize the existence of Jesus. The type of present used is the gnomic present whose function is to show the timeless fact or eternal fact<sup>40</sup> that Jesus is the 'Christ' (v. 1a) and the 'Son of God' (v. 5b) is an eternal fact that is not limited by time. This confirms the eternity of Christ's messiahship and divinity.

In verse 1a, John emphasizes Jesus as the Christ or ὁ Χριστός. The definite article ὁ has the masculine singular nominative form, and points to Χριστός as par excellence, referring to the only person worthy of the title.<sup>41</sup> The only one worthy of being called Χριστός is Ἰησοῦς, namely Jesus of Nazareth. Χριστός is the Greek version of the Hebrew

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament* (Moscow: International Bible Translators, 2000), Bibleworks V.9. Conversely, if the word πᾶς is followed by an unrelated noun, then the translation is 'every.'

<sup>33</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 1997), 219–220.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 521–522.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 620–621.

<sup>36</sup> J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Charleston, South Carolina: Nabu Press, 2012), 301.

<sup>37</sup> Francis Brown, SR Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Texas: Snowball Publishing, 2011), 221.

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks v.9.

<sup>39</sup> F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon Of The Greek New Testament*, ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1983), 56.

<sup>40</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 523–524.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 222.

word מָשִׁיחַ (Mashiakh) which means 'Anointed One.'<sup>42</sup> The word Χριστός is related to χρίω which means 'to anoint.'<sup>43</sup> Porter notes that the words Χριστός or מָשִׁיחַ refer to a future leader.<sup>44</sup> Jesus is the King and leader. Meanwhile, in verse 5b, John emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God or ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>45</sup> The word τοῦ is a definite article in the genitive, of the type par excellence, because it refers to the only person worthy of receiving the title θεός.<sup>46</sup> The word θεοῦ is a singular masculine genitive noun. The genitive in question is the genitive of relationship, which explains the familial relationship<sup>47</sup> through which Jesus stands in relation to God. In fact, verses 1a and 5b repeat Jesus' title in 3:23, which reads πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ. In it there are the words 'believe,' 'Jesus,' 'Christ,' and 'His Son (Son of God).'

Chapter 5:1-5 is a unified structural unit marked by the inclusion ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν. This inclusion not only demonstrates compositional unity but also indicates that John begins and ends his thought unit in 5:1-5 with a strong Christological doctrine. The core message he wishes to convey is framed by firm doctrinal conviction.

### **Substance 5:1-5 Based on Axis**

The sentence τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν in verse 2b is similar to the sentence ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν in verse 3. This similarity confirms that verses 2b and 3 (section C-C)' are the central axis or component in the chiasm that builds the other parts.<sup>48</sup> Brouwer added that the axial character of the central element has long been one of the clues to identify the development of chiasm.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the axis located in the middle is the focus of the author's thoughts, the main point and the key to interpretation that the reader must consider.<sup>50</sup> Norrman even refers to chiasm itself as the use of bilateral symmetry about the central axis.<sup>51</sup> Lund and McCoy emphasized the importance of the axis section, noting that specific terms in the text seem to gravitate toward it, and that identical ideas are spread throughout the section centered on the axis.<sup>52</sup> Breck also concluded that chiasmus is distinguished from direct parallelism and is inverted to emphasize the central conceptual theme, or "pivot," on which other elements

<sup>42</sup> William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew And Aramaic Lexicon Of The Old Testament* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), 219; Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon Of The Greek New Testament*, 218.

<sup>43</sup> Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon Of The Greek New Testament*, 218.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 4.

<sup>45</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 43–46.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>48</sup> Brad McCoy, "Chiasmus: An Important Structural Device Commonly Found in Biblical Literature," *CTS Journal* 9 (2003): 20–21.

<sup>49</sup> Wayne Brouwer, "The Literary Development of John 13-17: A Chiastic Reading" (McMaster University, 1999), 10.

<sup>50</sup> Wayne Brouwer, "Rethinking the Structure of the 'Farewell Discourse' (John 13-17) through a Chiastic Lens," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2020): 4–7; Elie Assis, "Chiasmus in Biblical Narrative: Rhetoric of Characterization," *Prooftexts A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 22, no. 3 (2002): 273.

<sup>51</sup> R. Norrman, *Samuel Butler and the Meaning of Chiasmus* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 276.

<sup>52</sup> Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiasmus Structures*, 40–41; McCoy, "Chiasmus: An Important Structural Device Commonly Found in Biblical Literature," 17.

are built.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the middle section plays an essential role in determining the substance of text being studied and even serves as the starting point for explanations throughout the text unit. The C-C' section is seen as an axis that presents the main point and becomes the center of the development of ideas.

There is only a slight difference between verse 2b and verse 3. In verse 2b, the word θεὸν is a singular masculine accusative noun. The accusative form is *a direct object* because it is related to the transitive verb ἀγαπῶμεν.<sup>54</sup> The word θεὸν is the direct object of the act of loving. The definite article τὸν has a singular masculine accusative form, which points to θεὸν as par excellence, referring to a special person because there is only one God known and worshiped by believers. Meanwhile, in verse 3, the word θεοῦ is a<sup>55</sup> singular masculine genitive noun. The genitive form is an objective genitive to explain that ἡ ἀγάπη is directed to God or God as the object of believers' love.<sup>56</sup> The word τοῦ is a definite genitive article which is also a par excellent article, because it refers to the only person worthy of being called θεός.<sup>57</sup> Although one is accusative and the other is genitive, both θεὸν and θεοῦ are *objective*, namely the object of the believer's love.

In verse 2b, the first-person plural active present subjunctive verb ἀγαπῶμεν appears. The subjunctive form is the subjunctive in an indefinite temporal clause, which is marked by the appearance of ὅταν and functions to indicate future possibility from the perspective of the main verb's time.<sup>58</sup> The present form is the gnomic present, which functions to indicate a timeless fact or eternal fact that is not limited by time.<sup>59</sup> The emphasis is not that something is happening, but that something does happen.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, in verse 3, the word ἀγαπάω appears in the form ἡ ἀγάπη, the article ἡ has a singular feminine nominative form, which identifies ἀγγελία as a particular object.<sup>61</sup> The word ἀγάπη is a singular feminine nominative noun. The nominative type is nominative subject, functioning as a subject, because the word ἀγάπη is the subject that John wants to explain. Although one is a verb and the other is a noun, both τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν and ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ equally emphasize love for God. This love is the focus of John's attention.

Verses 2b and 3 both exactly mention τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ. The word ἐντολὰς is a feminine plural accusative noun. The accusative form is a direct object because it is related to the transitive verb τηρῶμεν.<sup>62</sup> The word ἐντολὰς is the direct object of the action of obeying. Meanwhile, the word αὐτοῦ is a masculine singular genitive pronoun. The

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<sup>53</sup> John Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17, no. 2 (May 1, 1987): 70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/014610798701700206>.

<sup>54</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 179.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 523–524.

<sup>60</sup> Philip R. Williams, *Greek Grammar and Syntax Notes* (South Caroline: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 27.

<sup>61</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 216.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 179.

genitive function here is possessive genitive to explain that ἐντολὰς belongs to God.<sup>63</sup> The translation for τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ is 'His commandments.' However, there is a difference in the use of the verb. Verse 2b uses ποιῶμεν while verse 3 uses τηρῶμεν. The word ποιῶμεν is the first-person plural active present subjunctive verb. The subjunctive type is the subjunctive an indefinite temporal clause, which is marked by the appearance of ὅταν and its function indicates a future possibility from the perspective of the main verb's time.<sup>64</sup> The present type is the gnomic present, which reveals a timeless eternal fact that is not limited by time.<sup>65</sup> The emphasis is not that something is happening, but that something does happen.<sup>66</sup> The translation for ποιῶμεν is 'we do.'

Meanwhile, the word τηρῶμεν in verse 3 is a first-person plural active present subjunctive verb. The subjunctive tense is an epexegetical ἵνα clause, characterized by the appearance of ἵνα and its function is to explain or clarify a noun or adjective.<sup>67</sup> The word being explained is ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ. The present tense is gnomic present, whose function is to indicate a timeless fact or eternal fact that is not limited by time.<sup>68</sup> The emphasis is not that something is 'currently' happening, but that something 'indeed' happened.<sup>69</sup> The translation for τηρῶμεν is 'we keep.' Although ποιῶμεν and τηρῶμεν have different lexical meanings, both convey the idea of obedience. Carrying out and keeping God's commands without regard to time is a form of loving God. The appearance of the phrase αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν at the beginning of verse 3 confirms this. The word γάρ is a conjunction with the category of explanatory conjunctions whose function is to provide additional information from what is explained.<sup>70</sup> John wants to provide additional information regarding ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ. The word ἐστιν is the third-person singular active present indicative verb of the word εἰμί. Literally, the word means 'to exist' (describing existence).<sup>71</sup> This word is related to Αὕτη to emphasize the existence of ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ. The present tense is gnomic present whose function is to show a timeless fact or eternal fact that is not limited by time<sup>72</sup> regarding the eternal existence of ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ. The word ἐστιν is translated 'is.' So in other words, verse 3a can be interpreted as 'love for God is to obey all His commandments.' Continuity or faithfulness is emphasized.

The axis of the structure shows the main idea (substance). John emphasizes obedience to God's commandments as evidence of one's love for Him. Love for God, manifested through obedience to God's commandments, becomes a point related to love for others and victory over the world. According to Marshall, obedience to God's

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 81–82.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 523–524.

<sup>66</sup> Williams, *Greek Grammar and Syntax Notes*, 27.

<sup>67</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 476.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 523–524.

<sup>69</sup> Williams, *Greek Grammar and Syntax Notes*, 27.

<sup>70</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 673.

<sup>71</sup> Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon Of The Greek New Testament*, 56.

<sup>72</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, 523–524.

commandments is shown by loving God and others, by overcoming the world that tempts believers.<sup>73</sup> By borrowing the term popularized by Gary Chapman, namely the language of love<sup>74</sup>, the author states that the language of love of believers to God is by obeying all His commandments. God's love language is obedience.

## CONCLUSION

The explanation in the verse leads to the conclusion that 1 John 5:1-5 is a unified structure. This is proven by the similarities between the first part of verse 1 and the last part of verse 5, namely the parallelism and inclusion marked by the repetition of the words ὁ πιστεύω, ὅτι, and the phrase Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν. The structure of the text begins and ends with a Christological doctrinal statement. Based on the chiasm structure with the ABCC'B'A' pattern contained in 1 John 5:1-5, it is clear that the axis and main idea (substance) in the structure is love for God through obedience to His commandments. This research implies that believers are reminded of the importance of having a strong doctrinal foundation regarding Christ, still more, obedience to all of God's commandments must be shown as evidence of one's love for God.

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<sup>73</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 228–229.

<sup>74</sup> Gary Chapman, *God Speaks Your Love Language: How to Feel and Reflect God's Love* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2009), 21.

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