

## ***Small Group Bible Study***

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community

A Study in 1 John

### **The Cornerstone of Authentic Christian Community**

**1 John 1:1-4**

#### **Opening Discussion**

1. Do you sense people in our culture are becoming more or less isolated from one another? Why is that? What effect is it having on people?
2. In what ways has this trend affected you personally?
3. What does community (fellowship) look like for you? Where do you experience it? What are some identifying marks of true community for you?
4. We will be learning about “authentic” Christian community in this study. Describe what you would consider to be “artificial” Christian community. Which do you believe is more common? Why?

#### **Bible Study**

1. Read 1 John 1:1-4 in several different translations if you have them available. Also read the Gospel of John 1:1-14. What similarities do you notice from the same author?
2. John is obviously refuting the false teaching that is dividing the churches when he reaffirms what they witnessed as Apostles concerning Jesus. Think back to the Gospels and identify what they heard, saw, beheld and touched concerning Jesus (the Word of Life). See 1 Cor. 15:1-8 as well.
3. The reason John uses “what” rather than “who” (vs. 1) is because the message is more than just who Jesus is. It was also what He did. What was proclaimed to them was the whole package concerning the person and work of Jesus. Apparently the false teachers were denying some aspect of Jesus’ person and/or work. In what ways does this continue to be a problem in churches today? How credible is it that people deny something 2000 years after the fact that eyewitnesses overwhelmingly confirmed in the first century?
4. John summarizes the message of Jesus as eternal life in verse 2. According to the Gospel of John 17:3, what is eternal life? Does eternal life start when you die or when you trust Jesus as Savior?
5. John states that the result of eternal life (what was proclaimed) is fellowship/community. We experience community with others because we are all fellow partakers of the divine nature through Christ. Read 2 Peter 1:4. The word “partakers” used by Peter is the same word translated “fellowship” by John. What, then, is the theological basis for our community as Christians? How, then, should the “community” we experience as fellow believers differ from the “community” experienced outside the church?

6. If the church truly understood and experienced biblical community, how attractive would that be to people in the world searching for something real? In other words, how critical is authentic community to our mission as a church? (Compare with what Jesus said in John 17:20,21.)
7. Often people think of community/fellowship as something good to have in church, but not essential. They sometimes think it isn't as important as biblical instruction or worship or evangelism. Would John agree with this assessment, based on what he's written in 1:1-4? Why or why not?

## **Application**

1. Based on our study so far, as a group, write a definition of authentic Christian community.
2. List three practical things you could do as a group to begin to experience this type of community.
3. Spend time in prayer asking God to make us one as He and the Father are one (John 17:20,21).