

Sept. 29/30, 2001

Study Questions

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community: A Study in 1 John

Love and Hate

1 John 2:7-11

Opening Discussion

1. Do you believe people in our culture are generally characterized by selflessness or selfishness? Give some examples to support your answer.
2. Do you believe *Christians* are generally characterized by selflessness or selfishness? Give some examples to support your answer.
3. According to Jesus, love for one another as Christians is to be the identifying mark of a follower of Jesus. Do you think the average non-Christian would identify our love for one another as that which sets us apart from others? Why or why not?
4. Do you think Jesus limited this command to the Christians in your local church? Christians we agree with? Is there any justification for being unloving to anyone who has truly trusted Jesus as Savior?

Bible Study

1. Read 1 John 1:1-2:11 to pick up the flow of thought. We've learned that the person and work of Jesus is the cornerstone to authentic Christian community. Then we learned that when we walk in authentic community our sins are exposed, so we must confess them and experience God's forgiveness rather than slip back into the darkness and pretend we have no sin. The more we do this the more we walk in obedience, which means the more we become like Jesus – which is the goal. Therefore, authentic community is a necessary value to accomplish the mission of the church.
2. The command to love one another (which is the command that is inferred in v.7) is not new. Look up these verses that affirm what John is saying. Lev. 19:18, Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:37-40, Gal. 5:14.
3. Yet, in verse 8, John says in another way the command is new. How does this line up with what Jesus said in John 13:34,35? What was new about the command which Jesus gave and John reemphasized? Notice carefully the wording used by both Jesus and John. Both highlight the key to understanding how the command to love is "new."
4. Verse 9 speaks of "hating" his brother. At first glance it would be easy for most of us to dismiss this verse because we don't hate our fellow believers. However, the word hate is not a term of emotion as we may think. It is a contrast to love. Love is to think of others as more important than ourselves, so hate would be to think of our own needs before we think of others. Based on this definition of hate, how often do we "hate" others?

5. Authentic Christian community demands that we think of others as more important than ourselves. It cannot be a selfish pursuit. We are called to wash one another's feet even when we don't feel like it. Authentic community often reveals how selfish we really are. How does this line up with John's words in 1:5-10? In practical terms, what does it mean then to walk in the light according to John?
6. In what ways do we cause others to stumble when we walk in the darkness and "hate" our fellow believers? Have you ever been made to stumble because you experienced the selfishness of another believer? Share your experience without revealing the names of those who hurt you.
7. According to verse 11, do people who walk in darkness (selfishness) know the damage they are causing? According to what we've learned in 1:1-2:11, what is the solution to exposing people's selfishness?

Application

1. Brainstorm ways selfishness can be manifested among believers. Are we guilty of any of these behaviors or attitudes? Take some time to examine your own heart and confess your sin where necessary.
2. What does love look like lived out in daily life among believers? What one thing could you do to be more loving this next week?
3. Choose one person you struggle to love. Determine one way you could "wash the feet" of this person to demonstrate the love of Jesus to them.
4. Ask God to reveal any areas where you are unloving, and dedicate yourself to walking in the light, which means truly loving one another in Christ.