

November 10/11, 2001

Study Questions

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community: A Study in 1 John

Whose Child Are You?

1 John 3:1-10

Opening Discussion

1. Discuss what you believe distinguishes a child of God from a child of the devil in our culture today. Be specific. Do you believe the difference is obvious? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe a Christian can knowingly live in sin without conviction, confession and repentance? Why or why not? What might this imply concerning those who claim to be Christians but seem to have no concept of sin?
3. What does it mean to you to be a child of God? When was the last time you marveled at the miracle that you have been made a child of the living God who created heaven and earth? What happens when we take these great truths for granted?

Bible Study

1. In 1 John 3:1, John marvels at the wonder that we have been made children of God. He then comments that the world does not know us because it did not know Him. What did the world not know about Jesus when He walked this earth? In the same way because we are in Christ, what is true of us that the world cannot possibly understand?
2. As children of God we are becoming like Him, which is the purpose of authentic Christian community. What does this mean? Do you picture Jesus still in His humility or in His glory?

Read John's description of Jesus in Rev.1:7-20. Can we even begin to imagine what we shall be one day? How should this motivate our behavior now (v3)?

3. Define sin according to 3:4. What does this mean in practical terms?
4. Why did Jesus come to earth as a man, according to 3:5?
5. Following John's logic from verses 4 and 5, what does John conclude in verses 6 and 9 for those who are children of God?

The verb "sins" is a present durative tense, which means as a way of life or habitual pattern. Compare 1:5-2:2 with 3:6,9. It is obvious Christians still sin, but not as a pattern of life. List all the reasons John gives for why habitual sin cannot exist in a child of God?

What does John mean by His "seed" abides in us in 3:9? How is this similar to what He said in 2:20,27?

6. According to John, what distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil? Compare with the Gospel of John 8:44.
7. Compared John's words in 3:1-10 with Paul's words in Romans 7:7-25.

Application

1. The false teachers (the Gnostics) were claiming to be of God, but practiced sin as a way of life without conviction. John is responding by saying this cannot be. Summarize John's message in a simple paragraph. Share your paragraphs with one another.
2. Do you think John intended for us to use this passage to judge others' salvation or to examine our own heart and behavior?
3. Pray Psalm 139:23,24 and see if there is any area of your life that needs to be examined to live as a child of God.