

November 17/18, 2001

Study Questions

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community: A Study in 1 John

Believe and Love

1 John 3:11-24

Opening Discussion

1. Have you ever been fooled by something that looked like the real thing but it was actually a cheap imitation? How did you figure out it wasn't the real thing?
2. What is the difference between the community you may experience at work, school or in the neighborhood versus the authentic Christian community John is promoting?
3. Let's imagine you went on a three-month trip with 10 people. 5 are Christians and 5 are not. All 10 are good, moral, religious people. What would you look for to identify which 5 are the Christians? Over a period of three months should the difference be obvious? Why or why not?

Bible Study

1. John has been discussing authentic Christian community. He is writing in a spiral fashion, meaning he covered three basic elements of authentic Christian community once, and now he is covering the same elements again, only expanding on what he said before. What did John say about each of these elements the first time around as they relate to community?

Truth about Jesus 1:1-4
Dealing with sin 1:5-2:6
Love one another 2:7-11

How did he expand his teaching on these elements of community?

Truth about Jesus 2:18-29
Dealing with sin 3:1-10
Love one another 3:11-24

2. 1 John 3:10 clearly states that how we treat one another makes it obvious whether we are a child of the devil or a child of God. How does this line up with Jesus' words in John 13:34,35?
3. In 1 John 3:11-12, John uses Cain as a picture of the children of the devil. What does John mean by his statement, "And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous."?

Therefore, what does John conclude about us in verse 13? What can you expect in practical terms if you are a child of God? How does this explain why Christians are being put to death in many countries of the world today?

4. What does John mean when he says if you hate another you are a murderer? How does this line up with what Jesus said in Matthew 5:21,22? Were there any people in the Bible who were guilty of murder who were children of God?
5. How do John's words in 1 John 3:16 line up with Jesus' statement in John 15:12,13? How is the way of Cain contrasted with the way of Christ?
6. How do John's words in 1 John 3:17 compare with James 2:14-26?
7. What gives us confidence even when our heart condemns us, according to 3:18-22? What does this mean in practical terms?
8. 3:23 takes two commandments and makes them one: believe and love. Why is it not possible to separate these two commands? 3:24 says Christ abides in believers by the Spirit. How does that concept help us understand this whole text from 3:10-24? In other words, given this truth, why is it not possible to be a child of God and not love?

Application

1. List three practical ways you can love the people around you according to 3:18.
2. Search your heart and ask God to reveal to you any issue that you need to settle with another believer to love as Jesus loved? Review 3:16 as the basis for this love.
3. Define what it takes to cultivate authentic Christian community, according to John, from chapters 1-3.
4. Spend time in prayer asking God to cultivate authentic Christian community among your group.