

December 15/16, 2001

Study Questions

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community: A Study in 1 John

Three Witnesses From God

1 John 5:6-12

Opening Discussion

1. How much evidence would be enough to convict someone in a court of law? Describe the type of evidence that would be most effective to convince a jury.
2. Who do people in our culture today believe Jesus was (or is)? How could people celebrate Christmas complete with manger and carols and still not understand the real meaning?
3. What do you believe is necessary to convince people who Jesus is and what He did for them on the cross?

Bible Study

1. In 1 John 5:1,5 John has clearly stated that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He continues on that same theme by presenting three witnesses from God to verify this fact. Read 5:1-12 to get the flow.
2. Bible students disagree on what exactly is meant by the “water and blood” in verse 6. It seems most likely, given the way the verse is stated, the dispute was over the “blood.” The Gnostics believed Jesus received a special power at His baptism but believed that He lost this power before His crucifixion. Therefore, it seems likely John is refuting this error by stating Jesus was God through His death, not just temporarily while He did some miracles.

Think through all the evidence related to Jesus’ birth, baptism, life and ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension that would testify to His claim to be God. Look up the following related passages in the Gospels:

Birth: Luke 1-2, Matt. 1-2

Baptism: Matt. 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11

Life and Ministry: All four Gospels

Death: All four Gospels

Ascension: Acts 1

Were these events secret or public?

Did they occur in front of believers only or also in front of skeptics and enemies?

Given the fact that these Gospel records were written while the witnesses were still alive, what would have been the reaction by Jesus’ enemies if what was recorded wasn’t true? (The fact is no such claim was made.)

3. The third witness John claims is the Holy Spirit, who is truth. Compare with these passages John's Gospel:

14:16,17,26

15:26,27

16:13

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

How does this line up with what John said in 1 John 2:27?

Read Hebrews 11:6. Often we want the facts, then we'll believe. How does God invite us to come? What is the result?

What does this tell us about the effectiveness of trying to argue people into the Kingdom of God?

(This is not to say there is no place for well-reasoned arguments. Even John is appealing to the witnesses of Jesus' baptism and death as evidence for who He is. However, it's only when someone is willing to step out by faith that true assurance of what is true comes from the Holy Spirit within.)

4. 1 John 5:10-12 puts the message of the Bible in a nutshell. What is it?

How does John's message conflict with the trend in our culture that all faiths eventually lead to God?

Application

1. Do you believe the witness of God? In what practical ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit affirming the truth about Jesus in you?

Do you have any doubts about your salvation or who Jesus is?

2. According to what John has taught us in his letter, what is the most effective way to reach unbelievers around us?
3. How should we respond when others share with us their belief that all roads eventually lead to God?
4. Spend time praying for those you know who have never received eternal life through Jesus the Son of God.