



study guide

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PART 2 | Study 1

God's Family Grows in Righteousness

1 John 3:1-10

Context

At the start of his first letter, John has made it clear what he sets out to do. He is declaring to the readers 'the word of life' (1:1) that he has seen, heard and touched - so that the readers will also have a fellowship with the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and other believers.

Toward the end of the letter, John also makes it clear that he wants us to have the assurance that we are part of God's family (5:13). Therefore, John invites us to examine our lives to see whether there is evidence that we are truly members of God's family and to be encouraged that indeed we are.

In the first two chapters, John has so far given us at least five signs of our salvation:

- we are honest and repentant of our sins (1:5-10)
- we have the desire to obey God (2:1-6)
- we love one another (2:7-14)
- we do not love the world (2:15-17)
- we keep believing in the One who saves us (2:18-29).

In the remaining of the letter, John unpacks further what it means for us to live in God's family. In verses 3:1-10, John uses the term 'children of God' for the first time in his letter - a title that Christians are not unfamiliar with and discusses its implication to our lives.

1. What do 1 John 3:1, John 1:10-12 and 3:3-8 say about how to become children of God?

Observation

2. What are the characteristics of children of God (1 John 3:1-10)?

Meaning

3. We are God's children **now**, but what we will be has **not yet** appeared (verse 2). What does John mean by that (verse 3)? What are the implications for our lives now (Romans 8:12-17)?

4. Jesus' mission in his first coming was to destroy the works of the devil (verse 8). How do you reconcile that with the fact that the devil is still active in the world today (Luke 10:17-20 and Hebrews 2:14-18)?

5. How do we reconcile verses 4-10 with 1 John 1:8-10?

Application

6. Without a doubt, John wants to convince us to pursue holiness in our lives (verse 3).
 - a. How has this passage encouraged you to grow in your holiness?

 - b. In which aspect of your life are you willing to grow in holiness?

 - c. What steps are you going to take?

7. John's letter was written not to individuals, but a local group of believers. We are not meant to pursue holiness alone, but together with the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ - our fellow children of God. What will you do as a life group to encourage and keep each other accountable?

PART 2 | Study 2

God’s Family Loves One Another Sacrificially

1 John 3:11-24

Context

This passage begins by asking the readers to recall what they have already heard about loving one another. In Jesus’ own words:

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” - Matthew 22:37-40

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. - John 15:12-13

Observation

1. John uses ‘abide’ plenty of times in the whole letter, including five times in this passage. How does his use of ‘abide’ relate to our salvation?

2. This passage has three commands (verses 11, 18 and 23) backed up by three reasons (verses 12-14, 19-20 and 24). What are they?

Verse	Command	Verse	Reason
11		12-14	
18		19-20	
23		24	

Meaning

3. John writes with great confidence (verses 21-22) about God answering our prayers. How do you reconcile these verses with unanswered prayers in your life (2 Corinthians 12:8-9, John 15:7-8 and 1 John 5:14-15)?
4. Sometimes our heart condemns us before God (verse 20); sometimes it does not (verse 21). What is John referring to? How can we tell the difference?

Application

5. Share a moment in your life when you became aware of the difference between the conviction of sin through the Holy Spirit and the feeling of guilt through self-condemnation.
6. John encourages us to lay down our lives for our brethren as Jesus did (verse 16) - loving in deed and truth (verse 18). The early Christians experienced hardship like us and they found ways to help their fellow brothers and sisters in need by looking after the poor in their community (Acts 4:34-35), in other countries (Romans 15:25-26) and in their own families (1 Timothy 4: 4 and 7).

Prayerfully consider one specific and practical way that your life group can do for those in need in our city and for your life group's global partner.

God's Family is United in Christ

1 John 4:1-6

Context

Since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there have been hundreds of false prophets claiming to be the Messiah. One recent example is Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez, who in 2011 claimed that he was Jesus and fired a semi-automatic rifle at the White House.

While some false prophets are fairly easy to identify, others are much harder to root out. As followers of Christ, we must be vigilant or risk being led astray. In today's world of fake news, having a source of truth is more important and valuable than ever before.

1. How do you determine if a piece of information is true or false? What do you rely on as your source of truth?

Observation

2. What are the two tests in this passage that we can use to identify false prophets?

Meaning

3. What is the meaning of 'confess' in regards to Jesus coming in the flesh (verse 2)? Is it enough to simply say it (Romans 10:9 and John 1:12-13)?

4. John's first test (verses 1-3) is to examine what someone says to see if they are from God. John focuses on whether the spirit confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Why are miracles, signs and wonders not part of John's tests to determine if a spirit is from God (Matthew 7:21-23 and 24:24)?

5. John's second test (verses 4-6) is to examine the people who listen to the false prophets. The world listens to the prophets who are from the world (verse 5) while those who know God listens to those (i.e the Apostles) who are from God. Why is it important to examine their followers to determine if they are from God (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)?

Application

6. Have you had an encounter with a false prophet? Share your experience.

7. Paul warns us that there are men who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ, with even Satan disguising himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-14). As a result, we must be careful in discerning whether a teaching is from God or the world. Apply John's two tests to your encounters with false prophets in question 6.

8. How should we respond when we identify that someone's teachings are not in line with the Bible (Jude 1:17-23)? What if that person is from outside the church, a popular Christian media figure, your life group leader, your life group member or your pastor?

PART 2 | Study 4

God's Family Loves Because God First Loved Us

1 John 4:7-21

Context

"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God.

And everyone who loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;

He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love;

Beloved, let us love one another; first John four: seven and eight!"

(Music by Dale Garret, 1973)

Many of us may recall singing this song, which is taken directly from the Bible. Scripture-based songs help children memorise Bible verses and stay with you throughout your life. Committing to memory often means committing to heart - and what a lovely message to commit to heart that God is love.

John teaches us that God is love and though we have not seen Him, we know Him. Knowing God is only possible if we abide in Him and He abides in us. And God will only abide in us if we love one another.

Observation

1. John states that love is the very nature and essence of God. How has God demonstrated His love for us? How is it different from how the world perceives God (verses 9-10)?

2. What are the grounds of assurance that are evidence of genuine Christian faith that we abide in God and He abides in us (verses 13-21)?

Meaning

3. How does knowing God's love motivate us to love one another? How is God's love perfected as we do it (Romans 5:6-8 and John 13:34-35, 15:13)?
4. Why does abiding or living in God lead us to be confident in love and not fear (John 14:20-27 and Romans 8:9-17)?

Application

5. How can we be confident that God's love abides in us knowing that we will always struggle in loving others (John 1:18, 1 Peter 1:8 and 1 John 2:3-6)?
6. What should we do when we find it difficult to love others? How does this passage encourage us to do so (Luke 10:25-37)?

Prayer

Lord, thank you for saving a sinner like me, for your forgiveness which I could never earn. Thank you for your steadfast and unfailing love. Help me to love others as you have loved me.

*He said, "Freely freely you have received, freely freely give;
Go in my name, and because you believe, others will know that I live."
(Freely, Freely, Carol Owens, 1972)*

God's Family Believes in God's Son

1 John 5:1-12

Context

This passage begins with a bold declaration that Jesus is the Christ - the very core of the Gospel. This is the saving faith that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross for our sins and redeemed us, so that we may be born again into God's family. But that is not all that John promises.

1. Share about a brother or a sister in Christ who has impacted your life with how they love you or others.

Observation

2. When we love God and keep His commandments, we know that we love the children of God. How does our obedience to God's commandments translate to loving our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Meaning

3. John confidently expresses that God's commandments are not burdensome and that our faith is our victory over the world (verses 3-5). These statements echo Jesus' words (Matthew 11:28-30 and John 16:33). How can we reconcile these with our experience of difficulties in obeying God's commandments?

4. What is John referring to by 'water and blood' (verse 6)? Why does he place an emphasis on 'not by water **only** but by the water and the blood (Matthew 3:13-17, Isaiah 53:4-6 and 1 Peter 2:24)?

5. Testimonies require more than one witness by Jewish law (Deuteronomy 19:15). These testimonies should be in agreement and not contradict one another (Mark 14:55-59). What does John mean by saying that water, blood and the Spirit testify and agree (verse 8 and John 8:17-18)? How is this testimony manifested in us (verse 10)?

Application

6. Those who have been born of God overcomes the world (verses 4-5). What struggles do you long to have victory over?

7. How can you explain 'being born of God' through our belief in Christ to someone who is unfamiliar with the concept?

8. John's warning (verses 10 and 12) should remind us of the importance and urgency of sharing the good news of God's saving grace through His Son. Who can you minister to with the Gospel? How can you support one another in reaching out to others in a practical way?

PART 2 | Study 6

God's Family Spurs One Another toward Holiness

1 John 5:13-21

Context

In the previous studies, we have looked into the testimony concerning Jesus as the Son of God and what it means to be children of God. John's statement about eternal life (verse 13) is not simply a concluding statement of the letter - it is an assurance that we have eternal life in the name of Jesus.

1. John has repeated 'believe in the name of the Son of God' multiple times in his letter. Name is not just a word (or set of words) by which a person or a thing is known, addressed or referred to. It carries the identity and essence of our existence. What is the impact of believing or trusting in someone's name?

Observation

2. John talks about confidence in prayer (verses 14-15). Why can we be confident in prayer? What sort of prayer can we be confident about?

Meaning

John mentions two sins - one that does not lead to death and one that does (verses 16-17).

3. What are the explanation of these two sins? How can we tell the difference?
 - a. A sin that does not lead to death (1 John 1:7-9, 5:13 and 5:18)
 - b. A sin that leads to death (Matthew 12:31-32 and Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29)

4. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one (verse 19). However, Jesus says “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). How do we reconcile these verses? See also Ephesians 6:12.

5. Why does John finish his letter with a warning (verse 21)?

Application

6. John finishes with an encouragement and a warning against idols (verses 19-21). How have your fellow Christian brothers and sisters (or the church) kept you from idolatry and reminded you of the truth of Jesus?

As we conclude the series, let us reflect, assess and share if we have truly applied the lessons from John’s letter.

Closing Remarks

When I wrote the introduction for this series, Victoria was in the first round of lockdown due to the rapid spread of COVID-19. Interestingly, and perhaps unfortunately, as I am writing these closing remarks, Victoria is in the second round of lockdown due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases.

Except for a handful, many countries are struggling to cope with the ongoing spread of COVID-19. The whole world has to grapple with this new reality until the vaccine is found. Although we are hopeful that the vaccine will be found, we are not sure when it will be widely available. Even then, the threat of virus mutations is still looming and might render the vaccine ineffective. Furthermore, the economic impact of the pandemic might be more lethal than the pandemic itself. To say the least, we are in very uncertain times, and we desperately need some assurance that things will be OK.

As we have learned together throughout our 12 studies, Apostle John knows how much we need assurance of our salvation among the uncertainties in our lives. In his days, as well as ours, many false teachers are propagating their 'new' teachings that might shake the foundations of our beliefs. There are also times that our actions and sins make us doubt whether we are truly saved.

That is why Apostle John begins his letter by reminding us again of **the word of life** who has brought us **the eternal life** (1 John 1:2-3). He also makes it clear that the purpose of his letter is so that we who believe in the name of the Son of God know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

Despite uncertainties in our lives, John wants us to examine our lives - whether or not we see evidence of repentant lives, have genuine and sacrificial love for others, grow in our obedience to Jesus, cling on to the truth and show the practice of righteousness and its characteristics - and to have the confidence of our position in God's family in Jesus Christ.

So, congratulations on persevering through the 12 studies of John's first letter. We hope that John's purpose in writing his letter is accomplished in your life - that indeed you will have increasing confidence of your salvation. We also hope that you will continue to draw closer to Jesus and encourage one another to do the same - that together we will bear an

increasing fruit that will assure us even more that we are indeed saved. To say it in the words of Apostle John himself:

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

(1 John 2:28)

Together in the Gospel,

Sandy Citro