

**Leaders
Notes**

HERE IS

JOY



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How to use this book

At St Paul's we are committed to growing as disciples of Jesus, spurring each other on to know and grow in Jesus. We know that God works through His Word powerfully to teach and transform us. We therefore know the importance of seeing God's Word regularly sown into our lives, through our sermon series and also during the week.

We see this process as we daily open God's Word and depend on Him in prayer. We also grow as we meet in our households and study groups to read God's Word together.

Over time we've seen that as we study the same passage from God's Word, that God builds depth in our understanding, stronger application in our lives, and encouragement in our households and church as we learn together.

As we together dig into the idea of **HERE IS JOY** this term, we are exploring the concepts in these ways...

CHURCH

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church, or keep it handy when you watch church online. Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided. Then, be ready to reflect on these personally, as you meet with someone 121, and as you meet up with your Small Group.

SMALL GROUPS

Take this guide with you to your Small Group each week. There are Bible studies for each topic within the **HERE IS JOY** series, with space to write down your answers plus prayer points that arise from the study and prayer requests from the members of your group.

Setting the scene for our series **HERE IS JOY**

PURPOSE

This letter, written by the Apostle John, is a challenging piece of writing and an important gift to the family of God, those who are in Christ. From 1 John 2:18-23 and 1 John 4:1-3 we learn about a group of people who have left the church and are denying Jesus as the Christ and even as the Son of God. In 1 John 3:4-10 they are causing hostility and division by leading people astray (1 John 3:7).

Given this problem, the elder (John) wants to protect those who hold to the truth about Jesus, by reminding them of what they were taught and the kind of lives this should produce in them.

In recent times cultural and social change that is contrary to Jesus' commands have seeped into the worldwide church. Perhaps we are becoming more and more syncretistic. We take what we like about Jesus and combine it with what the culture is telling us and call it good. There is sometimes too little difference between followers of Jesus and those who do not follow him. These ideas often come from people who were once part of Jesus' church and continue to have influence.

Being reminded of our roots and foundational truths ought to build us up and help us to persevere. This is the purpose of John's letter. This can also be seen in John's writing called Revelation, where we see the refrain: "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus." (Revelation 14:12, 13:10b).

Perseverance means keeping going, even through challenges and difficulties. 1 John is not only about perseverance but assurance (the reason believers persevere).

*"Assurance, then, is a pervading theme in the letter, and grounds of assurance that the author provides tend to be objective and ethical rather than subjective and doctrinaire. The reader's assurance is to be grounded on God's testimony about his Son, their own godly living, loving action and concern for fellow believers, their obedience to the love command, and the Spirit's testimony to Christ."*¹

¹Kruse, Colin G. The Letters of John. (Pillar series) 2000. Page 33.

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

The structure of 1 John is not easy to pin down. It is not a straightforward or linear argument as we may be used to. It is also not helpful for us to impose this kind of structure on the book to “make it fit.”

1 John is most likely what we would call Epideictic Rhetoric. It is speech, or writing, that relates to values and attitudes and aims to bring a deepening reaffirmation of values already held. It doesn't seek to prove but reaffirm what is already known. A feature of Epideictic Rhetoric is “amplification”, or building on what has already been presented.

The elder reminds the readers of what they already know (1 John 2:3, 2:7, 2:18, 2:21, 2:24, 2:27, 3:5, 3:11). John often uses the expression “we know”, speaking of himself and the apostles, but draws in the readers as believers who have been taught these things and know them as well.

A suggested structure is:

Introduction: 1 John 1:1-4

God is light: 1 John 1:5-3:10

God is love: 1 John 3:11-5:17

Conclusion: 1 John 5:18-21

It is also worth noting that this book is less like a letter and more like a sermon. This helps to read it more as it was intended.

The break up for our teaching series will be as follows:

30th January 2022	1 John 1:1 – 4
6th February 2022	1 John 1:5 – 2:2
13th February 2022	1 John 2:3 – 11
20th February 2022	1 John 2:12 – 17
27th February 2022	1 John 2:18 – 27
6th March 2022	1 John 2:28 – 3:10
13th March 2022	1 John 3:11 – 24
20th March 2022	1 John 4:1 – 6
27th March 2022	1 John 4:7 – 21
3rd April 2022	1 John 5:1-13
10th April 2022	1 John 5:14 – 21

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Campbell C - 1, 2, 3 John.
The Story of God Bible
Commentary. 2017.

The Bible Project Video
Overview: 1-3 John
CLICK [HERE](#) TO WATCH

Study 1

1 JOHN 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION

In the first 4 verses of this book the author is reminding the church of the credibility of the message to which the readers first responded. We all want to have confidence in the information we are given. Why should we believe what we are being told?

In this book the readers are being reminded, in typical John style, that what they believed at first is important, so that when he talks to them regarding those who have left the fellowship teaching a different or nuanced message would be recognisable and should be avoided. In this book the church is being reminded, in typical John style, that what they believed at first is important and trustworthy. Then, when John talks about people who have left the fellowship, teaching a different or corrupted message, the church will be able to recognise this and avoid problems of wrong belief.

QUESTIONS

1. Read all of 1 John. Share any observations made with the group.

Include here things like repeated phrases, key words, convictions or if it invokes any feelings. It may provoke conflict in someone's mind because it challenges their view of Jesus and what it means to obey him. Allow people to talk. This question is not trying to seek definitive answers, but people's initial thoughts and feelings. There are no right or wrong answers here. Try to let the conversation flow. As the series unfolds we want people to be shaped by God's word and be challenged by it.

2. In 1 John 1:1 we read “that which was from the beginning.” Similar introductory words are found in his gospel (John 1:1). To what is John referring in 1 John 1:1? How is this different from John 1:1?

Sorry about all the Is and John's in this question. In 1 John there is a series of relative clauses (beginning with “which we...”) to describe the Word of Life (verse 1). The word of life would be Jesus as God incarnate. These are the things that John has seen and heard and touched, which is only possible when Jesus became human. In John 1 it is referring to a more cosmic level of existence. This implies that there is a link between the incarnate Jesus and the Son on who was there before the beginning of creation.

3. John says that “we” have heard, seen, looked at and touched. Why is it important that John uses “we” as he starts out? What do we learn about the Word of life from this description of what they had understood and taught?

Use of “we” means there is credibility in multiple witness accounts. There is also solidarity and corroboration in what has been taught. The Word of life is not just something that is heard but embodied. Jesus is experienced and known. It is not just the testimony of one person but others as well (“we”). Perhaps you could ask how this helps people persevere or have assurance that we are saved and have eternal life (verse 2)?

4. What do you think it means that eternal life “was with the father” and appeared to them (verse 2)?

“The expression ‘eternal life’ here, then, does not denote an impersonal quality of life that comes from the Father, but refers to the Word of life, the Son of God, who was with the Father prior to his incarnation, and in whom eternal life is found.” Eternal life is not just something Jesus offers but means that we experience it with him; it becomes a means of fellowship. It is an attribute of God himself. Perhaps it provides a closeness to God we have not considered, and not merely a gift from God for us to enjoy. We do not just ‘get’ eternal life ... we get him, Jesus. There is quality to this life, not just longevity. Perhaps this is why we are to live the way John describes in this letter, as it reflects our beginning in eternal life and not just a means to getting it. We already have it and are living it, even if it is not yet in its fullness.

5. In verse 3 what does it mean to have fellowship with each other? How does this relate to fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ?

Fellowship is not independent of (or separate from) God. We are drawn into the fellowship of the Trinity. We cannot experience this fellowship apart from God (and on his terms). If we follow the corrupted ideas of people who have left the church, then fellowship with God’s people is broken, because fellowship with God is broken should we turn from the truth about him (the truth as God himself has handed down, through the Apostles).

6. What does it mean to have fellowship with God and therefore other believers? How does this make the joy of John and the other Apostles complete?

MAKING IT STICK

What do you find most difficult about following Jesus?

In what ways do we have fellowship with others? What brings you the most joy in fellowship with Jesus?

How can we help the fellowship of believers to produce more joy?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- John Gray. Pray that he will heal as he takes time over the next few months to recuperate and rest.
- Our wardens, that God will grant them wisdom as they steward our finances and property.
- Rod and Abby Bishop, in their roles at ECM (European Christian Mission)
- Our church family, that we will grow in our love and knowledge of Jesus.

Study 2

1 JOHN 1:5-2:2

INTRODUCTION

In these verses John lays out the message he has received from the Word of Life (verse 5) and then continues with three conditions which display his understanding of what the false teachers are saying. Included with this is his counter argument to their claim.

As Kruse points out, “In setting out the nature of the claims (and his counter hypotheses), the author not only addresses the false teaching of his opponents, but also reveals what he means by saying that ‘God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.’”²

The language John uses is economical. He tells it how it is and how it ought to be. There is almost an urgency to correct things and to encourage and build up before any rot sets in. The author is telling them things they have heard before which means he can be succinct with his words and get to the point. He does not hold back, however, in showing his loving, pastoral heart for these people, in calling them his “dear children”.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 1:5. What do we learn about the light from the following verses?

Bible verse/s	What do we learn?	How does this relate to the gospel message?
Exodus 13:21-22		
Psalms 27:1		
Psalms 199:105		

²Kruse, Colin G. The Letters of John. (Pillar series) 2000. Page 62

Bible verse/s	What do we learn?	How does this relate to the gospel message?
Isaiah 49:6		
Isaiah 60:19-22		
Revelation 21:23-24		
John 1:4-5		
John 8:12		

We are trying to see the importance and breadth of the light metaphor in scripture as it refers to God and to the Word of Life. Light is a common metaphor in religious circles in John's time and one that people would be familiar with. He does, however, want them to be reminded that Jesus is the true light. This is good news, as Christ entered a world living in darkness. John 1:4-5 and 8:12 tells us that Jesus is the light that enters the darkness and overcomes it.

2. Read 1 John 1:6-7. What is the false teaching? What is John's counter argument?

Also ask, what do you think it means to walk in the darkness? Why do you think walking in the darkness means we are not in fellowship?

3. Read 1 John 1:8-9. What is the false teaching? What is John's counter argument?

Also ask in what ways do people say they are without sin? As holy people living in the "now and not yet" we can still sin. How can we be assured that we are still living God's way or that we are still right with God? Verse 9 says that we live a life of confession. You cannot "out-sin" the cross. God will not be surprised by your sin and he has already dealt with it. Confession keeps us humble, reminds us of where we have come from and the depth of Jesus grace and love. These are things John wants his "dear children" to remember.

4. Read 1 John 1:10-2:2. What is the false teaching? What is John's counter argument?

5. What does it mean that Jesus is an "advocate with the Father"? What does it mean that he is an "atoning sacrifice"?

Jesus speaks to the Father in our defense. As our atoning sacrifice he has borne judgement that our sin deserves. We can spend a lot of time trying to justify our actions; maybe this is a form of walking in the darkness. Jesus knows that we can never justify ourselves before God who knows us better than we know ourselves. Jesus says in effect, I can vouch for this person because they have repented and believe in me. As the letter unfolds, the outworking of this is also important and the basis for the fruit in our lives.

MAKING IT STICK

Do you find it hard to think of things to confess? Are there times when you trivialise confession? Read Psalm 139:23-24. Is this something you are able to pray?

What does repentance look like in practical terms?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Emma Sibley and hopefully our new Youth Minister as they lead our youth ministries. Ask for wisdom, and for God to sustain them. Pray that the leaders in youth ministry will show God's love to those in their care and that many will be won for the kingdom.
- Our parish council, that God will grant them wisdom as they steward our finances and property.
- John and Fiona McIvor. Pray that God will use them in SE Asia in their new role. Pray God will sustain them and be with Zeke and Clay.
- That we live in a way that reflects a life of honest confession, that we will not remain in old patterns of sin, but when we repent we will grow to be more like Jesus and leave behind the things that kept us from the light.

Study 3

1 JOHN 2:3-11

INTRODUCTION

Obedience is something with which we can struggle. Our self-righteous desire for autonomy drives the conflict within us as it battles with our desire to obey Jesus and live as he did (1 John 2:6).

John wants the readers to be reminded that knowing God means keeping his commands. It is the best way to live and brings God glory at the same time.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 2:3. What do you think John means when he says that we have come to know him?

This is not just knowing things about God but knowing him personally. Kruse includes John 14:9 as being in the same vein. He says, "Here [John 14:9] knowing Jesus involved more than being closely acquainted with him (something Philip had experienced); it involved perceiving his true identity; a true but not complete understanding of his nature."³

2. Read 1 John 2:3-11. What is John referring to when he says to keep his commands?

Use the whole passage to work through this question. It is most likely talking about the command Jesus gave to love one another in John 13:34-35. Verse 9ff supports this view. It is a command from the beginning because in the context of this letter it is referring to the beginning (as it does in 1 John 1:1), the coming of Jesus and the birth of the church.

³Kruse, Colin G. The Letters of John. (Pillar series) 2000. Page 78 (footnote)

**3. When do you find it hard to love other disciples of Jesus?
Why can it be so hard?**

We have been brought together from different backgrounds, different vocations, different interests. Perhaps we think more of ourselves than we ought. Perhaps it is because we think Christians ought to live a certain way...and when they do not we struggle to love them.

4. What does it mean to be “in Him” (verses 5-6)?

We are united with Christ. This is an idea that is prevalent in the writing of Paul. John uses it here, however, as it was a concept that grew among the early Christian church. There is a closeness to knowing Jesus. It is not just about knowing him but being known by him. We live for him, in other words, we walk and live in the light. When people see us do they see Jesus? When we repent do we turn from old ways for his sake? Do we have his interests and his will at heart?

5. John refers to those who claim that they are in the light (verses 9-11). What is the evidence they are actually in the darkness?

The evidence is that they hate their brother or sister. What are examples of this happening? In what ways do people hate their brother or sister?

6. How has the darkness blinded those who have left these churches?

Kruse writes:

“In 1 John the expression darkness stands for either sinful behaviour (1:5, 2:11) or the realm in which sinful behaviour predominates (1:6, 2:8, 9, 11). Here in 2:11 ‘darkness’ is used with both of these meanings. People who hate fellow believers walk in the realm in which sinful behavior predominates, and their own sinful behaviour, in this case their hatred, blinds their eyes so that they do not know where they are going. Those who do not walk in the light of Jesus Christ that is already shining must walk in the darkness. They do not have the truth to guide them, so they do not know where they are going (cf. John 12:35).”⁴

⁴Kruse, Colin G. The Letters of John. (Pillar series) 2000. Page 78 (footnote)

MAKING IT STICK

How can we love our brothers and sisters better?

What can you do this week to show love for a brother or sister?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- For Linda Stephens and Naomi Pigot as they lead our children's ministries.
- Keith Baker as he oversees the ministries at St Paul's in John's absence.
- Norm and Janelle Gorrie serving with CMS in Kenya as they strengthen believers and reach the lost.

Study 4

1 JOHN 2:12-17

INTRODUCTION

This section of the letter carries words of encouragement for the believers. John shows his affection for those to whom he is writing. His desire is to encourage them to stay the course, to stay with what they have been taught from the beginning.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 2:12-14. What do you observe in these verses?

Repetition of children, fathers, young men. What is said to the fathers in verse 13a is repeated in verse 14b (except for the words “I am writing to you” and “I write to you”). There are strong words of encouragement not to abandon the message of the Word of Life, so that it might be reflected in their lives.

A theory. “Children” refers to all the believers he is writing to as in the rest of the letter. This does not necessarily refer to literal children (given the context of the rest of the letter). The fathers know God who is from the beginning; they are the first to hear. They are the ones who pass it onto their own children. This is indicative of John as the one who proclaimed to them concerning the Word of Life. The young men are those to whom it has been passed on. This is an ongoing pattern. In verses 12-13 he says, “I am writing...” It starts with John as he writes to them. In verse 14ff he says “I write to you...” in the Greek aorist tense. It does not need to be written again, the important thing is that it is written and it must be followed. They have what they need and they ought to stick to it. What John the apostle writes must be passed on, as it is from older saints to younger. This bypasses the false teachers who try to interrupt the flow. What does your small group think about this idea?

Important to remember from these verses that we have been shaped by God, and not our own doing. As Con Campbell rightly says, “We are not the artists of our own beauty. We are the canvas. God is the artist.”⁵

⁵Campbell, Constantine. The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John. page 83.

2. Read 1 John 2:15-17. What do you think John means by ‘the world’? Why is it that you cannot love the world and also love the Father?

Campbell explains: “This exhortation reads as a warning so that they do not fall into love of the world. They are people who know the Father, who have had their sins forgiven, and who have overcome the evil one. They are to make sure that their good standing is not compromised by the allure of the world.”⁶

Love of the world is incompatible with love for the Father. Perhaps you could ask, in what ways is love of the world incompatible with love for the Father? In what ways can we cross this boundary? There are things about the world we do love but where does this go awry?

“Since the ‘world’ is rebellious humanity, John’s instruction not to love the world or anything in the world does not pertain to ‘neutral’ or ‘good’ things in the world. Food, for example, is not part of rebellious humanity, so love of food is appropriate, especially if we thank God for his provision of it.”⁷

3. Read 1 John 2:16. Do you see any similarities and differences between this verse and 1 John 1:1?

There is both seeing and touching. Jesus is not distant but came close. We can see and touch the things of this world and therefore they entice us. If we are enticed by the things of the world there is no room for the Lord Jesus.

Jesus overcomes this problem by coming close to us, living a perfect human life among us. Jesus (the Word of Life) has now been seen and touched. When Thomas is invited to touch Jesus’ wounds, he sees Jesus in his rightful place.

4. In verse 17 what does it mean that the world and its desires will pass away?

The desires that we have are NOT necessarily bad but the way we use and act on them can be. Perhaps it means that we have disordered desires (per Augustine) and acting on these takes the focus off God and onto ourselves. We are not acting on our desires the way God intended, or we might follow them instead of being grateful to God for the gifts he gives.

5. What does it mean to do the will of God?

The will of God in this context is perhaps to love God and desire him above all else, rather than divorcing ourselves entirely from the world. To have desires is not wrong, but to satisfy them in a way not intended by God is the problem. The satisfying of our desires is not the aim as such, but our desires should point to a giver, a source who ought to be worshipped.

⁶Campbell, Constantine. The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John. page 81.

⁷Campbell, Constantine. The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John. page 82.

MAKING IT STICK

What things do we desire most and what lengths do we go to satisfy them?

What can we do this week to focus our attention on God...and do his will?

How can we encourage others to remain faithful to Jesus?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Sunday Care Teams at each of our services, prayer ministry, practical care, Help at Home Days, and the many teams providing care and support to people across our church.
- The Reverend Ruth Waldron, Anglican Dean of Nungalinya College, who is serving with BCA in the Northern Territory. Pray God will keep Ruth well and enthusiastic as she teaches those who come to college.

Study 5

1 JOHN 2:18-27

INTRODUCTION

This section of the book is summarised in 1 John 2:26, “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.”

In the first part of this section John contrasts two groups: those who are defined as the antichrists (2:18-19) and those anointed by the Holy One (2:20). He is reminding them of who to watch out for and the importance that the believers remain in Christ. Without Jesus what they do and there is no future. He does not want them to be robbed of the hope they have. This hope means they are motivated to love as he describes earlier in his letter.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 2:18-19. What is the last hour?

This can take into account 3 ideas that contribute to its understanding. Firstly, ‘last hour’ refers to a temporal period or current reality. Secondly, there is a parallel between the last hour and the last days in other parts of the NT. Perhaps refer to Hebrews 1:2. It is talking about the current era of salvation history between Jesus’ ascension and his return. Thirdly, the last hour may have a background in the OT (such as Daniel 8:18, 19; 11:35, 40; 12:1). Campbell elaborates: “The ‘hour’ refers to ‘the eschatological time, time when the opponents of God’s people attempt to deceive them... So the ‘last hour’ refers to our current stage of salvation history, between Jesus’s ascension and return, parallel to the ‘last day’ language of the Old and New Testaments. It is the period when deceivers will come.”⁸

2. Who are the antichrists?

They are those who “went out from them and did not really belong to them” (2:19). These people had tasted the goodness of Jesus yet deny him as the resurrected Lord (2:22-23). If they deny him then they deny the Father. You cannot have one without the other. They are deceivers saying that Jesus is not who the apostles have claimed he is.

NB: This should not be automatically aligned with the evil one of Revelation. There are multiple antichrists in this part of John’s writing.

⁸Campbell, Constantine. The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John. page 91.

Rather than search out a particular person as the antichrist we need to be aware of the truth and protect that. This is the main point of what John is saying here. We can get caught up with identifying the antichrist rather than holding to the truth and not being led astray by deceiving ideas and temptations.

3. In what ways do antichrists deceive today, that is, deny Jesus is the Christ?

4. What distinguishes the anointed ones from the antichrists?

It is those who know the truth. Perhaps you could ask how we know it is the truth? The source of the truth is important. Furthermore, it's not complicated, Jesus is the Christ. Deceivers try to complicate things and mix things together so they sound reasonable but divert people from the truth. John wants to remind them that they already know the truth; he is not adding something new.

5. What is promised to those who hold on to the truth? What does this mean to you?

Eternal life.

6. Read 1 John 2:26-27. What is the anointing they received?

This anointing may be the receiving of the Holy Spirit, who places the truth in their hearts and protects it. The Holy Spirit comes from the Father and the Son. You cannot have the Father without the Son and vice versa. It would follow that the Holy Spirit comes from them. The anointing may also be that they have received this truth. They can worship in Spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

MAKING IT STICK

What are some of the current messages we hear that can deceive? Where do we hear such messages?

How can we avoid being deterred from the truth? How can we remain faithful to Jesus our Lord?

How can we protect each other from going astray and help each other to remain in Jesus?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Discipleship ministry at church and Paul Lucas as he leads the Discipleship Team.
- Small Group leaders across the church, for their encouragement and growth and the raising up of new leaders.
- Those involved with Read with Me (one-to-one bible reading) with others. Pray for the growth of this ministry for sharing the gospel and growth as disciples.

Study 6

1 JOHN 2:28-3:10

INTRODUCTION

This passage is reminding us of two important truths about who believers are. The first is that we are children of God. The second is about the proof of this first truth by living and acting in line with what being children of God means.

As we have seen, John is reminding those to whom he is writing of what God has done for them and the beauty and privilege of belonging to Him. We are to live rightly as the change in us is significant: it reorients us to God's way. We not only benefit by having our sins forgiven but we continue to live as the children of God.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 2:28-29. How does continuing in him make us confident and unashamed? What does it mean to be born of God?

The phrase "continue in him" is the same as 2:27 that says "remain in him". To be 'in Christ' is where we gain our confidence. It is the work of Jesus in us that makes us righteous: we are clothed in his righteousness. Perhaps you could ask, 'What does being 'in Christ' mean to you?' This is an important concept. Being in Christ is our assurance of salvation and hope. Being in Christ means we are co-heirs with him. Being in Christ means we represent him (2 Cor 5:20). When we are in Christ our minds are renewed to think more like him, to be made more and more into his likeness, and therefore, into the restored image of God. We have confidence because this cannot be taken from us. For example, when the evil one tries to tell us that God would never accept us because we are sinners, we know that this was once true but in Christ it is no longer true, as we are cleansed. If we realise what we once were - and who we are now in Christ - there is no more shame, because in Christ our shame has been dealt with. The evil one may try to shame us or make us feel ashamed but Jesus has borne all of that so we no longer have to. What a joy, what liberation when we come to be children of God. There is a family ethic which operates here: that people live in a way that is consistent with their parents or household.

For the second half of the question look at John 3:1-8. According to 1 John being born of God means believing that Jesus is the Christ (5:1). This new birth produces life for other believers and enables them to overcome the world (5:4) and the life of sin (5:18).

2. Read 1 John 3:1-3. How would you describe God lavishing love on us?

We are aiming for people to think about what it means for them to have love lavished on them. Perhaps you could discuss what 'lavished' mean?

3. What do you think it means that 'what we will be has not yet been made known'?

Seems to be looking forward. We will be more even than we are now. Perhaps it is talking about the fact that we are spiritually resurrected now and this will include physically when Jesus returns. Perhaps it also includes that we will live fully as creatures made in the image of God. It is hard to nail this down but get ideas about how people think about this. It is important to be sure of where we are going but we are not there yet.

4. Read 1 John 3:4-6. As children of God is it possible to live without sinning? What do you think John means by verse 6?

Campbell: "Sin is understood as a disposition of lawlessness and wrongdoing. Living in such a way is incompatible with living in Jesus. John is not claiming that believers will be without sin (1:8, 10). But someone living in Jesus has been cleansed of sin. They have left the old disposition behind. This means that anyone who does live in sin cannot be identified as a child of God. They have not seen or known him (3:6b)."⁹ This can be an area of difficulty and anxiety for people as we can tend to carry our sin around with us. We forget the verse in 1 John 1:8-9. When we confess we are reminded that we carry that sin or shame no more. We also need to remember that this is not our boast but Jesus' as he alone does the cleansing. Walk people through this carefully, helping them to see that they can be assured of their cleansing because the work of Jesus is eternal and complete, as seen in his being resurrected.

5. Read 1 John 7-10. What ideas or thoughts or actions come to us that make us doubt that in Jesus we are righteous? How is this the devil's work?

We can have thoughts that we are no good or maybe that we are too good. We can be told we are not righteous because we have messed up. Perhaps we think that Jesus has not paid for all our sin and we must pay for some of it. That we need to carry hurt or grudges because we do not deserve to be treated badly which leads us to 'hate' our brothers and sisters in Christ. Perhaps we ask the question (in some way) 'Did God really say your sins are fully paid for?'

The devil puts these kinds of thoughts in our heads to deceive and devour us. If you want to take this further perhaps you can look at Genesis 3. How does the serpent deceive Eve and Adam? It is not with physical harm but ideas that are twisted and nuanced.

⁹Campbell, Constantine. The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John. page 104

MAKING IT STICK

In verse 3 we are told to purify ourselves. How do we do this?

What strategies can we use to avoid being led astray?

Is there someone among your Christian brothers and sisters with whom you need to reconcile?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pat Jones and the young adult ministry.
- Brendan and Karina Pont, that they will be sustained as they serve their community and that God will keep them safe and healthy.

Give thanks to God:

- For his being generous to us and for the generosity of his people in their giving, so that ministries in our church can continue.
- That in Christ we are children of God and that his Spirit is working in us to make us more like Jesus.

Study 7

1 JOHN 3:11-24

INTRODUCTION

Last week we remembered who we are in Christ. What considered what it means to be the children of God. In this passage we are reminded that this is why we love one another. We belong to him and to each other.

Love here is expressed practical terms as well as spiritually. We are to speak the truth, to build each other up in truth. We learn here that love means life. Verse 23 sets out for us Jesus' command. When we believe in him we ought to love each other, so that we clearly bear the family resemblance.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 3:11-24. The command that John wants them to remember (which they heard from the beginning) is to love one another. Why do you think John is particularly talking to those who are believers here?

Those in Jesus cannot love others if they cannot love each other. Other believers are those we align ourselves with. If we ONLY engage with those who are not believers we end aligning ourselves with them and might end up in communities that merely affirm us but do not challenge or ultimately love us. This is not to say, however, that we shouldn't love those who are outside the church. Campbell also warns us about the need for love within the church when there is conflict or disagreement. "Love among brothers and sisters is especially important in the context of division. The splinter group threatened to undermine Christian unity and was ultimately an unloving development."¹⁰

2. What do you think it means to love one another? When do you find this difficult?

Remember the love we have for each other is founded on Jesus' love for us (verse 16). Allow time for people to be honest here. There may be hurts and experiences that make it hard for people to love other Christians or be a part of church. Jesus is asking a lot notwithstanding how much he gave and how much we gain in being known by him.

¹⁰Campbell, Constantine. The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John. page 114

3. In verse 18 we are encouraged in how to love. Do you think John is saying action is the only way they love from this verse?

His point is not that you cannot love with words or speeches but that words alone are not enough. We may speak of love, but without loving deeds, eg. generosity, our words mean little. Perhaps you can talk about the example of a wedding speech. People talk about how proud they are of their family or friends and it means something because they have experienced their love in their actions. This love is expressed in a range of ways; in practical care, in romantic situations and also “in the mess” of life. This verse also encourages integrity. Do and be who you say you are.

4. How would you describe the difference between love and hate?

One brings life, the other destruction.

5. In verses 19-22, why does not being condemned give us this confidence to approach God in prayer?

20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

6. Read verses 23-24. Why do you think we find it hard to obey?

We have our own agenda. We think freedom is bound up with complete liberty. Sometimes those who are closest to us drift away from God's truth and commands so we try to accommodate them. The evil one puts ideas in our minds that make us question God's intentions for certain commands and biblical principles. These are suggested answers that may or may not be agreeable...but allow people to talk and think through this.

MAKING IT STICK

What can we do to keep our confidence in God?

What things shake our assurance? What can we do to maintain our assurance?

How can you support each other as you grow?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Our interns Holly Turner, Chelsea Rumbel, Blake Scurr and Alex Furner. Pray that they will enjoy their time, that they will grow in their love and knowledge of Jesus and that they will make good decisions about ministry in the future.
- Matt and Paula Crowe in Colombia.
- Our church family, that we will love one another with our words and our actions.

Study 8

1 JOHN 4

INTRODUCTION

John is giving us, in these verses, a means to “test ‘spirits’”. In verse 24 of chapter 3 we read that “We know it by the Spirit he gives us”. This is qualified at the beginning of Chapter 4 by explaining how we recognise the Spirit of God. This is spelled out in verses 2-3.

He also reminds them not to be overwhelmed by the world, because the one who is in us is greater than the one in the world.

Chapter 4:7-21 is a complex passage, but enhances the themes already introduced, particularly to love one another and the reasons for it. Coupled with this, John explores the concept of the fruit that we see from this command to love.

QUESTIONS

1. John 4:1-6. How are we able to discern whether spirits are from God? What situation is this particularly speaking to?

There is a particular issue being dealt with that is undermining the assurance of God's people. John is calling antichrists those people who were once among them but are now teaching wrong ideas. That is, those who are false teachers. But if the foundation of solid biblical teaching is destroyed or neglected, then no other belief or doctrine stands either.

2. In verse 5 what do you think is the “viewpoint of the world”?

Remember “the world” in this verse refers to those who rebel against God.

3. In verse 12 we read that God's love is made complete in us. What do you think this means and how can we tell it is complete?

God's love is complete in us when we love others. The fact that we are loved by God means that we have love to share. There is a fullness to this. "When we love others, God's love for us has reached its full effect in creating the same kind of love as his in us." Howard Marshall.

4. To what is John referring to when he says that perfect love drives out fear?

He is referring to the assurance that we will not have to face judgement. We have no fear of judgement. We can have confidence in the saving work of Jesus, and in God's perfect love. The fact that people are always trying to justify their actions shows an aversion to (or fear of) judgment. Jesus has dealt with this when it comes to God and our future.

5. John again talks about the importance of loving each other. How do we do this and not get worn out?

Loving others can be tiring, but John seems to be labouring the point. The love we have for our brothers and sisters is from God. God loves us not from a need for love himself, as he (in the Trinity) knows complete love. He loves us from an abundance, an endless well. We need to draw on him to be able to love each other. We love because we have been loved. It is important to remember that we ought to accept the love that others show us. We are talking about mutual love, between brothers and sisters, rather than "doing good deeds" to earn God's favour.

MAKING IT STICK

How do we maintain our zeal for loving and serving others?

How should we respond when others express their love through kindness or generosity toward us?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pray for our small group leaders, that God will sustain them, give them insight and endurance.
- Pray for Rich Vassallo and his production team (both paid and volunteer). Thank God for their gifts and making it possible to meet online.
- Pray that we will be able to love others as we have been loved and to gain a greater understanding of the grace and love God has shown us in Jesus.
- Pray that as we relate to each other we will do so with genuine humility and love. That we will do this for the sake of Jesus name and the good of our brothers and sisters.

Study 9

1 JOHN 5

INTRODUCTION

In these final verses John is again wanting the church to be assured of their hope in Jesus. Their eternal life rests with him and they can be confident of this.

QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 5. How would you summarise this chapter in one sentence?

2. What do we learn about Jesus from verses 6-9?

These are difficult verses but what we most likely learn is that the water and the blood signify Jesus' baptism and death. Taking this a step further, it indicates his humanity, which is in line with the rest of the letter, which refers to people casting doubt about Jesus' divinity and incarnation (1 John 4:2-3). This language is also used in John 3:5 and Ezekiel 36:22-27.

3. In 1 John 5:13-16 what gives the churches John is writing to the assurance of eternal life?

Belief in Jesus' name. Perhaps you could ask what our belief in Jesus should cause us to do and what fruit it should bear?

4. In verses 16-17 what are the believers encouraged to pray for as they approach God with confidence?

Pray for those who sin but also remember to confess our own sins and accept the cleansing that comes through Jesus.

5. What do you think is the sin that leads to death?

This passage is firstly talking about sin in general (verse 17). The language is not pointing to a particular sin. It is talking about the type of sin that puts people on a path to habitual and lifelong sin.

Campbell quotes from Kruse in his explanation:

“Given the thrust of the letter as a whole, it seems that the only sin that could never be forgiven is a persistent lack of belief in the one whom God has sent to die for our sins. As Kruse writes, ‘The sin that does lead to death is most likely that of the unbeliever.’ Since our sins are forgiven through confession and belief in Jesus, ‘sin that leads to death’ is sin that remains unforgiven. The overall point is that believers may (or will) still commit sin from time to time, but this will not lead to death because their sins are forgiven. By praying for those struggling with sin, believers know that God will give them life. On the other hand, ‘sin that leads to death’ belongs to the person who has not received God’s forgiveness.”¹¹

6. Why do you think John ends with the command to keep themselves from idols (which seems to come from out of the blue)?

Any form of belief that leads people away from the truth is idolatry. John has taken great pains to remind them of the truth they received from the beginning and is encouraging them to hold onto it firmly. Not believing in Jesus leads us to believe in something else (as we all believe in something.)

¹¹Campbell, Constantine. *The Story of God Commentary - 1, 2, and 3 John.* page 167-168

MAKING IT STICK

How can we keep ourselves from idols?

How can we be praying for each other?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pray for our D-Team leaders as they lead the youth of our church each week
- Pray for Mark Pozorski and our administration team. Thank God for them and ask him to sustain them in their work as they give admin support for the ministries of St Paul's.
- Pray that we will have the courage to obey and make disciples.
- Pray for our governments, that they will govern for the good of all people.

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 1:1-4

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 1:5-2:2

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 2:3-11

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 2:12-17

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 2:18-27

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 2:28-3:10

Sermon notes
1 JOHN 3:11-24

Sermon notes

1 JOHN 4

Sermon notes

1 JOHN 5



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