

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH
1 JOHN: THE FATHER HEART OF GOD
FALSE TEACHERS IN THE LAST HOUR
1 JOHN 2:18-27
02/12/2017

MAIN POINT

If we want to avoid falling prey to false teaching, we need right discernment and right doctrine.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever unknowingly found yourself in the middle of a sales pitch for something like a time share or some kind of pyramid scheme?

What was the person trying to sell you? Were you surprised when you found out the truth of the situation you were in?

How sensitive are you in general to recognizing scams? What are some of the indicators that help you recognize them?

We are frequently bombarded day in and day out with “deals of the century” and sales that are “too good to pass by.” In a spiritual sense, too, we are confronted with messages that might seem innocent at first, but in reality contradict the message of the gospel. John knew that such false teaching would abound, so he wanted his readers to be ready to fight them. He taught that we can do so through a combination of right discernment and right doctrine.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:18-23.

What images come to your mind when you hear the word “antichrist”?

Why is it significant to note that these antichrists went out from the church (v. 19)?

Why might that fact make these false teachers more difficult to recognize?

What does the fact that they went out from the church tell us about the role of the church in recognizing teachers that aren't true to the gospel?

The reference to "antichrist" here is probably to leaders who were once a part of the church, but weren't true believers in the message of Jesus Christ. Evidently the church had recognized their falsehood and had separated from them. The church plays an important role in not only recognizing threats and false teachers, but also making sure she protects her people from it.

Look back at verses 20-23. What are the key pieces of doctrine that mark true believers?

What is this anointing from the Holy Spirit John described? What is the effect of that anointing? What does this show us about the centrality of right doctrine?

Because we live in an age of tolerance, some would argue that we shouldn't split hairs over doctrinal matters. But often these points of doctrine make all the difference in the world, not to mention eternity. Doctrine matters; we must hold true to what we have seen in the Bible as revealed through Jesus if we want to truly follow Him. Because the Holy Spirit lives in the Christian, we can rightly understand and obey the Bible. God has revealed Himself fully through His Word, the Bible, and His Living Word, Jesus Christ—and that is His final Word to us.

What are some ways you have seen people try and search for some other kind of knowledge than what we already have through God's Word?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:24-28.

What are some ways we can make sure that what we have heard from God remains in us? What are some ways we might be tempted to not let that remain in us?

What is the promise God gives to those when this truth remains in them?

For those that remain true to God's revelation in His Word and in Jesus, eternal life is a reality. We must be all the more vigilant to be aware of that truth given the deception around us.

We can recognize false teaching with right doctrine, but also through right discernment. What does the word "discernment" mean?

Is discernment a feeling or something more than that? How do right doctrine and right discernment work together?

What role does the Holy Spirit play in both right doctrine and right discernment?

The Holy Spirit is truer to God's Word than any of us. That's how discernment and doctrine work together; if we sense we are witnessing some kind of spiritual untruth, then the most sure way to check our discernment is with our doctrine. God will not contradict Himself; He won't say something now that is different than what He said then.

What implications does this text have for our study and memorization of the Word of God?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Is there any pattern of belief or behavior in your life that you need to check for false teaching?

What about in those close to you? Do you need to have an important but difficult conversation about doctrine and discernment with those closest to you?

How does your commitment to the Word of God need to change based on the threat of false teaching?

PRAY

As you close in prayer, thank God for the gift of His Word and the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to give you the ability to recognize truth and error, and the courage to remain true to what you have heard from the beginning.

COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 2:18-27

The problem John addressed in these verses is not a new one. He addressed a similar situation where an early form of gnosticism was contradicting the factuality of the full deity and humanity of Jesus. John countered these erroneous messages by issuing a warning against false teachers, followed by an assertion that true believers are marked by crucial characteristics.

In these verses, John warned against many antichrists. This is probably a reference to misguided or diabolical individuals who were guilty of the sins that he described and condemned. They opposed and sought to replace the true Christ. The phrase they went out from us shows there had been a division among the church members to whom John wrote. But not all who were in the church were authentic believers. Their departure from the fellowship and the apostolic truth was proof of this.

The anointing in verse 20 could be the Holy Spirit, but it more likely refers to the gospel or the saving message—the teaching that believers had received. Verse 21 shows us that a mark of those who truly know is the ability to admit their lack of knowledge and their desire to learn more. True believers are always “disciples” (learners).

The error John referred to in verse 22 was not ethical but theological—false teaching about the Father and the Son. Verse 23 affirms the unity and identity of God the Father and the Son. Yet it also affirms their distinctiveness.

In verse 24, the phrase from the beginning refers to the earliest exposure of John’s readers to gospel teaching. There is a direct tie between what they have heard and the status of their souls as residing (or not residing) in the Son and in the Father. Despite John’s earlier ethical warnings to remain faithful, He reminds us in verse 25 that salvation is a matter of God’s faithfulness, not human achievement.

Verses 26-27 give us the reality of the situation: God’s people cannot always avoid conflict; usurpers and destroyers arise, trying to deceive. But John was content to entrust his readers to the powerful message they had received.