

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH

1 JOHN: THE FATHER HEART OF GOD

REBIRTH = HUNGER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

1 JOHN 2:28 -3:10

02/19/2017



MAIN POINT

A result of spiritual rebirth is a hunger for righteousness.

INTRODUCTION

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

What is one thing you've always felt like you were born to do?

What is something you have become passionate about in adulthood that you were not passionate about in your younger years?

On a typical Monday morning, what is something you desire? Is this the same thing you want on a typical Saturday morning? Why or why not?

People use phrases like, "Born to shop" or "Born to run" to express hobbies, attitudes, or interests. But just like our wants or plans change based on the day of the week and what we have to do, what we say we are "born to" do can change based upon our current interests. Spiritually speaking, when we experience new birth in Christ the things we desire change, too. Rebirth results in a hunger for righteousness.

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 2:18-27.

What was John's view of the spiritual condition of the people he described in verses 18-19? What does this passage teach you about authentic Christianity?

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

How many times does John use the word "abide" in this passage? Why do you think the principle of abiding is so important for believers? How have you experienced the truth of this in your own life?

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. 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. 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.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 2:28–3:3.

Why might a church member “shrink back from him in shame” when Jesus returns?

Does verse 29 mean that anyone who does the right thing is born again? What does it mean? What does love have to do with rebirth? With hungering for righteousness?

How is the identity of the child of God tied to the return of Christ? Why is that tie meant to give us hope?

From 1 John 2:29 and 3:3, what can we say about those who have truly experienced rebirth in Christ?

We remain in Christ because He has demonstrated His love for us at the cross. He did this not because we were righteous, but because He is righteous Himself. Our hunger for righteousness is born out of this love which has transformed us into children of God. When Jesus returns, there will be no doubt as to His true identity and glory. Similarly, though Christians might suffer right now in seemingly unjust ways, when Jesus reveals His true self at His return, the children of God will be seen as they truly are—transformed and glorified coheirs with Christ.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:4-10.

Generally speaking, do you think Christians take sin seriously enough? Why or why not?

What might be some reasons why indifference can creep into our view of sin in our lives? How do these verses speak to that temptation of indifference?

What is the difference between sin and a lifestyle characterized by sin? Is that an important distinction to draw? Why?

Christians sin (1:8). But true Christians take an active stance, rather than an attitude of indifference, to the reality of sin. Christians choose to engage in the fight rather than lapse into a lifestyle of habitual sin. Though we will never live a sin-free life until we reach heaven, the true Christian will not grow weary of confronting, repenting, and trusting in the forgiveness of Jesus for daily sin.

Do you think John was overstating things when he said that the one who commits sin is of the devil? Explain.

How do these verses reveal the depth of the change Jesus brings in us?

Why is the word “rebirth” appropriate when thinking about this change?

When we are born again, we have a new nature that desires to follow and please God. John wants us to know that it’s one thing to claim to be born again, but it’s another thing to offer evidence of the fact. Because we are so dramatically changed by the grace of God when we become Christians, our lives will always reflect that.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

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

Is the statement “Rebirth = Hunger for Righteousness” true in your life right now? Why or why not?

What are some practical ways we demonstrate that we hunger for Christ’s righteousness?

What are some reasons why a believer might not sense a real hunger for righteousness for a time? What should he or she do about it? How can we help each other continue to abide in Christ and hunger for His righteousness?

PRAY

Thank God for the rebirth He gives us in Christ. Invite Him to deepen our hunger for righteousness as we commit to reject worldly doctrine and abide in Him.

COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 2:18-29

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.

Ashamed in verse 28 refers to the guilt and terror of judgment by God. Those who remain in Him avoid this grim prospect.

Verse 29 shows the doctrinal knowledge of John’s if statement setting up the ethical response implied by does what is right, but the response is a function of spiritual rebirth (born of Him) and not human effort.

1 JOHN 3:1-10

In 3:1-3, the apostle breaks out in spontaneous wonder at the love of God in making us his children. A further wonder grasps him: that is what we are. The world does not know us, because it does not know our Father. To “know” in this context has the sense of “accept.” Just as the world did not accept Jesus, it will not accept us.

Even though we are children of God, we don’t grasp the full significance of what it means to be God’s children. We now have only a dim perception of who we are and what we will be (what we will be has not yet been made known). When we see Jesus, our understanding will expand, and we will see it all. If we begin to understand the unimaginable wonder of this fact, we will want to live pure and holy lives, for we will want to be pure as he is pure. Our weak commitment to absolute holiness

stems in large measure from our dim perception of who Jesus is and who we have become in him. When we grasp more fully that we are now coheirs with Jesus (Rom. 8:17), we are destined to rule and reign in heaven with him. Slated for perfect holiness, united in spirit with the Creator-God of the universe, we will no longer want to fiddle around with the “mud pies” of this world. We will prefer the spotless beauty of a banquet table.

The opening statement in these verses appears obvious: When we sin, we break the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. This lawlessness is characteristic of the spirit of Antichrist, and sinners see no reason to concern themselves with God’s laws. But that doesn’t change the problem of sin, much as the false teachers might want it to. Sin is not removed from the world by simply creating a theology or philosophy that says we are above sin or incapable of sin. Sin has to be dealt with. God has dealt with our sin. You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. Jesus dealt with sin in the only way suitable to God. He lived a sinless life, and then made the ultimate perfect sacrifice. His perfect life became the model, the new creature God wants to make of all His children.

The next statement is breathtaking: no one who lives in him keeps on sinning. This statement is followed by an even more absolute statement: no one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. To put a cap on it, verse 9 says the person who has been born of God cannot go on sinning. These statements can be alarming; we know we have sinned. We may be wrestling with sin that keeps cropping up in our lives. If this letter intends to comfort us with the assurance of our salvation (5:13), statements like these can have just the opposite effect. So what do we do with these statements?

Christians do sin, as acknowledged elsewhere in this letter (1:8–2:1; 5:16-17). Repeated exhortations not to sin (2:1, 15, 29; 3:12, 18; 5:21) would be needless if we could not sin or if we did not sin. The kind of sin meant here is continual; it means we cannot adopt a lifestyle of willful, unrepentant sin. The verbs in these sentences are present tense, which means, as the NIV has translated it, don’t “keep on sinning.” We will sin. We may sin badly. But we will never settle down into a lifestyle that is characterized by sin. It’s important, too, to remember the context. False teachers claimed that Christians do not sin, or cannot sin, or are free to sin, and that if they do sin, it is of no great consequence. It is an extreme situation that calls for extreme language, so Scripture dispels this groundless teaching.

Verse 7 warns us not to be led astray. This is probably a warning against the false teachers and antichrists who apparently felt free to sin, while denying that they were doing anything wrong. Our text counters with the bold assertion that the person who does what is right is righteous. Doing what is right does not make a person righteous. But the false teachers must recognize that if a person is righteous, he or she will do what is right. You cannot claim to be righteous, as did the antichrists, while living in open sin.

He who does what is sinful is of the devil makes it clear that the sinning antichrists were not righteous, but were of the devil. This does not mean that when a Christian sins, he suddenly loses his place as a child of God and takes his place as a child of the devil. Rather, it means that the antichrists—since they claim righteousness while living in sin—are children of the devil. To sin is to take part in the devil’s plan, which automatically sets a person in opposition to God. Scripture takes seriously the nature of believers as born-again, Spirit-filled, new creatures in Christ. It will not tolerate any casual attitude toward sin. Sin and salvation are opposites. Wanting to sin is not part of being led by the Spirit or having Christ in us. Refusal to take this warning seriously should call us to reexamine our commitment to Christ.