

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH
1 JOHN: THE FATHER HEART OF GOD
THE LOVE OF JESUS
1 JOHN 3:11-24
03/05/2017

MAIN POINT

Moving forward as a disciple of Christ should happen naturally as we grow in our understanding of God as our loving father.

INTRODUCTION

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

How do you define progress? In what areas of your life are you making progress?

What do you think progress in the Christian life looks like?

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 3:19-24.

What does our demonstration of love do to our consciences according to these verses? Why might love assure our consciences?

Do you ever have moments when you wonder if you truly belong to God? How do you deal with those thoughts when they come up?

Does verse 22 mean we can get God to do whatever we want? If not, what does it mean?

John makes following God sound so simple: Believe in Jesus and love one another. Are there ways you tend to overcomplicate or add to what it means to glorify and enjoy God?

From time to time, all of us wonder about our own authenticity. As we look deeply into our hearts, it is disturbing to see the mixed motives and propensity for sin we find there. But thankfully, we are not kept in faith by our own ability, but by God who is greater than any guilty conscience. When we doubt, we remind ourselves that we have received the love of God once and for all through Jesus. It's then that this love not only assures us, but makes us obedient. When we obediently desire what God desires, we can ask for whatever we want in His name.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

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

Where does the ultimate source of our reassurance come from? How does this influence your faith in God and life?

Are you self-condemning when God has forgiven you? Why?

A child of God is deemed righteous and can have confidence before him. Do you pray with this boldness? What is preventing you?

PRAY

Thank God that He is greater than anyone's conscience. Pray that you would trust in Him and His love and not in yourself. Ask Him for the vision to continue to see His great love in Christ so that you might tangibly and sacrificially demonstrate that love to others.

COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 3:19-24

3:19-20.

The statement, This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, probably refers back to verses 17-18. By practical acts of love in which the needs of others are met, Christians can have a basic assurance that they are participating experientially in the truth. (The niv's "we belong to the truth" paraphrases the Gr. "we are of the truth"; cf. "of God" [V. 10] and "belonged to the evil one" [V. 12].)

The rest of verse 19 and all of verse 20 are difficult in the original, but probably should be translated, "And we shall persuade our hearts before Him that, if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." It is precisely in the sphere of a believer's love for other Christians, in which Christ has set him so high a standard, that he may feel deeply his own inadequacy and failure. But if his heart condemns him, he can remind himself that God takes account of those things which at the moment his heart ignores. If he has been engaged in the kind of practical acts of love which John enjoined, his guilt-ridden heart can be persuaded by realizing that God is well aware of his fundamental commitment to the truth. The passage clearly recalls Peter's response to the Lord's final query, "Do you love Me?" Peter replied, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You" (John 21:17).

3:21-22.

Once a condemning heart has been silenced by resting on God's knowledge of all things, there comes a new confidence before God. "Confidence" here translates parrêsia, which John had not used since his thematic statement in 2:28 (cf. 4:17; 5:14). The halfway point in his argument had now been reached. As a result of active participation in the truth by real deeds of love, Christians can calm their disapproving hearts and achieve boldness in prayer, and their prayers will be answered because they, as believers, are consciously subject to God's will (they obey His commands [CF. 2:3] and do what pleases Him). This presumes, of course, that the requests themselves are made in subjection to God's will (5:14-15).

3:23.

The writer had declared that a confident and effective prayer life is founded on obedience to God's "commands" (v. 22). Now those commands are summed up in a single command consisting of faith and love. The phrase believe in the name of His Son contains the epistle's first direct reference to faith. The Greek here contains no word for "in" so the expression could be rendered "believe the name of His Son." In this context it certainly includes the faith in Christ's name which true Christian prayer involves (see John 14:12-15; 16:24).

First John 3:23 furnishes a kind of climax to the paragraph beginning in verse 18. As a Christian actively engages in deeds of love (v. 18) and as he achieves boldness before God in prayer (v. 21), he is doing what God commands (cf. 2:3; 3:24; 5:2-3): living a life of confidence in the name of Christ which is undergirded by love (3:23; cf. v. 14; 4:7, 11, 21). Since faith and love, thus conceived, go together, this kind of life is seen as obedience to a single "command."