

5th March – 23rd April 2023

Resources for personal and lifegroup use

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Quoteable quotes

Jesus says, "I want you to follow me so fully, so intensely, so enduringly that all other attachments in your life look weak by comparison" Tim Keller

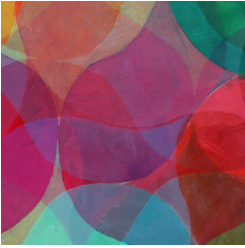
"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5:11

"Following Jesus can mean finding the trouble you've been looking for!" Kingsley Manuel

"Discipline leads us to desire, which matures into delight." Jim Elliott

"It is only because he became like us that we can become like him." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Faith in Jesus will always be personal, but it can never be private." JD



Introduction

Almost certainly this epistle was written by the apostle John around 85–90 AD, when he was an old man, before he was exiled to the island of Patmos.

The writer claims to be an eyewitness of the events of Jesus' life, and we know that the apostle John was one of the inner circle – Peter, James and John, who were present at Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain. John was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the Cross when he was commissioned to care for Mary and at the Resurrection, when we know that he was the first of the twelve disciples to reach the empty tomb. He was described in the gospel as the apostle who Jesus loved, so John writes with authority to dispel false teachings, especially the idea that the physical was less important than the spiritual, that Jesus was not truly human and that mystical knowledge was necessary for salvation: gnosticism.

In John 20: 30-31 we read that he wrote his gospel that 'you may believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God and may have life in his name'. In the epistle 1 John 5:13 he writes to those who believe, 'that they may be sure that they have eternal life'. In this epistle, John continually says that he knew Jesus, and he wants to share the message of the love of Jesus with everyone.

This book is not a carefully constructed textbook dealing with Christian belief verse by verse, but a passionate plea to his readers to follow Jesus, who is the light of the world, who is love personified and who brings eternal life.

Although love seems to be the overriding theme in this epistle, John includes many significant truths.

2:1-2. Jesus is our advocate to the Father and atones for the sins of the whole world.

2:6. We must live as Jesus lived.

2:22. He is the long-awaited Messiah.

2:24. Jesus will come again.

3:5. Jesus was sinless and can take our sins away.

4:9. God showed his love by sending his son.

4:15. Jesus is the son of God.

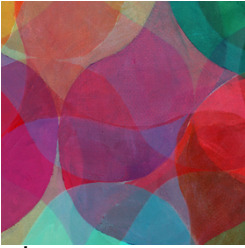
3:16. This is how we know what love is, that Jesus Christ lay down his life for us.

3:23. This is his command, to believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and to love one another.

5:13. If we believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God, we can have assurance of eternal life.

Our Sunday sessions are planned as follows:

- 5th March: pt-1 It's all about Jesus. 1 John 1:1-4.
- 12th March: pt-2 Walking in the Light 1 John 1:5-2:2
- 19th March: pt-3 Truth about following Jesus & warning about false teachers 1 John 2:3-2:29
- 26th March: pt-4 Love in action 1 John 3:1-24
- *pause for Palm Sunday & Easter Sunday*
- 16th April: pt-5 The Love of God 1 John 4:1-21
- 23rd April: pt-6 Faith in Jesus 1 John 5:1-21

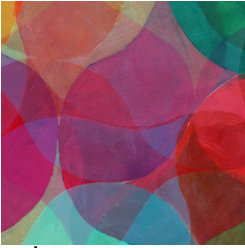


5th March: pt-1 It's all about Jesus.

1 John 1:1-4.

John begins his letter by proclaiming that Jesus, the man he knew and loved, was the eternal Word of Life and that by having fellowship with him we may experience joy and have eternal life.

1. Compare verse one of chapter 1 of John's gospel with the first four verses of the epistle. How do they compare? What do they say about Jesus' origin, his relationship with his Father and his incarnation?
2. What does eternal life in v2 mean to you?
3. Why is it important in v2&3 'that we have seen it and can testify'. In what way can we see and hear Jesus today and testify to it?
4. What does fellowship mean in v3. Have we debased the word fellowship to become friendly chats with other Christians? What is true Christian fellowship?
5. How can we enter into this fellowship more fully? Reflect on Romans 10:9 and Galatians 3:26
6. What is your experience of Christian fellowship? Can we have fellowship with God without fellowship with our brothers and sisters? Did Covid influence your experience?
7. How do we experience the joy mentioned in v4?
8. What do you take-away from these opening verses?

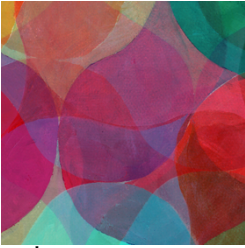


12th March: pt-2 Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-2:2

John talks about walking in the light. Light represents goodness, purity, holiness and truth. Darkness represents evil and sin. We cannot see clearly in the dark but the light exposes things for what they are. John equates this to our relationship with God.

1. John describes God as light - Ephesians 5:8-10. What does darkness and light mean to you?
2. Can we walk in darkness and still have fellowship with Jesus?
Ephesians 4:17-24
3. What is the link between walking in the light and fellowship with each other v7?
4. In v8. what does sin mean? Is there less emphasis on sin in today's church?
5. No one can be perfect and God forgives us so why do we need to confess our sins?
6. What are the consequences if we are unwilling to repent?
7. At the beginning of chapter 2, John explains the whole purpose of Christ's coming. How do we explain this to a nonbeliever? John 3:16
8. In 1John 2:2 it says that Jesus' atoning sacrifice is for the whole world.
In what way can Christ transform the whole world? What did God promise Abraham? Can we take part in this world mission before Christ returns?
9. What do you take-away from this session?

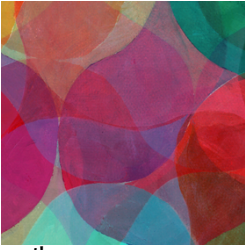


19th March: pt-3 The truth about following Jesus and warning about false teachers

1 John 2:3-2:29

John teaches us that we must obey Christ's commands if we claim to know him. In fact it is the proof that we are truly his disciples. His command to love one another is not a new command but was given in the beginning Leviticus 19:18. James 2:8 calls it the royal law. John warns against loving worldly things and being led astray by false teachers.

1. What strikes you from these verses, and what does v3-6 say about what we believe and how we behave?
2. What are the hallmarks of the Christian life? Your essentials...
3. In v7 what is the old commandment, Leviticus 19:18? How is it re-interpreted by Jesus? John 13:34,35 and 15:13? Did the Jews of Jesus' day understand the Levitical commandment Luke 10:29)
4. What do you think about v9 as none of us live up to the standard required? Invitation & grace
5. Is there a contradiction in a v15 with 'do not love the world' and John 3:16 'God so loved the world'? How much do we get involved with worldly values and activities or do we remain aloof as a holy huddle? Do we have non-Christian friends or do we remain 'apart'?
6. In the v18-22 John speaks about antichrists. How do we deal with those who think differently to us or even strongly oppose us? How do we recognise false teachers in the church?
7. What do you take-away from this session?



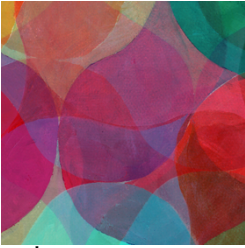
26th March: pt-4 Love in action

1 John 3:1-24

John continues with his main theme of love. Because God loves us we have become his children and take on the family likeness, becoming more like Jesus and being willing to lay down our lives for others. When we are born of God we may continue to sin but we will not continue in rebellion against God.

1. What does v1-2 teach us about our relationship with the Father?
How do we become a child of God?
2. What does John tell us about Jesus' return (v2)?
3. In v4 John calls sin lawlessness. What does he mean by this?
5. Do v6 and v9 challenge us when we sin? What should our response be?
6. Read v15 and v17 which of these to do we find more difficult, loving our brother or meeting material needs?
7. Does v18 suggest that we no longer need to speak about Jesus, but can just show God's love by our actions? When we show love to those in need in practical ways, do we need to talk about the Lord Jesus?
8. How does our church corporately show God's love in action to those in our community? How do we discern the needs of those outside of our walls?
9. What do you take-away from this session?

pause for 2nd April: Palm Sunday & 9th April: Easter Day

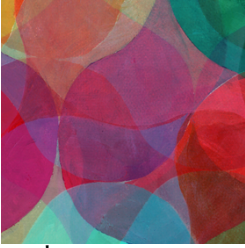


16th April: pt-5 The Love of God

1John 4:1-21

Again John warns against false teachers. He shows how those who love God have been given his Spirit to enable them to show His love to all.

1. In v1 John tells us to test the spirits. How do we recognise the spirit of the antichrist or a false teacher? Is this a problem that we have personally encountered, perhaps in watching TV preachers or reading books?
2. V4-6 suggest we should not be like the world. In what ways should we be different to our non-Christian neighbours?
3. Where do we get our motivation from and our ability to love others?
4. If God is love, how does he show his love to us? (v9)
5. William Barclay describes how we should love the way that Christ loves. “Nothing that person can do will ever make us seek anything but their highest good. Even if they hurt us we love them. So Christian love must not just be emotional but of the will. We love the unlovable, those who don’t love us, those we don’t like. It means no bitterness, no revenge but only to seek the highest good for someone.” Do we love like this? Do we love those we don’t like? Why do we love?
6. How can the church be more involved in the life of our community? How can we stand up for justice, for those whose voice is not heard?
7. What is the big idea you are leaving with, and what are you going to do about it?



23rd April: pt-6 Faith in Jesus

1 John 5:1-21

Everyone who believes and trusts in Jesus will obey his commands and can be assured of eternal salvation. We can have confidence to come to God in prayer knowing that we are God's children.

1. How is our love of God related to our love for others?
2. In v3 we read that we show our love of God by obeying his commands which are not burdensome? Is this our experience?
3. What is it in the world that we need to overcome v4? How do we conquer the sins and temptations of the world?
4. Eternal life is given to us now if we believe. How does living in eternity affect how we live life from day today?
5. Do we feel the assurance that is our promise if we believe in Jesus, v13? Why is it important that we are assured of our salvation?
6. What does v10-12 say about other religions and what they teach. How do we respond to beliefs which are different to ours without appearing intolerant?
7. How do we pray in accordance with God's will? Do we have confidence when approaching God in prayer, v14?
8. What do you take-away from this series in your ongoing walk with the Lord?