



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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HG171 *Walking In The Light* True Life

1 John 2:1-17

Home Group Study Notes

23 September 2018 - Pauline Woolnough



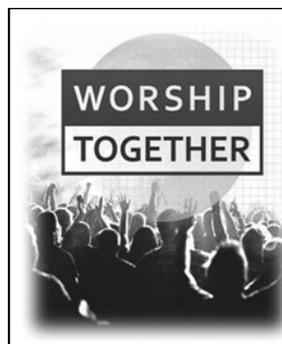
**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!**

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

You often hear people say that there are big sins and little sins, what do you think?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG171 *Walking In The Light* True Life

1 John 2:1-17

Home Group Sermon

23 September 2018 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction Today many feel that the message the church gives is that God is harsh and demanding, that he expects good behaviour and bad behaviour is punished. They argue that loving earthly parents show more love for their children than the God that the church portrays which too often treats people as projects, getting to know them in order to convert them rather than simply loving them for who they are. There is a growing trend to separate the God of the New Testament from the God of the Old Testament because the God of the Old is much less likeable and He has been under attack for some time. Its a revival of an ancient idea first argued by the second century heretic Marcion who like others in church history rejected certain books of the NT that they didn't like and separated the NT from the OT. What can happen today is that Jesus is removed from the OT and people may say yes to him, but a definite No to the OT God because there is so much smiting and bloodshed in the OT. Jesus though, never apologised for the God of the OT, because he was his father and he affirmed everything in the OT. These current beliefs are held by many western Christians who prefer to single out one aspect of God's character, i.e. love. 1 John 4:8 says that "*God is love,*" but if we strip down God's moral character to 'nothing but love' a real distortion of his character occurs and love is isolated from all his other attributes. We have to take everything as a whole that God reveals about himself and one of these things is his hatred of sin and his holy determination that it shall be judged and condemned. 1John 1:5 says that God is Light, meaning that he is entirely holy and pure, and as a result, he cannot and will not, tolerate sin. When we take a narrow view of God it is then easy to believe that as God is love it would be impossible to think that he could ever be angry with us and so we consign God's wrath or anger to the OT where he tended to be most angry. It's then only a very short step to believe that Jesus did not come to die for our sins because God loves us anyway, and rather than thank Jesus for dying in our place in order to satisfy God's anger, he came to show us the Father and to show us how to live.

The problems that beset us today are not new as the truth has always been challenged. People are no longer interested in what the church has to say, things like hell is never going to be popular and a more liberal theology wants to defend Christianity by getting rid of the bits that people don't like in order to get them to like Christianity, but the danger is that we end up taking away bits that we are trying to convert people to. Ultimately the truth is not a popularity contest. We don't have to defend God. We just need to know the truth. We will get challenged by others who say that its all a matter of interpretation and that truth is subjective but we still have to respect others views and avoid arguing to score points, it simply means its all the more important that we know what we believe and that's why we have to interpret scripture correctly.

There are probably few if any Christians who don't doubt at some time or another whether their salvation is secure, but thankfully we don't lose it simply because we wobble and have doubts but life feels better and we are free from worry and the danger of a works-based theology when we know for sure that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. John wanted to reassure his readers of this and confront false teachers at the time who claimed that you can enjoy the assurance of standing sinless before God in righteousness and light, whilst still walking in darkness, disobeying His commandments, and hating your brother. This did not square with John's teaching, Paul's or the Lord's

4. Is it possible to rightly love others without a true love for God? Can you think of ways you show love for others because of your love for God.

5. What are some of the things that the world promises to provide but cannot?

6. Are there areas in your life where the world's temptations wage war within you? Reflect for a few moments. How does our love for God help defeat any sinful desires?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Sin is such an emotive subject, why do you think that it is important that we get our idea of sin from God rather than from our culture?

2. None of us like the idea of having to obey someone so how would you explain to a non believer that obedience to God is not oppressive?

3. Can you understand why people may want to separate the God of the Old Testament from the God of the New Testament? How would you help them to understand he is the same God.

and so the issue had to be dealt with. That is why John wrote this letter. He says in 2:1-2 *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”* John is an old man by now, he knows human nature, he has seen it all and he knows that in this life we cannot be sinless, we will sin until our dying day so the question is not , *“how do we stop sinning”* but *“what do we do when we sin?”* Here in vs 1-2 he tells us that when we sin we are to go straight to our advocate in heaven who is Jesus Christ, he is the Righteous one and the one who atones for our sins and rather than our sin distancing us from our Father and making us question our salvation John gives us 3 tests to order to be sure that we do indeed know the Lord and that our salvation is secure, these are - Do I believe the right things about Jesus? Do I obey Gods commands? Do I love others? And he goes on to tell us not to love the *“world.”*

1. Do I believe the right things about Jesus - In Ch 2 1 John says that *“we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.”* The term *“advocate”* usually refers to the Holy Spirit, and it is only here in 1 John 2:1 that it is a reference to the Lord Jesus who is able to be our advocate because only he is righteous. Only Jesus was without sin, he is the Righteous One. The word *“advocate”* means *“helper”* and so Jesus is our helper when we sin, 1 John 1 :7 says that his blood *“cleanses us from sin,”* and 1:9 says he is *“the forgiver of our sins”* so whatever way you look at it we are completely covered because not only do we have a helper in the Holy Spirit in our hearts we also have a helper in heaven in Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, and as a result *“no sin can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord,”* Rom 8:39. Martin Luther said, *“If we are beset by sins no harm is done. The blood of Christ was not shed for the devil or the angels; it was shed for sinners. Accordingly, when I feel sin why should I despair, and why should I not believe that it has been forgiven? For the blood of Christ washes sins away. The main thing is that we cling to the Word. Then there is no trouble.”* So when we sin we are to go to our Saviour Jesus who is the cleanser and forgiver of our sins, 1:7 and 1:9.

In 2.2 John goes on to tell us why it is that Jesus is qualified to be our advocate or helper, and says it’s because, *“He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins- and not only our sins but the sins of the world,”* v 2. As Jesus died on the cross the blood that he shed satisfied God’s holiness and turned away his righteous wrath which should have been directed at us and instead, it was poured out on Jesus. Jesus took our judgement and our punishment and through Him, God reconciled the world to himself. God’s holiness and his love meet at the cross. Jesus Christ is our atonement, 2.2 *“He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins.”* See also what Paul also says in Romans 3:25-26, Hebrews 2:17 and John says in 1 John 4:10 *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* The word atonement is an important word in the NT and carries the idea of satisfaction. By his bloody sacrifice Jesus satisfied God’s holiness and turned away his righteous anger from sinners. We try to explain the cross as Jesus being like a bridge between us and God but this is denied by some as being something the church has made up. Some of todays popular Christian writers mislead people by saying that as God can be seen in all religions, they must all lead us to heaven and that everyone will eventually end up there anyway because really that’s what God wants and surely God gets what he wants. Steve Chalke suggests that the orthodox understanding of the cross is a form of comic child abuse, *“a vengeful father punishing his son for an offence he has not even committed”* and suggests that the cross is a barrier to unbelievers as *“such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement: “God is love,” yet Is 53:10 says “But it was the Lords good plan to crush him and cause him grief” and Phil 2:8 says, “he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminals death on a cross,”* but then goes on to say in v 9 *“Therefore God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above every names that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”* The cross is where God’s love, holiness, judgement and mercy meet. Rev 5:9 again highlights the universal element to Christ’s atoning work as it is for the whole world, no one is beyond its reach, *“And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and*

with your blood you purchased for God, persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

2. Do I obey God's commands The word “obey” is one of those unpopular words. We hate the idea of having to obey someone and obedience to God can be another stumbling block for unbelievers. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, *“Only he who believes is obedient; only he who is obedient believes.”* To know God is to love God and to love God is to obey God. v 3 says *“And we can be sure that we know him if we obey him.”* but v 4 says *“If someone claims ‘I know God,’ but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar.”* There must be something very powerful about this knowledge of God if John calls anybody a liar who claims to know God, but fails to obey his commands. There is knowing and knowing, I know who the queen is but I don't know her personally, so what kind of knowledge of God has the power to produce obedience to Him? It must be more than just factual knowledge to have the capacity to make us want to obey.

When a soldier comes back from war he says *“you don't know what its like”* in other words the knowledge he has only comes through experience and if you haven't experienced combat then you don't know what it's like. So the knowledge of Christ, and God the Father that John speaks about in v 4 is such an experience that it changes our lives and the way we live and produces a trust for God in us that makes us want to obey him, it becomes unthinkable that any command he gives wouldn't result in the very best outcome for our lives. For John it is inconceivable that we could know the love of God and not trust him because not to trust him means we don't really know him. So when God commands you to do something and you ignore it or go against it, John can only conclude one thing - you don't believe that God is love and therefore you don't know him. For if you believed that God is love, then you would believe that all his commandments were the very best thing for you and you would follow them. When you turn away from the commandments of God, you say in effect, a loving God wouldn't command me to do that. So our disobedience displays our lack of trust in the love God has for us and it shows that we do not know Him. John saw the importance of the gospels connection to obedience and that it was an important way of knowing that we are saved. Being obedient and keeping God's commands is not a condition of knowing God but its a sure sign that we do. Once we have found Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, our advocate and our atonement there naturally occurs in us a new desire and passion to please him and to obey him. This obedience is not driven by fear of some angry dictator or dread of what may happen should we not obey but driven by love and gratitude as the magnitude of what he has done for us becomes clear. Christ died for us so that we might have eternal life, why would we not want to know him more and to please him by obeying him and living as he did? V 6 says *“Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.”*

3 Do I love others We saw in v 5 that it was our love of God that concerned John, *“But those who obey God's word truly show how they completely love him.”* Now in 7-11 its about love for others. He assure them that it is nothing new that he is asking them to do, he *has* nothing new to say, its simply the same word he has given previously, when they first heard the gospel, its the word, *“love”*. v7 *“This old commandment -to love one another - is the same message you heard before, that we should love one another.* So John can say its nothing new that he is teaching yet in v 8 he says *“Yet it is also new.”* The old commandment to love is made new in Jesus, he *“lived the truth of this commandment,”* v8, and it is new in us when we *“live our lives as Jesus did”* v 6. It is also new because *“the darkness is disappearing and the true light is already shining.”* v8. Jesus lived a blameless life and the command to love was seen in everything he said and did, perfect love was revealed in his life, death and resurrection and darkness has been on the run ever since as the light of Christ shines through. He is *“the Light of the World,”* Jn 8:12. So love is as old as God Himself yet it is new in us at our meeting and conversion to Christ, so if we say we are in the light yet we continue to hate our brother John can only draw one conclusion, - you are still in darkness. You do not know God, you are lost and you are blinded by the darkness.

Do not love the world - In verses 12-14 John makes a point of addressing different groups and identifies his readers as *“children”*, as those mature in the faith, or *“fathers,”* and *“young men”* and perhaps we can categorise them as new believers, older believers and maturing believers, he reaches out to the whole church with affection and encouragement but in v 15-17 he gives a strong warning concerning the world and love of it. He mentions the word *“world”* 5 times in and obviously he is not referring to God's wonderful creation or the people living in it that Jesus died for. The first reason he gives is that *“if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him,”* v15. In other words, the reason you shouldn't love the world is that you can't love the world and God at the same time. Love for the world pushes out love for God, and love for God pushes out love for the world. As Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money,”* Matt 6:24. So don't love the world, because that would put you in the class with those who hate God. He's not telling us not to love our culture and things that are in the world that are good and which reflect God's good gifts and that glorify him, instead he is saying we are not to love and idolise things and behaviours that are contrary to God's word, i.e things that the world offers, v16 *“For the world only offers a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. For these things are not from the Father but from the world.”* We can easily identify these things that John speaks of in the modern world and the damage they do to individuals and to society, things such as drug abuse, drunkenness, gluttony, abundance of possessions, sexual perversions and so on. Sexual appetite gives way to immorality and physical appetite gives way to gluttony, but its important to note that we are not sinful *because* we sin, we sin *because* we are sinful and that is why everyone of us needs a Saviour who cleanses us and forgives our sins.

Conclusion Lastly John says that *“this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases the Father will live forever.”* v17. The world that the devil preys upon is on the run. Light which will last forever showed up fully in the Person of Jesus and the only thing that will last is the will of God, *“doing what pleases God will last forever.”* v17. The work of Jesus lasts forever because it was God's will that he do the work God gave him to do, we also need to ensure that our hearts are attached to his will and not the things of the world for our work to last. There is a story that at the end of his life John was brought out to the church on a pallet, they wanted to hear from him but all he said to them was *“Love one another.”* When he was asked why that was all he said he responded, *“Because it is enough.”* Things that satisfy us for a moment can kill our soul, it is only love that endures and what ensures that we endure, is that we belong to Jesus, that he belongs to us and that we love and abide in him.

Emmanuel Church Text for 2018

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry ‘Abba Father.’

Romans 8:15