

The First letter of John

True knowledge

Answers to Session Three: God is Light

1. John uses “light” as his metaphor to represent all that is good, holy, pure, true and reliable, all words applicable to God. Darkness represents what is evil and sinful. Light gives us the understanding of things being revealed and not hidden; concealed on purpose, because they do not bear scrutiny. Light is also a guide, which can lead us out of darkness and show us the right path, the path of truth, put another way, we can be mentally enlightened. Once in the light it is possible to recognise where there is darkness.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus declares himself the “*Light of the World*” and goes on to say, “*Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” John 8:12

To reinforce this teaching in John 14:6, Jesus says, “*I am the way the truth and the life*”, so clarifying for the disciples, and us, that we should obey his teaching and follow his example of complete obedience to God and loving service to other people.

2. We achieve fellowship with God, by obeying what Jesus taught us. Mathew’s Gospel puts a lot of that teaching together in chapters 5-7, and we looked at that closely whilst reading James’ letter. But Jesus also put it more concisely for us: to love God and to love other people. These two commandments covered the ten given to Moses on Mount Sinai; Exodus 20:1-17.
3. To know that we have true fellowship with God comes from inside ourselves and the key to this is love. With faith comes a change in how we think and feel. This is radical, so that is why it is referred to as being born again; a new life in him.
4. Who are these groups of people addressed in 1 John 2:12-14?

The “dear children” are all Christians. John is old and loves them all as his children. He reminds them they already have forgiveness through Jesus, 2:12, and have come to know the Father, 2:12b

Then he divides them into two groups:

- a) The “fathers” are those who have been Christians for some time. They are the ones who are in despair at the numbers of people from the church who are being led astray by false teaching. John reminds them that they have been believers for a time. The implication being that they have a role to play against the heresy using their experience and knowledge of God.
- b) The “young men” are the newer Christians, who have perhaps been tempted by and looked into these heresies, but recognised that they are false. This has given them an informed strength in understanding. They are the people who should be using that strength to defy the false and spread the true word of God.

When John first addresses the groups, he seems to be reminding them where they stand in their faith. He then comes back to them in the spirit of encouragement to go forward. All must remember what they know to be true and what Christ suffered to defeat sin. The experienced should share their experience with

those who need their guidance. The “young men” should use their energy to teach the truth and fight the lies.

5. When John refers to “*the world*” in 2:15-17, he means every aspect of life that is under Satan’s influence; all that is sinful. He spells that out in 1 John 5:19, “...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

However, in his Gospel in John 3:16, he is positive, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.”

There is a third use of the same Greek word, in John 12:25, “Anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Here our spiritual lives are torn between the transient things of life on earth and the eternal truths, or in others words our constant battle against temptation.

We should never forget the beauty of God’s created world and all the wonders he intended us to enjoy, and not confuse those wondrous gifts with the aspects of life in the world that are controlled by Satan. Christianity is about joy.

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September 2020