



1 John is a very practical and encouraging, yet challenging book that has been a source of life for many throughout history. John writes both to non-believers and believers with the purpose that those who believe in the name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Much of what he writes provides a sort of litmus test for the believer to where they can look and see where the Holy Spirit has been producing a certain quality or obedience in them and be confident that God has set his eternal seal on their lives. It is a challenging book that pushes the believer to rely more on Christ and the work of his Spirit in their lives so that the love of God may be clearly seen in their lives. As he did in his gospel, John uses words like “love”, “light”, “the Spirit”, and “believe” that serve as key words throughout the book. My prayer is that our Life Groups would study 1 John intentionally and press into the Spirit so that we might grow in faith and obedience. I am excited for this study and I hope you are as well. As always, if you need anything or have any questions, my cell is (256) 613-3609 and my email is hunter@mbchurch.com, you can reach out at any time.

In Christ,
Hunter Hindsman

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Life Group – 1 John 1:1-2:2 – Mar. 4, 2018

Walking in the Light

CONNECT

Light exposes things that are hidden. Share a fun fact about yourself with the group that they do not know. See if you can surprise some people with a cool piece of information.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 1:1-2:2

(Additional Passages: Jn 1:1-18; Deut. 10:12-22; Ps. 25; Eph. 4:1-3; Rom. 13:8-14; Jas. 2:14-26)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others?

Serve Weekend is upcoming in a couple weekends and could be a great opportunity for this Life Group to allow the light of God to shine. Brainstorm which areas that your class desires to serve in. Then, begin moving in that direction, making plans to serve as a group, not only this weekend but throughout the year.

As believers, we have fellowship with one another in God. How can this Life Group better serve the members at MeadowBrook?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

There are many people still walking in deep darkness. Pray that the light that cannot be overcome by darkness would shine into their lives and that they would receive life.

Spend time in prayer humbly confessing your sins to Jesus and resting in the grace our advocate shows us.

Pray for the members and leaders at MeadowBrook. Pray that our church would be full of people who choose to walk in the light. Ask God to empower us with His Spirit in that endeavor. Pray that we would daily seek fellowship with God through reading, praying and praising God and that we would have unified fellowship with one another as a result.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

When God reveals himself to us, the proper response is to proclaim his message to others as John did. Share with someone how the truth that God is light has been revealed in your life.

For the Family: Read verses 1:5-10 with your family. Walk through the story of Jesus and how he cleanses us from our sins if we turn to him and confess their sins. Prompt them to pray to God and confess any sins they may have committed that day.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 1:1-2:2 – Mar. 4, 2018

Walking in the Light

John opens his letter with a brief prologue highlighting the great progression we as believers are in, as well as establishing himself as an eyewitness to it. The God from eternity past, who was there in the beginning became a man and dwelt among us. He manifested himself to us in a historical way. Our God interacted with the people living during the time of Jesus in an unprecedented way, and because he came, we proclaim his message, have fellowship with God and others, and have joy that will one day be made complete at his return. What was Jesus' message? "That God is light and in him is no darkness at all". This light has shown into the world and gives abundant life to those who believe in Jesus. He is good and gracious, forgiving our many sins. He then enables us, as believers, through radical transformation brought about by His Holy Spirit, to walk in the light, as he is light. It is impossible to have fellowship with the God who is light, yet walk in darkness. However, it is also impossible for us to claim that we have never sinned or have reached a point where we sin no more. So, where should we be in this journey? If we are in Christ, we can look at our life and see where God has produced a desire in us to walk as he walked, to live as he lived. We can easily see this love for what is right and hatred for sin that used to not be within us. Whenever we do sin, however we recognize it, confess it and repent it. Brokenness over sin that leads to repentance is evidence of the Holy Spirit working in us. So even if you are struggling against sin and seem like there is no hope, keep striving! The fight against sin is an evidence that the Spirit is working in you. Rest in the finished work of Christ. We are not fighting for victory over sin or right standing before God, Jesus, our advocate and the righteous one, has already graciously given us that through faith.

5 Evidences that Someone is Walking in the Light.

1. They practice truth.
2. They humbly confess sins they commit.
3. They rely on God's grace, not themselves.
4. They pursue righteousness.
5. They experience fellowship with God and others.

The Prologue Progression¹

→ God in Eternity Past

→ Historical Manifestation of God.

→ Our proclamation.

→ Fellowship with God and others.

→ Joy. Everlasting, perfect, joy.

Jesus is not far off from us but is near and accessible. What John and the disciples experienced was a first for creation. Abraham only heard from God. Moses and some of the prophets heard and saw God. But the disciples were able to touch God and to examine him closely and through their accounts we are able to as well. It is through God's word where he has graciously revealed himself to us so that we might proclaim him to those who do not know him, have fellowship with him, and have joy everlasting.

God manifesting himself to John lead to John's proclamation. It is the same with us. When God reveals himself to us, we can't help but tell others about him. Move your group to get into the rhythm of God revealing himself to them through His word and they in turn proclaiming that to others.

"For the Whole World"

Does John mean that all people will be saved regardless if they believe in him or not? No. The weight of Scripture would speak to the contrary. (A good practice to teach people when they come across difficult to understand passages is to let the rest of Scripture help interpret it).

"Universal in provision is not to be equated to with universal in application. Universalism", (the idea that all people will go to heaven), "is plainly ruled out, unless one believes that John contradicts himself in the same epistle (e.g., 1:5-10, 2:28, 3:14,15; 5:12,16).... The provision has been accomplished. The reception and application of that provision is appropriated by faith."²

Unfortunately, many reject this gracious offer, yet we still must continue in proclaiming His gospel.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 62-70.

² Daniel L. Akin, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 84-85.

Life Group – 1 John 2:3-2:17 – Mar. 11, 2018

The Love of the Father and the Love of the World

CONNECT

Love makes people do sometimes wacky things and at sometimes amazing things. What is something weird or ridiculous or incredible that your love for someone moved you to do?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 2:3-2:17

(Additional Passages: Lk. 6:43-49, Deut. 6:1-9; Hos. 6:1-6; Jn. 13:31-35; Mt. 6:19-24; 1 Cor. 10:13)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others?

This upcoming weekend is Serve Weekend. How will our Life Group show the love of Christ to others? Have you decided on a way you could serve together as a group yet?

What are some practical ways we could better love our brothers and sisters at MeadowBrook? What are the areas of need?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

John McArthur states in his commentary: "An absence of love for the world must habitually characterize the love life of those to be considered genuinely born again. God, not the world, must have the first place in the Christian's life." What are areas that this world is tempting you to love above God? Ask God to strengthen you as you resist that temptation, trusting that he will show you the way of escape.

Is there a brother or sister in Christ that you need to confess lack of love for? Maybe you are withholding forgiveness? Spend some time in prayer for that brother or sister, forgiving them as God has forgiven you. Ask God for forgiveness for your lack of love.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share the love of God with someone this week. If you need to reconcile with someone, then do that. If a believer is struggling, share with them verses 12-14. If it is an unbeliever, point them to what is eternal.

For the Family: Pick one of the applications of God's love in our lives- obedience, love for one another, assurance, and/or absence of love for the world- and read those verses with your family explaining how God's love for us produces that in us.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 2:3-2:17 – Mar. 11, 2018

The Love of the Father and the Love of the World

The love of God is the light that has shone into our hearts that the darkness has not overcome. It was God's love for us that moved him to freely give his life for us upon the cross, making the way for sinners who stood condemned to be set free. This outstanding love is not earned or ever repaid, it is his free gift to those who receive him by faith, turning from their old love- the love of the world. The two are incompatible. The heart cannot serve two masters, it will love the one and hate the other. When a sinner first comes to knowledge of the depth of God's love for them, it truly is an amazing thing. They pass from death into life, from captivity into freedom, from blindness into sight. But that is just the beginning of God's love in their life. The love of God sanctifies us, assures us, and will one day bring us finally into his presence for all eternity. God's love for us enables us to love him in return by obeying his commandments. Love is lived out by obedience. If we walk in disobedience, the Bible clearly says that we do not love God. God loves us enough that he does not save us so that we can continue to walk in the same sin that entangled and devoured us unrepentant. God's love for us enables us to love others as he loved us. In fact, Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loved us, and that it would be by this love that the world would know that we are truly his disciples. It is God's love that gives his children assurance regardless of the spiritual maturity- children, young men or fathers³. His love for us assures that our sins are forgiven, that we have victory in Christ and over the schemes of the devil, and that those with deep communion with God are already consciously living in eternity. Lastly, God's love for us moves us to replace the love for the world that ends in death, with love for him that leads to eternal life.

Obedience and the Assurance of Salvation

Obedience is the external, visible proof of salvation. The false teachers' failure to obey God's commands objectively demonstrated that they were not saved. Those who are truly enlightened and know God are obedient to His word. The repetition of the words "know" and "keep" emphasizes that those genuinely born again display the habit of obedience.

Assurance of salvation is possible. Obedience to God does not bring about justification (that comes by faith alone), but obedience as a pattern of life gives evidence that one has been born again. To know Him transforms practical behavior. Jesus's life of obedience is the Christian's pattern. Those who claim to be Christians ought to live as he did, mirroring His faith, love, piety, obedience, and self-sacrifice.

How is this obedience possible? By the Spirit of God that dwells within us. This does not exempt us from stumbling, or struggle, however it is the solid foundation that we stand on, knowing that we are strengthened and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Old and New Commands

John uses some word play in verses 7-11. The commandment that he was speaking of was love. It was

new because Jesus personified love in a fresh, new way and it was spread abroad in believers' hearts and energized by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22; 1 Thes. 4:9). And the command was old because the OT commanded love and the readers of John's epistle had heard about Jesus' command to love when they first heard the gospel. (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5).

The Love of the World

We must understand this love of the world is not a direct attack of the world all together (food, sports, vacations), but rather of the world systems that are often in direct opposition to God, namely...

- the desires of the flesh: our inherited sinful desires that no one needed to teach us.
- the desires of the eyes: "the tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things, without enquiring into their real values"⁴
- the pride of life: "the glorification of self and a failure to realize the dependence of humanity upon God, the Creator, for existence. In this area of temptation, individuals make idols of their livelihood, social standing, any other status symbol that the world determines is important but that matters little to God."⁵

³ Stott, 100. See also Akin, 103.

⁴ Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, 41

⁵ Akin, 11.

Life Group – 1 John 2:18-27 – Mar. 18, 2018

Truth and Lies

CONNECT

Take time to see how well you know your group by playing the game 2 Truths and a Lie. It's quite simple. Have everyone say 2 truths about themselves and 1 lie, and see if you can discern which is which.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 1:1-2:2

(Additional Passages: Jn. 10:22-30; 14:15-31; 17:3, 17:17; Jude 1; Matt. 24; Gen. 3; Eph. 6)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others?

This is the last day of serve weekend. If you are planning on doing something today pray over that ministry opportunity. Reflect on the weekend and what God showed your group. Pray for the people with whom you came in contact.

How can we protect each other from the teachings of false teachers?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for MeadowBrook and our Life Groups and D-Groups. Pray that false teaching will not infiltrate our church through any avenue. Pray for those who would be deceived by false teaching that are in our church. Pray that God would move them to his truth.

Spend time in prayer honestly evaluating your own beliefs. Ask God to reveal any lies that you have believed about him or his word. And then repent of those false beliefs and renew your mind with the truth of God's word.

Pray for those who have been deceived by the evil one. Pray those we know who have believed his lies and are outside the family of God. Pray that God would open their hearts to the truth and that you would have the opportunity to share the truth of the gospel with them.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Find someone new to the faith and disciple them in the ways of God. Invest in them truth and train them so that they can stand firm against the lies of the enemy.

For the Family: Read verses 2:24-27 with your family. Walk through the gospel message and explain the promise of eternal life. Introduce your family to the fact that there are false teachers in the world telling lies about God and train them how to recognize them.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 2:18-27 – Mar. 18, 2018

Truth and Lies

John now makes the turn in his letter to address the false teachings to which his readers were being exposed. It is likely that John is responding to an early form of Gnosticism which grew in popularity during the 2nd through 5th century. They claimed to have a special knowledge from God (probably why the word know is so prevalent in 1 John), they denied the humanity of Jesus, and they preached that redemption was found “through affirming the divine light already in the human soul”, rather than repentance and faith in Jesus.⁶ At the time of this letter (no later than 90s AD)⁷, John states that already many antichrists or false teachers have already come, and today many false teachers are still out there seeking to destroy the lives of those who might hear the truth of the Gospel. Today, the believer must be ever diligent in protecting themselves and their family from the false teaching that the antichrists are seeking to use to deceive those who believe the gospel. John encourages his readers, however, with 3 ways to identify a false teacher, 3 truths to help ground themselves firmly in their faith, 1 command and 1 promise. All of these combined together will make the believer prepared to guard against and to destroy the false teachings this world has to offer with the truth of God’s word.

3 Ways to Identify a False Teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. They proclaim a special knowledge not found in Scripture.2. They deny Jesus as the Christ or any aspect of him that is revealed in Scripture.3. They claim to be the one you must come to be taught the things of God.
3 Truths for Those in Christ	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God has given us all the knowledge we need. (cf. 2 Peter 1:3)2. Jesus is in fact the Messiah, the God-Man, who is from eternity past, who died for our sins, rose from the dead and will return again.3. God himself, through the Holy Spirit (anointing in this context means the Holy Spirit), which indwells all believers at the moment of their salvation, continues to teach us truth to help distinguish lies from truth.
1 Command	Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. (You don’t get past the gospel message. Let the same grace that saved you, sanctify you.)
1 Promise	Eternal Life. No promise any false teacher offers tops this one. (cf. John 17:4)

Can you lose your salvation?

NO. But, Eternal Security (once saved, always saved) is not the best way to describe the work of God keeping his people either. Rather, it is perseverance of the saints. Those who are truly saved will remain steadfast to the end by the power and grace of God. Those who fall away reveal that they were never with us to begin with.

Antichrists

Defn: “Anyone who opposes Christ, seeks to supplant him or falsely represents him”⁸

In this passage John both makes a reference to the ultimate Antichrist spoken about by the OT prophets, Jesus and John in revelation, but the antichrists John refers to here are who are working against Christ. He says that many have come already, and surely many have come after them and are around today.

Antichrists are easily identifiable by the combination of these 3 characteristics:

1. They leave the fellowship of the Church altogether (not simply one local church), either out of disgruntlement or whatever excuse they concoct.
2. They deny the faith and the long-held truth found in scripture in lieu of their better truth they have received.
3. They attempt to deceive the faithful with their lies, while actually deceiving the false believers that were in the church.

Why does God allow this? I believe John MacArthur says it best: “He permits antichrists to do their sinister work in His own church for the ultimate good for the body... Satan and all his demons, despite for their hatred for God serve His end to purify His people”⁹

⁶ ESV Study Bible, 1 John Introduction, 2426.

⁷ Ibid, 2425.

⁸ MacArthur, 1-3 John, 94.

⁹ Ibid, 99.

Life Group – 1 John 2:28-3:10 – March 25th, 2018

Life as the Children of God

CONNECT

Children act like their parents—for better and for worse. Tell a story from either when you were a child or if you have kids from when they were younger where you or your child acted like one of the parents and embarrassed them.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 2:28-3:10

(Additional Passages: Jer. 31; Eze. 36-37; Hos. 6:6; Jn. 15; Rom. 8; Rev. 19-22)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others?

Next week is Easter. How can we serve those who will be coming on our campus who may or may not know Christ?

God desires for us to show mercy, love and compassion to others. How can we practically practice that in our church and community?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for those whom, if Jesus returned today, would shrink in fear and in shame. Pray that the light of God's salvation would shine into their hearts.

Where in your life is sin becoming a practice? Repent of that sin. Ask God to reveal other sins, so that you may repent, rely on the Spirit and walk in righteousness. There is no lasting joy and satisfaction in sin.

Pray for our Easter services next weekend. Pray for Randy as he is preparing. Pray that his preaching would be anointed by the Spirit and that the Spirit would move powerfully among the congregation. Pray for our First Impressions Team and that the joy they have in Christ would be evident on their faces.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Invite someone to Easter next weekend. If they ask questions, share with them the gospel.

For the Family: Read verses 3:1-3 with your family. Explain the great love God has for believers that we would be called his children. If some of your family are not believers, explain to them how God loves them and died for them that he may call them children as well. Talk about the hope we have as God's children and how that changes the way we live.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 2:28-3:10 – March 25th, 2018

Life as the Children of God

After finishing his section where he deals with the false teachers, John turns his focus again to the family of God. He introduces the two types of people in this world – the children of God and children of the devil (who we all once were) – and how to distinguish between them. The children of the devil are lawless because they do not experience the blessing of the New Covenant where the Holy Spirit comes into the believer and writes God's law upon their hearts and enables them to walk in God's ways (see Jer. 31:33 and Eze. 36:27). And because they are lawless, i.e. they do not know God, they make a practice of sinning and will one day shrink in shame and fear at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is not so for the children of God! The children of God have a firm and rooted identity that is found in Christ. We are children of the King and co-heirs with Christ who will one day judge the angels (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:3). We are not of this broken and dust-filled world. Our home is imperishable and glorious. Lastly, we are loved by God! We are never alone or totally hated. God is with us! Not only do we have a firm identity, but we also have a secure hope. One day, Jesus will return, and he will give us a new body that is not stained with sin. We will then be perfectly Christ-like and we will see God. Pause here and read through Revelation 19-22 and just reflect on it. That is our hope, and it is sure. These two things – our identity and our hope – drive the practices of those who are children of God. God has graciously adopted us as his children, forgiving us of our sins, and promising us a future that is beyond comprehension. Therefore, the children of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, abide in Christ, purify themselves as Christ is pure, and practice righteousness as Christ is righteous (Hos. 6:6). This is evidence of the Spirit working in the believer and it produces a confidence in God that will be displayed when He returns!

Hope¹⁰

The world views hope as a form of wishing. "I hope that _____ wins the National Championship" or "I hope to have _____ at this point in my life" are simply wishes with no firm grounding. Hope as seen in the Bible is not like that, but it is "an absolute future guaranteed by the Lord." Here are 10 Characteristics of Biblical hope:

1. Hope is founded in God. (Ps. 42:5)
2. Hope is a gift of grace. (2 Thess. 2:16-17)
3. Hope is revealed in Scripture. (Rom. 15:4)
4. Hope is reasonable and defensible. (1 Pet. 3:15)
5. Hope is secured in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. (1 Pet. 1:3)
6. Hope is confirmed and energized in believers by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)
7. Hope is a defense against the enemy. (1 Thess. 5:8)
8. Hope is confirmed and strengthened through trials. (Rom. 8:18)
9. Hope is the source of our joy. (Ps. 146:5)
10. Hope is the antidote to the fear of death. (1 Thess. 4:13-14)

Those not in Christ will shrink in shame and fear at Jesus' coming, but those in Christ will have full confidence. Our hope will be fully realized and the joy of it will continue to increase into all eternity as we will be with God. On that day, we will finally be saved from the presence and effects of sin and will be perfectly Christ-like. O what a glorious day that will be!!

Abiding¹¹

"Abiding in Jesus means to stay connected to him through the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Jesus is our source. We must love him supremely and stay connected to him relationally. We must stay grounded in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in Scripture." This kind of abiding is marked by sound beliefs in the basics of Christianity as we saw last week and the practice of living out our faith in righteousness. God gives those who are truly saved the strength to abide to the end through his Holy Spirit.

The Work of The Holy Spirit

Those who have been born of God have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. There is no special baptism that comes later that brings the Holy Spirit as many popular churches teach in our community. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer from the moment they are saved, and as a result, the believer begins to see strides in holiness and godliness. It is impossible for someone indwelt by the Holy Spirit to be ok with their sin to where they make it a practice.

John wrote clearly in his gospel account (ch. 16) that the Holy Spirit would convict of sin and would guide the faithful into all truth. There is no joy or peace for the believer living in sin. God's love and righteousness will not allow him to sit idly by as his children continue in the same destructive sin that from which Jesus saved us by his blood and set us free to live life abundantly.

¹⁰ MacArthur, 107-110.

¹¹ Allen, *Preaching The Word: 1-3 John*, 125.

Life Group – 1 John 3:11-4:6 – April 8, 2018

The Spirit of Truth and Loving One Another

CONNECT

As a class spend a few moments thinking back to elementary school and the thrill of Valentine's Day. As you discuss think about the candy and cards from your secret admirer and maybe some of those less than romantic jesters.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 3:11-4:6

(Additional Passages: Mt. 13:38, Jn. 1:1-14; 8:44-47; 15:12, 17:14, 1 Thess. 2:8; 1 Cor. 13)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others in our home, work and everyday life?

Consider the ways in which your life group can serve together in deed and in truth.

Hometown Opportunities:

State and National Opportunities:

Global Opportunities:

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take a moment as a group to pray for the continued renewal of the Spirit and the presence of God to indwell your innermost being. Pray for the opportunity to reveal to others the inward love that Christ has richly blessed us through the gift of salvation. Pray for the small moments of quiet times in your day to be filled with the words of God and not the noise of men. Pray that, as a result, God would draw non-believers to faith in Christ.

Last week, many people were on our campus and heard the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed boldly and clearly. Pray for those who were here for the first time looking to get connected. Pray that those who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior would repent and believe in Him.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

We must be ever ready to not only give a defense of our faith, but also to share the love that the Holy Spirit has been perfecting in us for such an occasion as today. Today is the day to share the "Good News" of God's love and mercy to the world around us, so share!

For the Family: Read verses 4:1-6 with your family. Talk about the difference between truth and lies. Explain how people will tell lies about God and how we are supposed to discern the truth about God through his word.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:19-21, ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 3:11-4:6 – April 8, 2018

The Spirit of Truth and Loving One Another

From the beginning, God's people were called to love others, and from the beginning they received opposition from the world. Evil hates righteousness. It is why Cain killed Abel, why Pharaoh opposed Moses, why Saul sought to kill David, why the Israelites rejected Jeremiah, why the Pharisees with the help of Judas put Jesus to death. So, it is no surprise when the world opposes believers. It is this evil that we were born into. But Jesus' death and resurrection made a way for us to have eternal life. At the moment of salvation, the Spirit of truth enters into us (see Titus 3, and this section of Scripture, some prominent churches and church denominations do not preach this truth). He is our Helper, and he enables us to love as Jesus did. Jesus is the example of our love, and those who do not show signs of loving others as he did show evidence of not having been transformed by the Holy Spirit. When we fall short of Christ's example, the Spirit convicts us and moves us back to a place of loving others in deed and in truth. It is in these moments, where the enemy will attack us and seek to condemn us. But in these moments of failures, we can look back to where we were before Christ and see how much work the Spirit has done in our lives since, and in that, we grow in confidence, not in ourselves but in God who saves and keeps us. However, if we look back and see no significant pattern of obedience, no significant pattern of love, no significant transformation, then the condemnation is likely a just condemnation. His commandment is simple: Believe. And from that belief, love. It is that simple. The commands found in scripture are not meant to be burdensome, but rather to be used by the Spirit to produce in us a greater love for God and for others. Many will try and twist this, however, and that is where the Holy Spirit aids us again. He has made himself known, given us victory, and given us clear steps as how to recognize Him in someone.

True Love

What does true love look like? It seems that at most weddings 1st Corinthians 13 is read in part or in whole. As believers, this passage amplifies the words of 1 John and gives us even more insight into the characteristics of love. 1st Corinthians 13:3 simply states that if we do not have love, it profits nothing. Of the many characteristics found in this passage it is verse 5b that is most applicable to our lesson today – "love does not seek its own way."

Simply put, Christ's love for us was so great that he did not seek to be among the holy, but chose to take upon himself wretchedness of the world to rescue his people and become a ransom for many. It is this type of seeking after those farthest away from the door steps of Heaven that enables us to be transformed into a redeemed people.

If this has been your experience in Christ, if you believe that he truly did step out of Heaven to seek relationship with the least of these, then what does that mean for us? It means that we must not seek our own way, and we must die to self as we open our hearts to those in need and seek out those who are considered vile, wretched and poor. It is to these also that we are to proclaim the gospel, the good news of love. Even in the brokenness and sinful life that we lead, Christ seeks us, and it is our pleasure to seek the one who is faithful to redeem any situation and faithful to rescue us from all brokenness.

Four Tests to Discern the Spirit of Truth

1. They love in deed and in truth.
2. They obey God's commands.
3. They confess that Jesus Christ, God himself, has come in the flesh.
4. They listen to the truth of God's word.

Not only are these helpful in detecting false teachings, but these are also helpful in self-examination that produces assurance. Have you seen growth in areas of love in deed and in truth and obedience? Do you confess Jesus to be God who became flesh? Do you listen to truth and make necessary changes to your life? These are all signs of someone who is saved by God and has His Spirit living within them.

False Teachers

"Satan's greatest ambassadors are not pimps, politicians, or power-brokers, but pastors. His priests do not peddle a different religion, but a deadly perversion of the true one. His troops do not make a full-out frontal assault, but work as agents, sneaking into the opposing army. Satan's tactics are studied, clever, predictable, effective. Therefore, we must always remain vigilant." – Tim Challies

To read his article on the 7 Types of False teachers in the church today follow this link:

<http://bit.ly/LGLeader1>

Life Group – 1 John 4:7-21 – April 15th, 2018

The Love of God

CONNECT

Who is the most loving person you know?
Someone who has a sweet spirit and is kind to everyone. No one is perfect except Christ, but take a moment to reflect on someone you know who shows the love of God most of the time.

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 4:7-21

(Additional Passages: Jn. 3:1-21, 13:1-35; Eph. 4:17-32; Matt. 25:35-40; Exo. 34:5-7; Ps. 136; 1 Cor. 12-13)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others?

As we journey together as believers in Christ we must make every effort to show the Love of God that lives in us. How do we show the Love of God as individuals and as groups of believers? What are the specific ways that we can do that as a Life Group?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Our text clearly indicates that love comes from God. This love is something that we cannot take credit for and we must humble ourselves in acknowledgement of God's gift. Humility is a good start for allowing the love of God to flow from us. As a group, pray for the love of God to flow from each individual in order for God to be glorified and Christ to be made known to the world.

Fear has to do with punishment, but the love of God drives that fear out of those who believe. Unfortunately, many still have not experienced the love of God in their own lives and are still living under the fear of punishment. Pray that the love of God would shine into their lives and draw them to faith in Jesus.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Our society has programmed us to be the best, finish first and to have the most. As Christians, we must follow God's commands and put others first out of love, especially the sick, poor and needy. Read Matthew 25:35-40 and apply it this week.

For the Family: With your family, read 1 John 4: 11 & 12. Discuss how we are to love one another and how some people are harder to love than others. It is God's love for us, despite all our faults, that enables us to love others with all their faults.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:19-21, ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 4:7-21 – April 15th, 2018

The Love of God

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not love God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:7-8

As we study through John’s first epistle we begin to understand clearly that our actions are a result of the Spirit working inside of us. By keeping the commands of Christ, we abide in Christ as evidence of the work of the Spirit within us. (1 John 3:24). John returns to his discussion about love for the third time in verse 7, focusing primarily on the perfect love of God seen in the lives of his children. God’s love flows from his character, because as John says twice that “God is love.” Two distinctions here need to be made. First, just because we experience an emotion that is similar to love, does not mean we are experiencing true love. Since God created love, he gets the privilege to define it, and anything that goes against the character of God is not done in love (i.e. people using this verse to justify sins that are clearly condemned in scripture). Second, just because God is love, it does not mean that love is God. As mentioned below, love is essential to his nature, but so is righteousness, justice, mercy, and holiness among others as well. Love is a gift that he gives us and should not be elevated above himself or used as an excuse to sin. That being said, God’s love is the most powerful force in this world. His love was perfectly manifested and displayed in the person of Jesus Christ so that all who repent and believe may experience this amazing love. God’s love moves us to love Him and love others. If it wasn’t for God loving us first, there would have never been a way for us to love him in return, nor to truly love those who are around us. His love moves us to obey the commands to love God and to love others. God’s love reveals itself in the person of Jesus Christ and his word. God’s love is not far off or difficult to find, but has been made clear to us. Lastly, God’s love gives us confidence in our salvation and drives out the fear of eternal judgment, because it so transforms our lives, it becomes increasingly evident that the Holy Spirit is working within us. In fact, John confidently asserts that if someone hates his brother, yet says “I love God” then he is lying. The growth in one’s love for others is one of the clearest assurance of salvation a believer can have. The lack of growth in love for others, on the other hand, is one of the clearest evidences of someone who has not truly believed in the gospel.

How can we live in love?

John makes clear that love is a characteristic of one who has authentic faith. A true believer allows the spirit to grow inside and the outward evidence is Love. “God is Love” (vs.8) that is, Love is essential to God’s nature. The love for fellow believers should be especially evident for one another. Our hearts will be troubled when we do not have love toward others, as God as loved us. We are unworthy of God’s love; Jonathan Edwards reminds us that we “contribute nothing to our salvation except the sin that made it necessary.” Having this mindset, we need to humble ourselves to show God’s love to those “unworthy” both inside and outside the church.

Does this mean that we can never get angry?

A person may be justified in being angry with someone under certain circumstances (read Mark 3:5). However, anger is likely to become sinful if it is not quickly controlled (read Ephesians 4:26). Any anger a Christian has toward another person must

be tempered with love that is steadfast in seeking good for the person who has been angered (read 1 John 4:21).

It is God’s love for us, despite all our faults, that enables us to love others with all their faults. God’s love operates in concert with his other attributes of holiness, mercy, justice, omnipotence, omniscience and others. This tells us it is loving to seek justice and demand holiness, though we never do so at the expense of mercy. PRAY that God will help us learn how to apply his love to every situation we face daily.

The Trinity

In this passage, we see clearly the Trinitarian God at work. Please read this admittedly lengthy article on the Trinity before this lesson, and avoid trying to come up with an analogy. They are nearly all heretical.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-doctrine-of-the-trinity>

Life Group – 1 John 5:1-12 – April 22nd, 2018

A Life Impacted By Truth

CONNECT

What or who has had a lasting impact in your life and why?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 5:1-12

(Supplemental Passages: Jn. 13:31-35; Matt. 3:13-17; 22:36-40; Rom. 6:5-11; 12:9-21)

- From this passage, what do I learn about who God is and what He does? (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
- From this passage, what do I learn about myself?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How can I better serve and love others, having read this passage?

How can we as a Life Group challenge one another to grow in understanding of who Jesus is?

How can we as a Life Group serve and encourage one another to cultivate a faith that leads to loving others well and obedience to the Lord?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

In this passage, John is communicating to us that faith, love and obedience are all founded in who we believe Jesus to be. Jesus is the Son of God who came, in love, to bring us eternal life and fellowship with His Father through His death and resurrection. Give glory and honor to the Lord through prayer for how He has been gracious to you through Christ Jesus.

Take some time as a life group to ask God which area - faith, love or obedience – do you need to surrender to Him. Ask that He would forgive our lack of dependency on Him. Reflect on how the truth of who Jesus is has transformed your life, thank God for it, and ask Him to grow in you a spirit that would live, love and serve out of that truth.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Make a point this week to (1) reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; (2) allow these reflections to guide your actions, words and thoughts of those around you and (3) share with others how God has given you victory.

For the Family: Read verse 1-4 as a family. Talk about why it is important to know who Jesus is, how this affects the way we treat others and follow God.

Memorize: Meditate on the Text

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:19-21, ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 5:1-12 – April 22nd, 2018

A Life Impacted By Truth

There are two main principles in this passage – understanding who Jesus is and how that affects our life as believers. Although our belief in who Jesus is affects every aspect of our lives, John focuses on three: love, obedience, and faith. The strength of our faith is a direct result of how we view Jesus. Do we believe Him to be the Son of God with full authority from heaven? Then our faith will be strong and enduring. Do we believe Him to be simply a wise teacher or prophet or maybe someone who doesn't affect your life in a significant way? If so, then our faith will be weak, unable to endure the trials of this life. Do we believe Jesus to be gracious and gentle or one who came to send some people to heaven and others to hell? If so, then it will be difficult to trust Him and lean on Him when life gets difficult. Who we think Jesus is and what kind of character He has, not only determines how we interact with Him, but it also affects how we love others, both believers and non-believer. When we understand the depth of God's steadfast and great love for us, we cannot help but to show that same love to those around us, whether it be family members, co-workers, neighbors, or someone you meet at the airport. This love for the Lord also leads us to obey His commands. By serving God out of an abundance of that love, obedience moves from being a burden to a joyful and peace-filled experience. When we walk in obedience and honor God with our decisions, He will bless us with peace knowing we are pleasing Him with our lives.

The Theme of Love

In the first three verses of this passage, John uses the word "love" five times! The idea that God's abundant and steadfast love for us leads us to show that same kind of love to others as well as be obedient to His Word is central to the passage as a whole. In the first verse, we see a typical pattern: If A=B and B=C and C=D, then A=D. In order to believe in Jesus (A), we have to be born of God (B). To be born of God (B), means you love Him (C). And if you love Him (C), then you will also love those born of Him (D). Therefore, those who believe in Jesus (A) will love others who believe in Jesus (D). In verse 2, we see a good test to make sure we're loving others well – are we loving God and are we obeying His commandments? If we are loving God (delighting in His word, praying and praising Him) and putting action to our faith, then we will automatically begin to treat others better and love them more in line with Jesus' love.

John is writing this letter, not as a young man, but as an aged follower of Jesus. When he writes in verse 3 that God's commandments are not burdensome, he is speaking from experience. "'Difficult' is a relative term, depending upon the relation between the thing to be done and the powers of the doer of it".¹² As a believer, our will is united with the will of the Father, so obedience to His will, will not be considered difficult, but will fill us with joy. The reason why it is

not a difficult task is seen in verses 4 and 5 – the one who causes the difficulty in our life has already been defeated; therefore, we as believers get to live and dwell in that victory.

Who is Jesus?

There are many interpretations of verse 6, however the most widely accepted is this: that "John came baptizing in **water only**" and "Jesus came baptizing in **water and blood**."¹³ Jesus submitted himself to baptism and the shedding of His blood for our transgressions against the Father. Jesus' baptism and blood shed testify to Him being the Son of God, but even more convincing is the Holy Spirit. Because the Spirit is Truth and testifies to Jesus being the Son of God and Man, we can put our complete trust in who Jesus is and what He said throughout His time and ministry on earth.

John also writes in verse 10 that "Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself". When we become a believer, we know to the core of our being that Jesus is the Son of the Most High, and this divine testimony, which abides in us, is an additional source of evidence that both supplements and confirms the external evidence (which is sufficient for belief).¹⁴ Those who reject this as truth, calls God a liar and will not receive eternal life.

¹² Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. *1 John*. The Pulpit Commentary. London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Life Group – 1 John 5:13-21 – April 29, 2018

That You May Know

CONNECT

If I gave you a legitimate \$1000.00 check, your first thought would be too good to be true, until you cashed it. Has there ever been a time when you thought something too good to be true but then found out it was indeed true?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: 1 John 5:13-21

(Additional Passages: This week reread 1st John in its entirety. Rom. 10:1; 1 Tim. 2:1; Isa. 44)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How does this text prompt us to be more like Christ?
- What assurance of eternal life does this text produce within you?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does this text move me to better serve and love others?

The closing verse of 1 John is “Little children, keep yourself from idols.” We are constantly being bombarded with false teachings from culture, false believers, and even those who might not mean to be. How can we make sure we hold each other accountable so that we nor our families fall into idolatry? How can we encourage others to cling to truth as well?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Read 1 John 5:14-16. How does it change things to have confidence that “He hears us in whatever we ask?” Does your prayer life reflect confidence that God hears you? Have you been praying according to God’s will, or might you be praying out of accord with His will as revealed in His Word? If you need to repent, humbly and prayerfully do so.

Take some time to personally pray for those who might be living in sin. If they are a believer, pray that he or she would be responsive to the Holy Spirit’s convictions. If they are not a believer, then ask fervently that God would lead them to a place of repentance and faith.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Share the wonderful gospel message contained within 1 John 5:20 this week with someone, trusting the Holy Spirit to do His work while you do yours.

For the Family: Read 5:18-19 with your family, and encourage them that even though “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (v. 19), it is guaranteed that “the evil one does not touch him” (v. 18) – speaking of the person who has been born of God. Share your testimony of how the Lord has kept you, and you went untouched while others around you fell by the evil one’s “flaming darts” (Eph. 6:16).

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:19-21, ESV)

Life Group – 1 John 5:13-21 – April. 29, 2018

That You May Know

As the Apostle John closes out his epistle to the growing first century church, he summarizes his message of Christian assurance by covering five sure things: our inheritance of eternal life; our prayers being heard by God; our experiencing victory over sin; our belonging to God; and that Jesus Christ is the one, true God. John's purpose overall was to combat the false teaching (namely, early gnosticism) that was propagating, and he did so by restating all the basics of the Christian faith. As stated explicitly in the letter, 1 John was written "so that our joy may be complete" (1:4) and "that [we] may know that [we] have eternal life" (5:13). It should be reassuring to us that there is a clear set of tests within 1 John by which one may assess whether one is truly born of God. Other religions may inform followers that they are simply to do their best in this life and hope for the best in the next life, without any definitive answer as to whether they have hope for eternity. But our God won't have it any other way, but to give us the utmost confidence in our hope of eternal life.

Whoever is born of God does not sin?

Verse 18 of Chapter 5 may be upsetting for Christians upon first encounter, depending on the translation they are using. A closer look at the verse helps us to avoid misreading the text and coming away with the idea that believers ought to be completely sinless after being born again.

If this were what the text meant, then John would be contradicting himself, for he wrote this very epistle "so that [we] may not sin" (2:1), which indicates we certainly are capable of sinning. And of course, the preceding verses (1:8-10) specifically state that we *do* have sin, and that the way of dealing with personal sins is confession.

Although it reads "whoever is born of God does not sin" in the New King James Version, the ESV translation makes things clearer: "everyone who has been born of God does not *keep on sinning*" (emphasis mine). For a professing Christian to continue in a pattern or lifestyle of sin without any sense of conviction or any sign of discipline from the Lord is a fearful thing. On the other hand, the true Christian is troubled within and desires to be right with God. Therefore, he does not "keep on sinning."

Sin leading to death, and sin not leading to death?

Verses 16 & 17 of Chapter 5 specify that there is "sin leading to death," and "sin not leading to death." Intercessory prayer is advised for the latter, and no prayer is advised for the former. Either these verses are speaking of a spiritual kind of death or physical death.

(1) SPIRITUAL. If the "sin leading to death" refers to spiritual death, then it is not possible for a true Christian to commit it, for he was made alive at the moment of salvation and cannot die spiritually. The issue at hand would then be a matter of losing *fellowship* with the Lord by sinning a sin that does not lead to death, and "life" would refer to restored fellowship with the Lord.

After all, Scripture's definition of life is intimately knowing God (John 17:3).

(2) PHYSICAL. If the "sin leading to death" refers to physical death, then it means that a Christian, though declared forever righteous in Christ, can do such unrighteousness that God ends his earthly life. This wouldn't be out of line at all with other passages in the New Testament: see Acts 5:1-11 and 1 Cor. 11:30. Whether 1 John 5:16-17 is dealing with those kinds of situations or not, we still must keep them in mind; although we are saved to the uttermost by the God of all mercy and grace, we must never live in a way that takes that grace for granted and provokes the Lord to severe measures.

Should we pray for the lost?

Yes. God's word gives clear examples and commands for believers to pray for the lost. And we know that the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost, so praying for the lost lines us up with the heart and will of God.

With regards to what John is saying here, that if someone has committed a sin that leads to death, a physical death, there is no need to pray for them because they are already experiencing eternity. We do not pray for those who have passed away because it has no effect on their eternal state. If they were a believer who committed sin that lead to death, we don't have to pray them back into good fellowship with Jesus. The cross had already accomplished that.

If they were an unbeliever, unfortunately no amount of praying on earth could affect their eternal dwelling place. This should push us to be forthright and bold in our relationships with lost people, all the while praying, while they are alive, that God would save them. (see Rom 10:1 and 1 Tim 2:1).