

Small Group Leaders Notes

1 John 1:1-2:2

Context

We looked at the context of the book at our Small Group Leaders Pit Stop. You can find the notes for the 'Applying 1 John' session on the website.

Big Ideas

- **God is knowable through his revelation (1:1-4)**
 - John makes a big deal of the fact that he saw and touched and heard Jesus, the Word of Life (notice how he keeps repeating this in v1, 2 and 3.)
 - This means that John's message is not something he has made up. Instead the message that he proclaims to them is reliable because it is based on what he saw and heard from Jesus. When we think of the context and the people that had left the church claiming to have 'new' revelation, we can see how John wants to reassure his readers that they have the truth.
 - Another key part of this is that John's readers can have fellowship with God and with other Christians through John's message because John's message is true. Indeed we can only have true fellowship with God through his true revelation as handed down to us by Apostles like John.
- **God is Light and so his people must walk in light (1:5-2:2)**
 - God is a perfectly holy God. He is blazing like without even a spec of darkness in him. This means that not only is he perfectly holy but also that we cannot hide any of our darkness from him. It is futile to pretend we are better and brighter people than we really are because God sees all. We can't deceive him, instead we will just deceive ourselves and others.
 - God's holiness means that his people are to be holy. This is perhaps a daunting thought but it comes with both a command and a promise. The command is that we are to confess our sin, bringing it to our advocate, Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice for our sins. As we are honest about the darkness in us we receive God's wonderful promise that through Jesus God will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Areas of Application

- Depending on your group you could choose whether to focus on one or both of the following areas of application. Alternatively you might see other areas of application that you think would be relevant for your group.
- **God is Knowable**
 - To claim that God is knowable is a huge thing in our culture today. To claim that God has revealed himself through the Bible and supremely through his Son Jesus is an incredibly controversial claim today but that is exactly what John is saying in 1:1-4.
 - Remembering that a key theme of the letter is reassurance you could spend time thinking about how these verses reassure us and give our faith confidence? You could think about how these verses might help us to answer people who say that God is unknowable or that Christianity is just based on myths and fairy tales?

- **God is Light**

- It seems that some of the people who had left the church were making the claims that John refers to in v6, v8 and v10. Most Christians would never actually claim to be sinless and we are often very wary of being called hypocrites. Yet even though we wouldn't say we're sinless we can often act around church as if we don't struggle with sin.
- We can give the impression that our lives are sorted and we don't have any ongoing struggles with temptation. We like to hide the darkness in us from one another because we're scared of what others will think of us and scared of being judged. We can give the impression that church is a place for 'sorted people' rather than a place where broken people come for forgiveness. Church shouldn't be museum for saints, instead it should be a hospital for sinners.
- It's one thing to know that we shouldn't be hypocritical and that we should be honest about our struggles but where does the motivation and power to change come from? These verses help us to see that they come from the forgiveness that Jesus offers (v9 and 2:1-2.) The more I see and believe that all my sin/darkness has been judged in Christ and therefore I'm completely forgiven, the more that will free me up to be honest about my sin and struggles.
- If I no longer need to fear God's judgment then I also don't need to fear the judgment of others. Similarly if I love the fact that God has forgiven me and no longer condemns me then I'll not stand in judgment over other people when they sin because I know that I'm no better.

Suggested Questions

In these questions I'm just going to focus on applying 1:5-2:2. If you also want to look at 1:1-4 then feel free to write your own questions to help you apply these verses.

Starter Question - When do you find it easy to be honest? When do you find it harder?

This study is going to focus on applying the idea of being more honest with one another about our sin and our struggles. To get us started we want to talk generally about the issues of honesty. Often we find it easier to be honest about something when we're proud of what we've done. The flip side of this is that we are often less honest when we're embarrassed about something.

1. What claims were some people making? (1:6, 8, 10)

People were claiming that they were done with sin that they no longer struggled with it. Don't get too bogged down on the exact nature of these claims. Try to keep the study moving.

2. Most of us would never actually say that we're perfect and never struggle with sin, but how might we give people this impression?

We might not say such a thing with our lips but we can often give that impression through our actions and through the sorts of things that we talk about. For example when a friend asks you, "How's your week been?" it's an opportunity to be honest but very often we like to give the impression that everything is fine even if it isn't. Similarly how we pray as a home group and the sorts of prayer requests we share can give the impression that everyone is sorted and no one has any problems.

A phrase that is often used is that church should be “a hospital for sinners not a museum for saints.” You could ask the group what they make of this statement. When is church really like this and when is it not? This would lead into the next question...

1. Why do we do this?

If there are times when we pretend that everything is fine when it's not why do we do this? Why are we often tempted to try and present ourselves as a chiseled spiritual masterpiece in museum rather than admit that we're spiritually sick?

There could be all sorts of reasons for this but often it will boil down to things like; “I'm scared of what people will think. I'm worried they'll judge me. I don't want to seem weak or needy.”

3. Instead of pretending we're sorted, what are we told to do? (1:9)

1. What do you think it really means to confess our sins?

We're to confess our sins not just our sin. That means we're not just to admit to God that we're sinners but to confess the particular way that we are sinners. We're also to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). You might want to talk about how and where you'd actually do that but we are to do it somewhere.

4. If we confess our sins what promise does God make? (1:9 and 2:1-2)

This is really important so make sure people really get this! If we confess our sins God will completely forgive us and cleanse us of our sin. Our sin has been paid for in blood and death by Jesus on the cross and he is now our advocate who stands before the Father on our behalf. These are very familiar ideas for many of us but take the time to let the group really marvel at this wonderful promise. We'll only be truly honest with God and one another if we believe this promise.

5. If we believe this promise how do you think it will change us as individuals, as a home group and as a church? What practical things are we going to do because of these verses?

Try and leave a good deal of time to tackle this question and talk as practically as possible. Think about things like what sort of conversations we have before and after the service on a Sunday? Or perhaps you could change the way that you pray at Home Group so that there's greater opportunity for honesty and really praying for each other? Perhaps you are going to decide to pair up within the home group and meet up every few weeks to really be honest with and pray for one another?

Here are just a few suggestions I'm sure you can think of more. Perhaps you could ask the group to describe a church that is really shaped by God's promises in this passage? What would such a church be like? How can we become a bit more like that?

6. Is there a memory verse from this passage that we could learn to help us apply what we've learnt?

Sometimes memorising a verse can help us to remember what we've learnt and persist in applying God's word.

