

## **Small Group Leaders Notes**

### **1 John 2:28-3:10**

#### **Context**

##### **Light and Darkness, Sin and Righteousness**

Throughout the letter John has been drawing stark distinctions between God's light and the world's darkness (1:5-7, 2:8). God is light and so his people are to walk in the light. Another way of putting this is that God's people are to be righteous because God is righteous. God hates sin and has nothing to do with sin and so a mark that we are God's children is that we too are seeking to purify ourselves. We've seen this theme through chapter 2 and now it comes again in chapter 3.

##### **Reassurance**

John's stark distinctions and black and white statements could understandably unsettle some Christians. Verses like 2:4 or 2:10 could cause a Christian to worry that they are not really Christians. You may be finding that there are those in your group who are struggling with the question of assurance and certainty of their salvation. Alongside these stark verses we also need to hear John's repeated theme of reassurance (see 2:1-2, 2:12-14, 2:20-21, 5:13.) This theme of reassurance is also very important in chapter 3.

##### **People try to lead them astray**

There are people around who are claiming to be Christians but who are teaching another Jesus and another gospel which is really no gospel at all. As a result John repeatedly warns his readers about these people who are trying to lead them astray (2:26, 3:7.)

#### **Big Ideas**

##### **Who we are - Dearly Loved Children of God**

Just scan the passage and pick out how many times John emphasises that these Christians are God's children...

Just because the world doesn't recognise who we are doesn't detract from the fact that we are God's children. We are part of God's family, heirs of the kingdom. We've been born of God (again look how many times John says that in these verses...) And God's seed (I think this might refer to the Spirit rather than the word but either way the point is the same) has been planted in us, we are marked out as his. John wants us to take in how staggering it is that we are the beloved children of God, let's make sure we don't rush this in our study.

##### **What will we be - Pure Like Jesus**

When Christ appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Now we walk by faith and not by sight, but one day we will walk by sight and not by faith! On that day we shall be transformed to be like Christ. We shall have resurrection bodies like Christ (1 Corinthians 15) but here I think the focus is on our purity because of the references to sin and purity in the rest of the passage. One day you will be pure like Christ! How wonderful is that? Don't you long for that day when you will be completely without sin?

Again we need to stop and ponder this because the application flows from who we are and what we will be. If we don't see these clearly then we won't see why we need to be striving for purity now.

## **What we should be - Purifying Ourselves as Jesus is Pure**

Once we understand who we are (God's Beloved Children) and what we will be (Pure like Jesus) then it follows that we will long to be increasingly pure like Jesus now while we wait. The implication is that if we don't believe we are God's children and that one day we'll be perfectly pure then we won't strive for purity. If we know that we're children of light then we will seek to be light now.

Purity and holiness can seem so old fashioned and boring to the church today but it is absolutely essential according to John. Perhaps we can easily slip into a lazy form of Christianity which is content with a certain level of sin in our lives, especially if those sins are 'respectable' sins. John doesn't say that "All new Christians who have this hope in him purify themselves..." Striving for purity isn't just for those who are enthusiastically starting out in the Christian life, it's for all Christians, no matter how long we've been running the race. Similarly John doesn't say they "purify themselves, just as others around them are pure." Our model of purity is not society, it's not even other people in the church, it's Jesus! He's the one we're focused on, he is the one that we aspire to be like.

## **Applications**

### **Reassure those who are worried about their salvation**

As we have already said there may be some Christians who are worried that they are not really Christians because of some of the stark things that John is saying. For these Christians we want to help them see the great reassurances that are in this passage and throughout the rest of the letter.

### **Challenge the complacent to pursue purity**

"ALL who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure." All of us could be purer and so because we one day will be perfectly let's encourage one another to really strive for purity. It's not an optional extra, it's a vital mark that shows we really are God's children. If we're not pursuing purity then it should cause us to question whether we really do have the hope that John speaks of.

## **Suggested Questions**

**Starter Question - Can you think of something that you were really looking forward to? (e.g. a special event, a big sports match, concert etc) How did that affect you in the build up?**

*Our aim here is simply to get us talking and thinking about how a future hope makes an impact upon us in the present. That's the key logic of the passage in v3.*

### **1. Who are we?**

- **Why is this so staggering?**

*Help the group to draw out the different things that are said about Christians in this passage. Notice how many times John tells us we are children of God - he really wants us to get this! Help the group to think about what it means to be born of God. Why are these descriptions so wonderful? Think about who we were because that will make it all the more amazing that we are now God's beloved children.*

### **2. What will we be?**

- **In what ways will we be like Jesus?**
- **How does this make you feel?**

*Start with the first question and then use the two subsequent questions if you need them to help the group get into our future hope. We want to help the group see what it means that we will be like Jesus not just with new bodies but perfectly holy. I would guess that very often we're not too fussed by this thought when really we should be impatient for that day. Why do you think we're often so excited about Jesus' return?*

### **3. What should we be?**

- **What does it mean to purify ourselves?**
- **Who do we tend to compare ourselves with?**
- **Who should we compare ourselves with?**

*Again start with the first question and then use the three subsequent questions if you need to help the group think a bit more. Make sure that we shouldn't just be aiming for some vague standard of purity. Instead we should be aiming to be pure as Jesus is pure! So this isn't just about being like other people at church, it's about being like Jesus! With this as our aim we all have room for greater purity!*

### **4. How does this passage reassure us when we are struggling with doubts and worries?**

*Some will be struggling with doubts and worries about whether they are really Christians so we want to sensitively draw out the encouragements from this passage. If you were feeling particularly imaginative then you could even think up a scenario of a christian who is worried that they're not really a Christian because they still sin. What has this passage got to say to such a Christian?*

### **5. How does this challenge us when we are complacent or content with our progress?**

*We need to acknowledge that most of the time holiness is a pretty low priority in our lives. We believe that we're saved and going to heaven but we fail to see that our future hope should prompt us to pursue holiness now. You might want to ask the group why they think we don't make more of an effort to be holy?*

Let's spend time praising God for what he has done for us! Praise him too for our future hope that is sure and certain! Then spend time confessing how we so often don't seek purity and ask him to help us purify ourselves as he is pure.