

Small Group Leaders Notes

1 John 3:11-24

Context

Throughout the letter John has been telling us the marks of God's true children. We have seen that God's people believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son (2:22-23.) We have also seen that God's children do what is right instead of continuing to sin (2:3-6 and 3:4-10.) The third key marker is that we love rather than hate our brothers and sisters in Christ (2:7-11). John reintroduced this theme in 3:10 and it is the main theme running through 3:11-24.

Big Idea

Love one another as Christ has loved us, not just with words but with selfless actions.

Applications

As we teach through 1 John we need to uphold the expectation that people should be able to identify Christians by their behaviour and their love not just what they profess to believe. Jesus is clear on this in John 13:34-35. Where we see God's love displayed through us it should encourage us as a sign that we really are God's children.

At the same time we need to remember that our ultimate assurance comes not from the quality of our love for others but instead from God's love for us. It may well be that there are many in your group who are struggling and doubting because of John's black and white statements such as 3:14. To those who are doubting their salvation this passage urges us to drive to God's greater love (3:20.) Only there can our hearts be put at rest and we can have confidence before God (3:21.)

Others in your group may actually be quite complacent in their salvation because they are confident that God loves them. To such Christians we need to help them to see that God's love for us should then spur us on afresh to love one another with that same selfless love (3:16 and 3:23.)

Questions

Starter - So much of 1 John is about being able to spot who the real Christians are. As something slightly different and a bit of fun why not start your study by playing spot the difference. I've attached a spot the difference that you could print off and give to your group.

1. Read v11-18, how do you spot a child of God?

The big thing is that they love other Christians with the same selfless love that Jesus has shown to them. They will not just talk about love they will actually express that love practically. To really help your group think this through you could use the following follow up questions;

- **What do they look like?**
- **How do they use their time?**
- **What do they treat others in the church?**
- **How do they view their possessions?**

Try and make this discussion as concrete and down to earth as possible. Don't just leave the conversation floating around on the abstract level, push it down to the ground and encourage the group to come up with what it would look like to really love like this.

2. Why do we find it so hard to love like this?

This question assumes that we don't always love the way that John describes. You could talk about the things that we love more than our brothers and sisters that stop us from loving them as we should. Perhaps we don't love like this because our appreciation of Jesus' love for us has grown cold. Perhaps it is because we don't find some of the people in church particularly lovely. Perhaps it is because we don't know people well enough to know their needs.

3. Who in the church/your group is in need at the moment?

- **What can we do to meet that need?**

Again we don't just want this to be a hypothetical discussion about love. We actually want to provoke one another to love and good deeds not just good intentions. If we are not aware of any needs then that should challenge us to go away and get to know people better so that we do become more aware of the needs.

4. None of us perfectly lives up to this standard of love. It can be very easy for our hearts to condemn us and we feel guilty because of our lack of love. We might even doubt whether we really are Christians. What encouragement does v19-24 give us?

When our lack of love leaves us feeling guilty and condemned it should drive us to God's greater love. If there's time you could turn to one of the many passages in 1 John (e.g. 4:7-11) to remind the group of God's great love for us. Help the group to see that all our sin and lovelessness can be paid for by Christ if we come to him in faith (3:23) and confess our sins (1:9). Help the group also to see that having received God's love and assurance we are then called to renew our efforts to love one another as he has loved us. If you find it helpful I have attached the diagram from the sermon below.

Prayer Spend time together confessing the times when our love has been lacking. Thank God for his greater love and the forgiveness and confidence that brings. Pray that God would empower us to love and serve one another as Christ has loved us.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!

Find 10 differences between the 2 pictures!



