



In Light of Easter: Now What?

St. Luke Lutheran Church
Spring, 2009
Home Group Discussion #1

Lessons from the Apostle John: For the Dear Children of God

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1

Our spring home group sessions examine a short but powerful “book” of the Bible: the “letter” known as I John. This letter focuses on the themes of life, light and love. It instructs Christians, dear children of God, in righteous living and brotherly love. Passages of I John are appointed to be read in the Church during the Easter season. Such passages help believers sort out how to live in the light of Easter.

A second feature of our spring home group sessions will reinforce our purposes as a congregation:

Worship: live to please God
Fellowship: be connected into God’s family
Discipleship: become like Jesus
Ministry: serve others
Evangelism: share Jesus

In each of our four sessions participants will evaluate our progress individually and corporately in fulfilling these purposes.

OPENING:

Make sure everyone knows each other.

Share a favorite Easter song. Share a favorite Easter custom. Share a favorite Easter food.

Have someone lead the group in a prayer. Make sure to ask God to grant his blessing on the entire home group ministry. Also ask him to bless the worship life of the congregation.

WORSHIP: Live to please God

Worship is more than “going to church” on Sunday morning. **Worship is all that we do to honor and glorify God.** Lots of worship ought to take place *outside a service setting*. And just because we are *inside a service setting* doesn’t mean worship really happens (for instance, thinking about Sunday dinner instead of the sermon, grumbling about the music instead of singing it, and so on does not honor or glorify God)!

Discuss how your worship life is going:

- Does our congregation’s service setting enable to you honor and glorify God? What could be added or changed? What needs to be changed in your life to be better able to honor and glorify God in a service?
- How is your worship life going outside of a formal service, day by day? Do you find yourself honoring and glorify God throughout the day? How do you keep the purpose of *Living to Please* God foremost in your day?

STUDY OF I John 3:1-7

John, the beloved disciple, saw everything first hand: the ministry, the death, the resurrection and the results. He became “the elder statesman” of the Church. Reflecting on his experiences and the situation of the early Church as false teachers rose up and opposition mounted, he wrote this very practical epistle. He called early believers and you and me, their later day brothers and sisters, to live lives transformed by the Resurrection: lives filled with evermore joyful love and obedience as we await the final fulfillment of our Easter hope.

READ (quickly) John 1:1-14 and I John 1:1-10

Neither the Gospel nor the letter that bears his name specifically identifies John as the author. A study of the internal evidence and historical testimony of John’s authorship is beyond our purpose. Spend just a moment or two discussing the similarities in language between these two passages. (The John specifically referred to is John the Baptist, not John the apostle/author.)

READ I John 3:1-2

Spend some time pondering this statement, “How great is the love that the Father has *lavished* on us!” How have you experienced *lavish love* from God?

Spend some time pondering this statement, “that we should be called *the children of God!* And that is what we are!” Quickly scan I John 2. Notice how often the author refers to believers as *dear children*. How does that designation shape your sense of identity?

Good things come to those who wait, especially those who wait on the LORD. Discuss what verse 2 tells you about heaven. What doesn’t it tell you? How does this verse help in tough times?

READ I John 3:3-7

According to this passage, how is the hope of the resurrection supposed to shape our lives? Does it shape yours that way? Do you focus on a regular basis on the hope you have in Jesus?

Sin doesn’t get much press anymore. For many in the world sin has been defined out of existence. For John sin is lawlessness: *chaotic rebellion against God*. Is your view of sin more like the world’s or John’s? (I mean *your sin*, not the sin of another!)

Reflect on this statement, “If Jesus went to all the trouble of removing sin (verse 5), why would we, the dear children of God, want to continue to live in it?”

Does John mean to say that Christians never ever sin? See I John 1:8-9. How do you reconcile these two passages?

FOCUS. FOCUS. FOCUS.

As we have celebrated the resurrection and as we await the fulfillment of our hope in Heaven, John calls us to *live rightly*. (verse 7) The accent of living rightly is in *relationship to God* (next time we will talk about living in relationship with others). What does a life look like that is living rightly before God? How does that look like yours? How does the *purpose* you discussed at the beginning of the session relate to this?

AND SO...

What will you take home from tonight’s conversation? What do you need to pray and think about? What do you need to put into practice?

ONE MORE THING

During the Easter Season the congregation is asked to learn by heart I John 4:7-11. Before you end, please read it aloud together.

CLOSING:

Have the group spend some time in prayer. Pray for a greater sense of worship *inside and outside* of Sunday worship.