



In Light of Easter: Now What?

St. Luke Lutheran Church
Spring, 2009
Home Group Discussion #2

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:

Share with one another a trip or a project that you have planned for the spring.

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 *fellowship life* of the congregation.

FELLOWSHIP: Be connected into God’s family

Christian fellowship is more than having coffee after a church service. It is being built into relationship with other Christians. When God calls us to faith, he also calls us into community. The center of Christian community is the local congregation. The New Testament does not talk about denominations or church bodies; it does speak to and about groups of Christians congregating together in a specific locale.

Fellowship within a congregation has been described as the second line of encouragement, defense and support for a person—the family provides the first line.

Discuss how your fellowship life is going:

- How are you receiving encouragement, defense and support from being part of our congregation?
- How are you encouraging, defending and supporting others who are part of our congregation? How about Christians not part of our congregation?

STUDY OF I John 3:11-24

These verses accent love for a brother... or sister. In light of Easter we are *to love God, to do right by him*. In light of Easter we are also *to love one another, to do right by our brother*. These are the twin themes of I John.

In our first session we considered the lavish love of God on his children and our response to it. Did anything occur to you following the session?

Tonight we are concentrating on the second theme: love for another. ***Read I John 3:11-24.***

Not too Romantic

When we hear the word "love," the first synonym that may occur to us is "romance." In fact it is a good thing when these two words are connected. Love and romance do go together.

But the love that comes from God and that is to be shown to one another is of a different and higher nature. ***Read again verses 16-18.*** What synonyms would you apply to the love described in these verses?

Where in your life do you see yourself expressing this kind of love for others? Where do you find it hard to express this kind of love for others?

Confidence Builder

When a young man first asks out a young lady, he must first build up his confidence. ***Read verses 19-22.*** John speaks about a different kind of confidence. Discuss in what ways your confidence is built up when you are doing right by others.

Consider this statement, "Seeing good works in my life convinces ME that I am walking with Jesus."

What Does God Want Me to Do?

Simple things tend to be true. Whenever you are solving a problem, the more convoluted the solution, the less likely it is the right solution.

Congregations, traditions and human nature tend to make following Jesus more complicated than it needs to be. Following Jesus is really very simple. ***Read I John 3:23.*** If you are pondering a particular path life, if you are wondering "what does God want me to do," how does this passage simplify your decision making process? How is it freeing? How is it NOT helpful?

A Different Spirit

The world has one spirit at work in it. The Christian has a different Spirit. ***Read verses 11-15 and 24.*** Where do you see which "spirit" at work? Should you expect to see both spirits at work in your life? How can you entrust your life more completely to God's Holy Spirit?

Consider this statement, "The best way to be able to better love my brother, is to be built up by my 'Greater Brother's' Spirit."

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

Don't forget to be inscribing I John 4:7-11 on your heart.

CLOSING:

Have the group spend some time in prayer. Pray for a stronger spirit of fellowship between members at St. Luke and between members and other believers in other congregations.