

In Light of Easter: Now What?

St. Luke Lutheran Church
Spring, 2009
Home Group Discussion #3

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 an interesting experience you have had this past week.

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.

MINISTRY: Serve others

A church bulletin has the following heading:

Pastor of St. John’s by the Lake:	The Rev. Jim Smith
Ministers of St. John’s by the Lake:	All the Members

Back in the 70’s a book entitled Everyone a Minister swept through the church. It accented the point that just like a body is connected in a way that each body part (member) must work with all the other body parts, so in a congregation all the members need to be serving one another. Paul said in I Corinthians 12, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

Discuss how your ministry is going:

- Are you finding places in the congregation where you can serve in a meaningful way? Do you have joy in the serving that you are doing?
- Are others finding places to be involved in meaningful ministry? How are we doing at building a culture of joyful ministry in the congregation?

STUDY OF I John 4:1-11

Tonight we continue our examination of I John. In this letter John focuses on the love of God and how his love shines through the children of God. John instructs us in how to live in light of Easter. In our study we will consider both a word of *caution* and a word of *exhortation*.

CATUION: Don't Believe Everything You Hear

We live in an information overload society. We have cable and satellite TV with hundreds of channels. The internet provides an unending supply of information with just a click of the mouse.

Discuss how the information from the media impacts you. How has the way you receive information and the amount of information you receive changed in the last 10 years? How does that make things better? How does it make things worse? Does it make things clearer or more confusing?

Read I John 4:1-6. John cautions us to “test the spirits.” He is telling us not to believe everything we read or hear. According to these verses what are some things that we should keep in mind when we listen to people who talk about religion? Are there any “fundamental” items he mentions that define what is or is not Christian?

How does John’s caution impact the kind of media you will let influence your thinking? Does it matter whether or not the topic is particularly religious? Is anything not religious?

Discuss the “spirits” that you let influence your children or grandchildren. Is there a difference between Christians being more careful about cultural influences in their lives and them being sheltered from the world?

John has a word about apostolic teaching. Read verse 6 again. What does this verse have to say to you about studying the Scripture?

People often look down on “doctrine” and a focus on doctrine. According to these verses what focus on doctrine (teachings of the Church or some other entity), should you have?

EXHORTATION: NOT All Show and No Go!

The Christian faith connects words and deeds. True teachings are to lead to good deeds. Good deeds, actions of love, are to grow out of God’s love.

Read I John 4:7-11 (or recite it from memory). Discuss this statement, “Love is result not a cause of God’s love.” Why is it that we have such a hard time keeping this straight? Why do we tend to try to turn it around?

According to these verses what is the evidence of God’s love? What is the essence?

According to these verses what is to be the evidence and essence of your love for others?

Discuss this statement, “Love is the natural, but not the automatic, outgrowth of God’s love for his people.”

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

One more week. Do you have it down? I John 4:7-11

CLOSING:

Have the group spend some time in prayer. Pray for a stronger spirit of ministry within our congregation.