

COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

The Church at Martinsburg

Secure: Certainties from 1 John

“Free from Hypocrisy” (1 John 2:3-11)

May 4, 2014

SECURE

CERTAINTIES FROM
1 JOHN

MAIN POINT

As a result of walking in the light we can be sure that we will be free from hypocrisy. Simply, hypocrisy is saying one thing and doing something else. John's words lead us to the crystal clear understanding that if we say we "know" God and do not keep his commandments there's no way we are actually living life with God. In fact, if we speak about walking with God and we find ourselves not actually walking with God we've been blinded by darkness. Darkness always flees in the presence of light. The answer to hypocrisy is walking in the light and walking in the light always brings about assurance, fellowship, and joy!

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What are some of your thoughts or insights from last weeks message? What challenged you, encouraged you, or ministered to you?
2. What thoughts come to mind when you hear the words “commandment” and “abide?”
3. How does a Christian know if they are truly a believer?
4. How would you define “hypocrisy?” How does the Bible define “hypocrisy?”

READING

Have a volunteer read 1 John 2:3-11.

In 1 John 1:2-2:2 the author dealt with the claims made by the Gnostics to have fellowship with God while still walking in darkness; while claiming to not have sinned. In 2:3-11 he continues to deal with the claims of the Gnostics, but here he focuses upon the claim they make to know God while not keeping his commandments. This section of scripture begins with a positive statement of the assurance true believers have of knowing God when they obey his commands. In verses 7-11, the apostle applies the “social test” for Christians to know if they truly are believers—love for fellow believers.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

1. What criterion does the apostle John provide for true Christians to be assured of their salvation? See vs. 3. Consider John 15:1-14.
2. What is the commandment John speaks of in vs. 7? In what ways is this commandment both old and new? How does Jesus make this “old commandment” new? Consider Matthew 22:36-40, Deuteronomy 6:5, and Matthew 5:44.
3. Is it possible for a Christian to display a habitual pattern of disobedience to God? (vs. 5-6)
4. How does love for God lead to obedience to God? How does obedience to God demonstrate true love for God? (vs. 4-6)
5. How does genuine Christian love demonstrate authentic change and obedience to God? (vs. 8). Consider John 13:34-35.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

1. Are there times where you doubt if you truly are a Christian? Why? What causes you to doubt if you are a Christian? How does the Bible affirm the security of your salvation?
2. John contrasts the difference between someone who “hates his brother” and the true Christian who “loves his brother” in vs. 9-10. Are you currently battling bitterness, anger, or hatred toward a fellow believer? Is there a “cause for stumbling” for you right now? What are the results of hatred and “stumbling?”
3. Do you love the people of God (not “do you feel well-disposed toward them?”)? Do you actually and actively love them? Do you use your hands for them? Your money? Your lips?
4. Do you view God’s mercy, forgiveness, and grace as an opportunity to pursue God and holiness or a license to continue in sin? See Romans 6:1-4.

PRAY

As you pray with your group, ask volunteers to pray that your group would:

1. Put aside bitterness, anger, wrath, and malice and put on love, kindness, compassion, and have a tender heart toward fellow believers (Colossians 3:8-10; Ephesians 4:31-32).
2. Continue to pursue holiness. Pray that your group members would have a heart to desire holiness and obedience more than their own comfort or pleasure.
3. Have a growing relationship with their Bible. Pray they would desire to not just read to learn *about* God but to truly *know* God.
4. Abide in Jesus, love one another, and keep the commandments Jesus has given to us.

WEEKLY UPDATE

Remind your group of some of the important things coming up for the church.

- **Gospel Class:** The Gospel Class is the first step toward covenant membership at the church. It will be held on **5/10/14 from 10am-2pm**. Lunch will be provided but childcare will not. Register by checking off the Membership box on the Connect Card or online on the Membership page at martinsburgchurch.org.
- **Mother's Day:** Mother's Day is next week! Invite your mom to come to church with you on **5/11/14!**
- **Parent/Child Dedication:** Our next Parent/Child Dedication is on **5/11/14**. To register, visit martinsburgchurch.org!

FOLLOW-UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email, text, etc. to your group with some or all of the following:

- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- A challenge to memorize 1 John 2:3, 6, 9-10; John 13:34-35.
- A reminder to pray for the requests made during your group time.

1 John 2:3-11

2:3. This section begins with a positive statement: **And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.** It is by obeying his commands that we may be sure we know him. Ongoing assurance that we are people who know God is dependent upon ongoing obedience to his commands. Knowing him is not knowing facts about him, nor simply being able to recognize him operating in circumstances or in other people; it is knowing him personally for oneself. The word John uses for “commandments” almost always refers explicitly to Christ’s command that his followers should love one another. Though there is no explicit reference to Jesus command, the context indicates that Jesus’ love command is in mind.

The thrust of 2:3 is that it is those who like the readers, believe in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, and obey his command to love one another who truly know God. The false teachers who claim to know God but do not keep his command by implication do not know God.

2:4. Underlying this whole verse is the recognition that people can have no authentic relationship with God if they do not obey his commands. This does not mean, of course, that those who know God will never fail to obey God’s commands, but rather those who know god will not be characterized by disobedience to his commands.

2:5-6. To be (or to “abide,” 6), “in” him is equivalent to the phrase to “know” him (vs. 3-4) and to love him. Being a Christian consists in essence of a personal relationship to God in Christ, knowing him, loving him, and living in him as the branch lives in the vine (John 15:1-11). This is the meaning of “eternal life” (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). Christian conformity is to the example of Jesus as well as to his commands.

Those who keep God’s commands may have assurance that they are people who know God; those who claim to know God while not obeying his commands are liars; those who say the live in God must walk as Jesus walked that is, keeping God’s commands to them as Jesus obeyed God’s commands to him.

2:7. An old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old command is none other than the message that they heard at the beginning, that is, the gospel message by which they were made children of God. It was the command to believe in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and, as we learn later in the letter, that included the obligation to do what Jesus commanded. Within the author’s community it appears that the love command was handed on alongside the gospel message itself.

2:8. New commandment. The idea of love in general was not new, but Jesus Christ invested it in several ways with a richer and deeper meaning. First, it was new in the emphasis he gave it, bringing the love commands of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 together and declaring that the whole teaching of the law and the Prophets hung upon them. Secondly, it was new in the quality he gave it. A disciple was to love others not just as he loved himself but in the same measure as Christ had loved him, with selfless self-sacrifice even unto death. Thirdly, it was new in the extent he gave it, showing in the parable of the Good Samaritan that the “neighbor” we must love is anyone who needs our compassion and help, irrespective of race and rank, and includes

¹ For more resources, see the commentaries of Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* and John Stott’s *The Letters of John*.

our “enemy” (Matt. 5:44). In these ways it was a “new commandment,” and will always remain new. It is new teaching for the new age which has dawned, new... **because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.**

The darkness is the present age or the “world” which in verse 17 is also said to be passing away. **The light**, which **is already shining**, is Jesus Christ, with whom light came “into the world” (John 3:19; Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:79). He is true not in the sense in which a statement is true as opposed to false, but in the sense in which the real differs from the unreal, the substance from the shadow and the prototype from the type.

2:9. John now shows that Jesus Christ, the true light, is the light of love, and that therefore, to be or to live, or to walk **in the light** is to walk in love. The Gnostic claim was as much to have been “enlightened” as to possess the “knowledge” of God. The falsity of their claim to **be in the light** was betrayed not now by disobedience, but by hatred. The true Christian, who knows God and walks in the light, both obeys God and loves his brother. The genuineness of his faith is seen in his right relation to both God and his fellow human beings.

2:10. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light. The light of Jesus Christ is already shining, and the proper behavior of people who live in that light is love for fellow believers. One important outcome of living in the light is then stated: **and in him there is no cause for stumbling.** It is in the darkness that people are likely to encounter things to make them stumble, not in the light. It is better, therefore, to interpret the verse to mean that there is nothing in the people who walk in the light that will cause them to stumble.

2:11. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. Those who hate their fellow believers are described not only as being in darkness but as walking about in it. **And does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.** People who hate fellow believers walk in the realm in which sinful behavior predominates, and their own sinful behavior, in this case their hatred, blinds their eyes so that they do not know where they are going. Those who do not walk in the light of Jesus Christ that is already shining must walk in the darkness. They do not have the truth to guide them, so they do not know where they are going (John 12:35)