BELONG

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LIVING TOGETHER IN THE LIGHT

After working through something as linear and personal as 2 Corinthians, coming to 1 John might seem like a big of a shock to the system. 1 John is circular, poetic and quite black-and-white. One writer said that reading the book's a bit like climbing a spiral staircase and looking out various picturesque windows on the way up. It's a beautiful experience, but it might take a bit of acclimatising to the way that John writes.

But just like 2 Corinthians, John is writing to a church where a group of false teachers had walked in and out and spread all this bad teaching. But unlike 2 Corinthians, they didn't stay in the church, but walked down the road to another church (we read about it in 2:19), and caused a bunch of confusion in the church about what was right and who was right, and who really knew God and had eternal life.

We hope that this book will give you love and assurance in who Christ is, and in all the great things that he's done for us—but also, love for your Christian family, as we can finally meet to gether and fellowship as a church family again.

The main things these false teachers were that the spirit is good, and the physical is bad; that Jesus didn't really come in the flesh; that they themselves were sinless; and they denied Jesus' atoning death. So John addresses all of these things in his letter, to correct the teachings, and to assure the church that if they confess Christ's life and death, if they know Christ, then they know God, and can have complete assurance in that. And thankfully, John gives us his ultimate aim in writing pretty clearly at the end of the letter: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life" (5:13). John is writing to give complete assurance to those who believe in Christ, and to encourage them in the hope of their eternal life.

But to this end, John writes as if there's only two possible ways for people to exist: Either we're in Christ, and we are living in the light, and in love, and we have eternal life; or else, we aren't in Christ, and we are still walking in darkness, and in the world. John is seeing his church through the lens of their union with Christ. If they're in Christ, then they have fellowship with the Father and Son (1:3), they live in the light (1:7), they have forgiveness of sins (2:2), they have been adopted as children of God (3:1), they have the Spirit (4:13), they have no fear of judgement (4:17-18), they have overcome the world (5:4-5), and they love their brothers and sisters in Christ (4:7-12). John just sees all of this as reality for anyone who trusts in Christ, and he goes out of his way to assure believers in these great hopes.

As we've started opening this book as we've started meeting physically again, we want this book to capture some of these loves for you. As we spend a term in this great book, we want the people of Village to fall in love with Jesus anew, and fall in love with their church, and their Christian family, anew. Because, to John, love is absolutely key for the Christian, because God is love (4:8), and "God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (4:9-10). So we hope that this book will give you love and assurance in who Christ is, and in all the great things that he's done for us—but also, love for your Christian family, as we can finally meet together and fellowship as a church family again.

DNA STUDIES

We are again using the DNA (discover, nurture, act) style of studies. These studies give you some general questions under these three headings, which your group might enjoy working through. But if your group needs some more specific guidance, there will also be some questions under the three categories to help that happen, including a key question in **bold**. But we hope these studies teach you, nurture your hearts, and help you obey the word in your lives.

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WEEK 1 THE WORD OF LIFE

1 John 1:1-4

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

What do you think it means to have experienced the "word of life" in this tangible, sensory way?

What are some reasons that John gives for his writing this letter?

What kinds of fellowship do you see in verse 3? How is this fellowship different from other groups we could belong to?



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

What's the most important thing about Jesus that you've discovered)or been reminded of) in these verses?

What is the fellowship that John wants us to have, as the church?

Do you tend to think of "spirituality" as a physical thing, or not?



CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

How do we use the word "fellowship"? How might this passage change the way we understand the word?

What would it mean for you to be declaring what's been passed on to you, so that your joy might be complete?

WEEK 2 THE ATONING ONE 1 John 1:5-2:2

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

John will talk a lot about walking in light and walking in darkness as we go through the letter. Hopefully it will become clear what he means as we progress through the book. But at this point:

What does it mean that "God is light"?

What does it mean to "walk in the light"?

What does it mean to walk in darkness (1:6-7)?

How do 1:8 and 2:1 fit together?



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

What is this relationship with God meant to look like?

When have you struggled to believe that there's no darkness in God?

What hope does verse 7 give us, even amidst our fears and doubts?



CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

How does this passage give you confidence in confessing your sin to God?

How Jesus change the way we think about our sin?

WEEK 3 THE TRUE LIGHT 1 John 2:3-14

11

I am writing you a new command, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

Where do we see evidence of our fellowship with God?

In verses 3-5, do you think the word "know" is used in a more intellectual ("I know facts") or relational way ("I know him")?

What does life in the darkness sound like?

What / who is the "true light"? (hint: 1:7).



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

Do you find this passage more encouraging or confronting?

How does this light help us in the darkness?

How does "true light" speak to different people? (verses 12-14)

CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

How is God speaking into some ways that you're living in darkness?

How's God calling you into the light, from these verses?

WEEK 4 THE CHRIST

1 John 2:15-27

No one who denies the Son has the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well.



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

What does verse 16 teach us about how John uses the word "world"?

What do we learn about the Father and the Son in verses 22-24?

What image comes to mind when you hear the word "anti-Christ"?

What does this passage say about who the anti-Christ is? (2:22)



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

Look for every "remain" in the passage. What are we called to remain in?

What's the opposite of remaining?

Read verses 15-17 again. How are you living too much in "the world"?



CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

Are any of the pulls of verse 16 drawing you away from "remaining" in Christ at the moment?

What's one practical way that you could be seeking to "remain" in Christ this week?

WEEK 5 THE FATHER

1 John 2:28-3:10

11

See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children—and we are!



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

How does 3:1 describe Christians?

3:2-3 looks into the future to the day of Christ's return. How do these verses describe Jesus as he will appear?

In what ways do we share in the family resemblance of being like Christ?

What do you think it means that "sin is lawlessness"?



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

If you're being honest, do you think you've grown in purity, (v. 3) to become more like your Father, in the last few months?

Read 3:1-2 again slowly. How do these verses give you hope in your relationship with God?



CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

John has already said that we will all struglle with sin until Jesus returns (1:8). But he also says that it's very dangerous to make a habit of sinning. Are there any habits that you need to confess and seek help in at the moment?

What are some ways that we can be "practicing righteousness"?

How would it make sense to live now, given the hope that we have for the future?

WEEK 6 THE LOVE

1 John 3:11-24

11

This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

In what way should we be different from Cain? (if you'd like to familiarize yourself with the story of Cain, you can read about him in Genesis 4:1-8.)

What's the difference between loving "in word or talk" and loving "in deed and in truth" (v. 18)?

How does John sum up God's commands in verse 23? Is this different to how we tend to think of God's commands?

URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?



Are there any ways that you heart can condemn you? How do verses 20-22 speak to that?

Go around the group and share your favourite memories of what love can look like in the church.

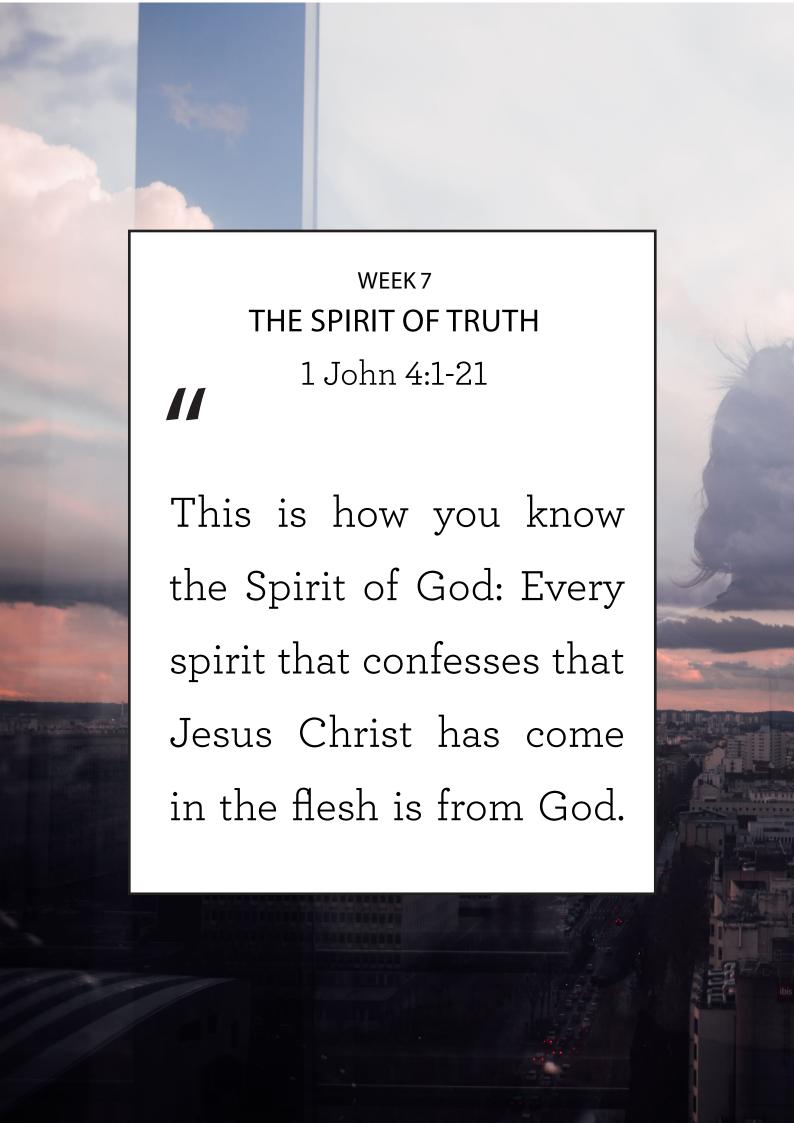


CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

What will it mean for you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ "in deed and in truth"? Try to be specific. For example:

- What would it look like for you to love others better in your community group?
- What would it look like for you to love those who are struggling better during the week (ie. verse 17)?
- What would it look like for you to love others better at our Sunday services?





ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

If you had to define what love is, what would you say?

What do we learn about love in this chapter?

How has God shown that he is love?

In the middle of this section about love, John starts talking about the spirit (vv. 13-15). What's the connection between God's Spirit, love and us?



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

According to verse 12, what two things are on display when we love one another?

Think of a time when you felt well-loved by brothers and sisters in Christ. What made that love particularly special?

"I'm a Christian. I just don't especially enjoy being with other Christians." How would you respond to this comment, given what we've read in 1 John?



How can you be living differently because of these words?

What can make it hard to believe that "God is love"? What are some practical ways in which we can help each other remember this truth?

What sorts of things can stop us from loving each other? What are some ways that we can combat these?



1 John 5:1-13

11

Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

If someone tells you that: "The Christian life is about grace and not about rules. We shouldn't worry about rules and commands." What would you say to that?

John has already talked about the idea of following God's commands in chapter 2. What does this passage add to that idea?

What does it mean to "do God's commands" in 1 John? (3:23)

What do you think "belief in Jesus" means for John? (3:23; 4:15–16).



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

How can John say that these things aren't burdensome?

In what ways do you find it hard to believe that Jesus has done it all (2000 years ago, and also in the present)?

How does verse 13 give us assurance of our eternal life because of Christ?



CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

Do you think your heart is more likely to condemn you or assure you? whatever your tendency, how is this section helpful for you?

Given that God has already testified in his Son, how does this take the pressure off us when we're sharing this message with others?



1 John 5:14-21

We are in the true one—that is, in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.



ISCOVER

What's interesting here? What don't you understand?

What are some places where you're tempted to lay back and enjoy the good life?

What are the "these things" that John is referring to in vs 13? Why is he writing about them?

What is the sin leading to death and the sin that doesn't lead to death? Has this come up before?

Read verse 21 again. How does this ending fit with the rest of the passage?



URTURE

What do you love in this passage? How can we see God's character?

What are the idols in your heart?

Write down a prayer for a brother or a sister that is shaped by these verses. Take some time to pray it in your hearts to God.



CT

How can you be living differently because of these words?

How does this passage challenge the idolatry in your life?

What's one thing way 1 John has encouraged or challenged you? How can you keep that message close to your heart?

PRAYER POINTS

