

I JOHN
SHINING LIGHT ON AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY



lifegroup

resource guide
for the week of 29 September

Galatians 5:24-26: Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

The basis for all fellowship— for every LifeGroup is when we kneel together at the cross of Jesus Christ, trusting wholly in His mercy and love. I have discovered that it is in fellowship with other Christians that the light of Christ has the opportunity to shatter my self-righteousness and expose my sinful heart. At that point of reality, I see how my sins crucified Christ and how they wound his body, the Church, today. Once I really faced this, nothing that I can say or do should surprise me concerning the image I have about myself. Also, as I turn towards my brother or sister, nothing he or she may say or do should surprise me about them! We are all in this “redemption boat” together. Therefore, I can no longer be critical or judgmental in a manner that causes me to perceive other believers as “outsiders”. The cross — our need and God's provision— is the same for everyone. We have this in common: we are all in need of mercy, we all need a new heart, and we have all received grace upon grace upon grace through Jesus Christ.

Since the cross is at the basis of all fellowship, it is only by the way of the cross that fellowship is deepened in maturity. This will involve a frequent and painful crucifixion of all forms of self— self seeking, self-centeredness, self righteousness— and the willingness to be transparent in our fellowship with other Christians. Often we try to meet each other from positions of accomplishment or strength. We talk about our work, our toys, our activities. Some even will “namedrop” their gifts, who-they-know, and their own achievements in the name of Christ. But the true fellowship, which binds our hearts together in love, begins when we meet each other in the shadow of Christ's Cross. This is where authentic fellowship is sown, cultivated, and maintained. Therefore, I must contend for authentic fellowship by risking transparency and creating a space for others to risk too. Together, we must be intentional about creating a space and opportunity where love, acceptance, forgiveness, and friendship might flourish. What better place to celebrate our common starting point: the foot of the cross. Here, at the place of God's healing and grace, we will always discover level ground.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to be real in our LifeGroup relationships... and, as always,

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Getting to know one another...

What saying or maxim from your childhood continues to be an influence or sounding board in your life today?

Reading scripture together...

1 John 2.1-11: The authentic Christian life...

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. 2 He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. 4 If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. 5 But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. 6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. 8 Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.

9 If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. 10 Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

What? (does the Bible say?)

What is the purpose of this letter? What do you think is going on that John is moved to write this?

According to John, how can we tell whether we truly know Christ or merely claim to know him?

What deception does John want this church to discern?

What does it mean that “the true light is already shining”?

What does it mean to live as Jesus did?

What is the evidence that a person is walking in darkness?

So what? (how will I think?)

How is having Jesus Christ pleading your cause before God radically different from pleading your own cause (2:1–2)?

Why would love for other believers rather than love for God serve as a test of living in the light?

Why does obedience to God give us assurance that we know him?

Now what? (what difference does it make?)

How can your LifeGroup enjoy the benefits of “an advocate who pleads our case before the Father”?

Based on 1 John, how might we approach a Christian’s regular criticism of other Christians or fellowships?

Some believers say to other believers: “You need to forgive yourself before you can fully receive God’s love.” In light of what John says in his letter so far, what do you think of this teaching?

How can your LifeGroup encourage obedience and affection without becoming legalistic or demanding?

What are tangible ways that John's "love for others" can be expressed in your LifeGroup? Is there any expression of John's vision that you feel is absent or needs strengthening in your LifeGroup?

How can your LifeGroup encourage you to "live your life as Jesus did"?

Prayer requests (write it down in advance)

Praying for my group...