

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Lesson 18– Study Questions

1 John 5:1-21

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read 1 John 5:1-3

1a. Today John begins by telling us that “everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.” In what way(s) do you understand that these two statements relate to the link between faith and love?

b. Comment on how one (or more) of the sacraments could be linked to this verse.

2. In John 8:19 Jesus states “If you knew me you would know my Father also.” What connection can you draw between this verse and the end of verse 1?

3. We can know that we love the children of God “when we love God and obey his commandments.” (verse 2) Read 1 Samuel 15:22 and in your own words explain what the author says about obedience.

4. According to the first part of verse 3, what is the essence of loving God?

5. John goes on to say, “And his commandments are not burdensome.” What do you think this means? (end of verse 3)

6. CONNECTION: Loving God as one of his children means we must follow his commands and we are told that his commandments are not burdensome. Even so, like naughty children we sometimes break our promises to him; however, we are given the wonderful sacrament of reconciliation which offers us a path back to our loving Father. In what way(s) do you prepare before reconciliation? How does this special sacrament bring you even closer to God?

Read and record Baruch 4:28 and begin your prayer today acknowledging your love of the Lord and your commitment to following his commandments.

DAY TWO

Read 1 John 5:4-6

7. As today's lesson begins, we are reassured that whoever is begotten of God conquers the world. According to the second sentence of verse 4, what empowers God's people to attain this victory?

8. Who is named in verse 5 that is able to conquer the world?

Note: John tells us that those who believe in Christ can overcome worldly sins and temptations. Victory for the Christian is through faith in Christ and love of God and our brothers and sisters. Christ, through his passion, has already defeated the powers of death and darkness. *USCCB*

9a. Thinking back over our study of 1 John to date, look up one of the following verses and note what believers are able to conquer or overcome and why.

1 John 2:14

1 John 4:3-4

b. There is an old hymn entitled "Victory is Mine." From your reading of today's scripture verses, what is the nature of the victory of which you are assured?

10. In verse 6 John states that Jesus Christ came by water and blood, perhaps referring back to John 19:34. What do you think is symbolized by each of the two elements named in this verse?

11a. Complete the two statements made about the Spirit in the last sentence of verse 6.

And the Spirit is the one

For the Spirit is

b. To what truth do you think the Spirit testifies? (see John 1:32-33)

12. CONNECTION: We read today that Jesus came to us by water and blood. According to Christian teaching, water alludes to Christ's baptism of water in the Jordan River and blood to his baptism of blood on the cross of Calvary. Water witnesses to our cleansing through baptism; blood witnesses to our salvation in the Eucharist. Considering the spiritual or symbolic meanings of these simple elements, beyond the sacraments of the Church, what significance do they have in your daily life? Share some examples with your group.

O Blood and Water is a prayer also known as the conversion prayer. It is a prayer to the Divine Mercy revealed by Jesus to St. Faustina Kowalska. Its full text, as reported in her Diary, is: *O blood and water, which gushed forth from the heart of Jesus as a fountain of mercy for us, I/we trust in you.* Spend a few moments meditating on this prayer.

DAY THREE

Read 1 John 5:7-12

13. According to verses 7-8, John includes three witnesses that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood. Why might John have included three agreeing witnesses? (Refer to Deuteronomy 19:15).

14a. From verse 9 why is divine testimony far greater than human?

b. Select one of the following verses and record what God testifies about Jesus:

Matthew 3:16-17

Matthew 17:5

15. Verse 10 states that those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts, and those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in his testimony that Jesus is his son. How would you briefly explain this statement?

16. Record the testimony of God contained in verse 11. (Good memory verse)

17. John states in verse 12 that whoever has the Son has life and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. In both verses 11 and 12, the word “life” is used four times. To what kind of life is John referring?

18. CONNECTION: We are reminded in today’s lesson that God gave us his Son for our eternal life. You are witnessing to Christ in your life every time you share with another person something Jesus has done for you. It is often through our testimony that others come to believe. Spend a moment putting into words your own testimony explaining why you are a believer – perhaps a favorite or powerful incident where you recognized the Son’s work in your life.

Keep in mind Mark 5:20: “And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.” Begin your prayer today asking God to give you the opportunity and courage to be a witness for him.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 John 5:13-15

19a. Today’s lesson begins the Epilogue to 1 John. John says that he wrote this letter to “you who believe in the name of the Son of God.” Select one of the following verses and record any additional facts you learn about the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:12

Romans 10:13

Note the consistency between Luke (who wrote Acts), Paul (who wrote the letter to the Romans) and these letters of John. Reading these verses supports the teachings and the consistency of messaging of the early Church.

b. According to the last part of verse 13, why was the letter written?

20. Often we think of eternal life only as following our physical death; however, in verse 13 John states, using the present tense, that we HAVE eternal life. How would you explain what it means to have eternal life here and now?

21. Read Psalm 139:13, which indicates that eternal life continues from the time of our creation through our life on earth, to our afterlife with God the Father. What does this mean to you?

22a. According to verse 14, we can boldly approach God with our requests. What requests will God hear? (verse 15)

b. Answered prayer does not always mean we get what we want. How do you reconcile that with verse 15?

23. Select one of the following verses and record a brief phrase that adds an insight about answered prayer:

Matthew 21:22

John 16:24

James 4:3

24. CONNECTION: When we pray to God, we pray that our requests agree with God's will for us. Rather than demand what we want for ourselves, it is far better to ask for what he wants for us. Consider and share some facts about a time when God did not answer your prayers in the way you desired, but in a way in which you could ultimately recognize that he was always with you. Since we know that God loves us and always wants the best for us, how can we better align our will with God's will?

Read and record Jeremiah 29:11 and begin your prayer today thankful for God's loving answers to all our prayers. End your prayer with the words "Thy will be done. Amen."

DAY FIVE

Read 1 John 5:16-18

25a. In verse 16 we read what we are to do if we see our brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin. What should we do and what will God do to such a one?

b. There is a very specific clarification about the nature of certain sins. What is it?

Note: In the Johannine community a mortal sin was most likely considered to be "...denial that Jesus is the Son of God or that He has come in flesh." (Commentary) "It is unclear why John does not ask believers to pray for persons guilty of deadly sins. Whatever the reason, his words do not imply that such a one is beyond the reach of God's mercy or incapable of future repentance." *Ignatius Study Bible* The USCCB says in regard to this, "prayer is not enjoined but is also not forbidden."

26. In these verses we learn that we are to pray when we see sin committed. There are other inappropriate responses we could make when we see another committing sin. Give some examples of what not to do.

Note: The Catechism describes the difference between mortal and venial sins as follows: "Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God who is his ultimate end and beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it." *CCC 1855*

27. John goes on to say in verse 17 that all wrongdoing is sin, but that there is sin that is not mortal. In your own words, explain what differentiates a mortal sin from other wrongdoing.

28. According to the beginning phrase of verse 18 we know that those who are born of God do not sin. What are two assurances to those who are born of God? (end of verse 18)

29. Even though it may seem at times that Satan is in charge, look up one of the following verses and record a phrase that refers to the ultimate fate of the evil one.

John 12:31

Revelation 20:10

30. CONNECTION: In our world today there is much sin and brokenness. Everyone is susceptible to evil. The evil one tempts us with the illusion that good can result from bad actions. Our God is always greater than the tempter who offers us riches or power or health in exchange for making bad choices that lead us away from God's commandments. What "words of wisdom" have you heard or used in teaching children (or others) how to discern good choices from bad choices or how to resist temptation?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and write a prayer today asking that Jesus protect you and your family from the evil one.

DAY SIX

Read 1 John 5:19-21

31. John reminds us again in verse 19 that "We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one." How would you reconcile this statement with our assurance that Jesus has triumphed over death and evil?

32a. Many of the messages of this epistle are summarized in verse 20. According to the beginning of this verse, what two things do we know and what does this enable us to do?

b. John tells us (in verse 20) that "we are in him who is true, in his son Jesus Christ." What does the author say about "him" in the last sentence of verse 20? (Good memory verse)

33. According to verse 21, we (little children) are to keep ourselves from idols. "Idols" may be represented as forms of belief and practice that in one way or another deny Jesus Christ and impede true life in him. (Anderson/Keating) What are some "idols" that might take you away from walking with Jesus on your own spiritual journey?

34. At first verses 20-21 may seem very disconnected; however, on further reflection, what connection can be drawn between these verses?

35. Throughout this epistle John has addressed his readers by several titles: Beloved, my little children, children, and today, little children. Are there special nicknames or ways of addressing your children or loved ones when you are conveying an important message? How might these relate to how John addresses his readers?

36. CONNECTION: Today's passage focuses on the reality that we have knowledge because Jesus the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true. What have you come to know about God or the Son of God as a result of this study of John's 1st epistle? Record some thoughts to share with your group.

Record a favorite verse from this letter to share with your group. As we complete our study of 1 John realize that you have been given these words not only for your own spiritual growth, but to share with others as you continue on your faith journey. Let this verse lead you into prayer.

Read pages 122-124 in the *New Collegeville Commentary, The Gospel According to John and the Johannine Letters*, by Scott M. Lewis. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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