



LIFE, LIGHT, AND LOVE: A STUDY OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

WEEK FOUR – GOD IS LOVE

Read 1 John 3

The NLT version of the first verse says: *“See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!”*

I don’t know how this makes you feel, but for me, it is overwhelming. God loves us so much that he calls us his children, meaning we are part of the family of God.

Verse 2 of this chapter says: *“...we are already God’s children, and we can’t even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes, we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.”*

We are, according to Romans 8:17, co-equal with Jesus! *“Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”*

- Can you put into words, the effect these verses have on you?
- Is it hard to believe that one day we will be like Jesus? In what ways does this give you hope and confidence?
- It is wonderful to think of ourselves as co-equals with Christ **BUT**, how do we feel about the second part of that sentence?

Many Christians across the world pay a high price for following Jesus. We don’t have that level of persecution in this country, but it is not always easy to follow Jesus. People ridicule us, accuse us of believing pie in the sky, and so on. When this comes from strangers, we can sometimes shrug it off but often it comes from friends and family: something much harder to deal with as it can make for strained and even broken, relationships. It can make things difficult in the workplace where maybe feel we cannot stand up for Jesus without jeopardising our position. We must ask God daily for strength and confidence in our faith, and in God’s love for us.

Read verses 4-9 It is important to understand what is being said here. At first glance it seems that we can be sinless which contradicts verses 8-10 of chapter 1. What John is saying here refers to the new life in Christ that is given to each of us sinners, by the

Spirit of God the moment we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and are born again. It is not the new life in Christ that sins, but our old sinful nature. If we read Romans 7 15-25, Paul tells us that the things he knows he should do he doesn't, and the things he should not do he does. We have this constant battle that goes on in our lives. The important thing to remember is to also ask forgiveness of God when we have done wrong. Verses 9-10 of chapter 1 says: *"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts."* Intentional sin should not be part of a Christian's life. We will all slip up and do things we shouldn't and at that point we ask for God's forgiveness which he freely gives because he loves us so much.

- Take time to think about and deal with, the things that we know are wrong in our lives. By dealing with them, I mean genuinely repenting before God. To repent is not just to say sorry but means to turn around and go in a different direction.
- In Study No.3 we looked at God's grace, his unmerited favour, which he extends to us his children. God is love. Hebrews 13:8 reminds us that he is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. What does this mean for our lives?

Read verses 10-24. In one version of the Bible that I have, this section is entitled **THE IMPERATIVE OF LOVE**, meaning it is something of the utmost important or necessity. It can also mean something that it is a command.

Verse 11 is crystal clear: *"For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."* It is imperative that we do this. Love for one another should mark us out as Christians. That love should then enable us to reach out to those who are spiritually lost. Jesus said: *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:35)

If God is love and we are his children, then love for others should be the hallmark of our lives.

- Let's look at our lives and be honest with ourselves. Do we really love as Jesus commanded us? Some people are easier to love than others but there are no get-out clauses with this command. We must pray that the grace God extends to us enables us to reach out to others.

Verse 17-18: *"But if anyone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to help – how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions."*

- This goes back to Matthew 25:35-46 – read through those verses. Jesus says here that as we do these things to others, we are doing them to him. Are we willing to give?
- When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples in Matthew 10, he tells them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. In verse 8 he says: *“Freely you have received, freely give.”* We need to engrave these words on our hearts.

“Those who obey God’s commandments live in fellowship with him, and he with them.”
(verse 24 of 1John 3).

John’s teaching is extremely practical. If God is love and we are his children, then we are to show that love in the way we reach out to those in need. He has no other hands than ours to do his work.

Prayer:

Father God, who is love personified, thank you for sending Jesus and through our acceptance of his sacrifice on the cross, allowing us to become your children.

