



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

WEEK FIVE – GOD IS LIFE, LIGHT AND LOVE

Read 1 John 4

In week two, we looked at four things John says we must do. We have looked at keeping God's commandments and loving our fellow Christians, but in this last study, I want to look at the last two: stop loving this evil world and consequently live in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Although chapter two deals with all of these, I think chapters 4 and 5 give us a more detailed picture of how we should live.

As I mentioned at the beginning, John was trying to ensure the Christians were not drawn away from the truth by other doctrines such as Gnosticism. Today, we have many more things seeking to attract our attention and turn us away from the things of God. Therefore, it is essential to consistently read God's word so that we can walk in his truth.

- Think about the things that would distract you from walking with Jesus. Are they external pressures or are they concerned with disbelief or uncertainty?
- How have you dealt with these, or do you try and ignore them struggling along as best you can?

At the end of chapter 3, John tells us that if we keep God's commandments, we abide in him and he in us. We know this because of the Holy Spirit which God has given to us.

We need to keep ourselves grounded in God's word so that when we hear or see things that are contrary to what we believe, we can make right judgements. Just as in the times of the early church, people today can be very persuasive in their words and manner. However, John gives us a good yardstick by which to measure the truth (1 John 4:2-3).

- If what we are reading or hearing does not acknowledge the truth of God's word, then the spirit behind it is most certainly not of God.
- What great truth do we read in verse 4?

- Verses 9-11 *“God showed how much he loved us by sending his only son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.”* (NLT)

Throughout this epistle we are encouraged to love one another. If we love God, then our lives should demonstrate that love.

Read verses 17-19

Many people, including Christians, live in fear. This can take many forms but each of us should learn verse 18 by heart: *“There is no FEAR in love; but perfect love casts out fear..”* We love God because he first loved us. As Christians we have no need to fear because God is also a God of peace. Fear and peace cannot co-exist.

Philippians 4:6-7 This is something else we should know: *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. If you do this YOU WILL EXPERIENCE GOD’S PEACE, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* (NLT)

- Whatever difficulties you may be experiencing, place these words in front of you and pray for the peace that God has promised those who love him.
- Don’t be afraid to ask mature Christians in the church to pray for any issues that are causing you distress. We are the family of God and should support each other.

Read 1 John 5

When I read verse 3 of this chapter it reminds me of the advert on television with the meerkats: **SIMPLES!** *“Loving God means keeping his commandments, and really, that isn’t difficult.”* And we know of course, what these commandments are: that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbour as ourselves. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. In other words, they are the essence of all that scripture teaches us.

- As we pray each day, we should remember that the Holy Spirit will help us in all aspects of our Christian life, be it loving God, loving others, or living out the teachings of Jesus.

One of the heretical teachings at this time was that the Holy Spirit came on Jesus as he was baptised by John the Baptist but left him at his crucifixion. John wants us to know that Jesus was born by the power of the Spirit and that remained throughout his life.

In verses 6-11, it talks about the certainty of God's witness. *"Jesus Christ was revealed as God's son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross – not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit also gives us the testimony that this is true. So, we have these three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood – and all three agree. Since we believe human testimony, surely, we can believe the testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his son. All who believe in the son of God know that this is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his son. And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life and this life is in his son."* (NLT)

In a court of law, testimony is required to demonstrate the truth of the case. This is what John is doing here, confirming that the true testimony comes from God himself. We know from Numbers 23:19 that *"God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?"*

The last verse tells us: *"Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts."*

- Remind yourself daily that God is love, demonstrated by sending Jesus to die on the cross for us.
- God is light: *In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overwhelm it* (John 1).
- I remember being in Beverley Minster at a Christmas service. All the lights were extinguished, and it was total blackness. Then the minister lit a candle, and everyone could see it. Even though it was not a powerful light, it was not hidden by the darkness. Be encouraged that even if you think you are not a strong light for God, even the smallest light stands out in our dark world.
- Because we are children of God, his love dwells in us, we have eternal life, and we can walk in his light.

"..for you are a chosen people... so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." 1 Peter 2:9

Prayer:

Father God may our lives show others your life, light and love.

