

Spring Scripture Sharing: James and 1,2,3 John

Let's keep the following points in mind:

-Make sure every person gets a chance to talk if they feel comfortable doing so. Don't dominate the discussion.

-Take a risk and share your thoughts! We all benefit from one another's perspectives.

-Keep any personal information shared in the group in confidence.

Reading for the Week: 1 John 4-5, 2 John, 3 John

For all readings for each person in the circle:

-What caught your attention in this reading or resonated with you in a particular way? Why?

-What questions does this reading bring up for you?

Background of the Epistles of John:

The Epistles of John are written in the same vein of the writer of the Gospel of John. It is most likely written around 100 A.D., after the Gospel of John (dated around 90 A.D).

The Johannine Community for which these works are written were dealing with issues of persecution from the Jewish community, which became stronger after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The writings focus on themes of Christ as light, as existing from all time, and of the theme of love in the Christian community. The dichotomy between light and darkness is used to represent the division between those who live according to God's commandments and those who do not. An identification of Christ with Truth is also emphasized. The Letters of John are most likely written to the later Johannine communities. The first letter is more of an exhortation to Johannine Christians about staying true to their faith and community living, rather than a letter to the community about a specific problem. 2 and 3 John, are letters that deal with specific issues concerning the community and individuals within it

1 John 4

Background:

Here you will notice the ongoing theme of loving one another in the community and preserving the unity of the community.

- What is a principle we can glean here regarding how to test the spirits?
- What are the reasons listed in verses 7-21 the we ought to love one another? What effects does loving one another have?

1 John 5

- Verse three says, "For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world." What does it mean that the commandments are not burdensome?
- In the comments about sin in verses 16-17, what teachings of our faith do you see echoed?

(over)

2 John

Background: The chosen Lady that is spoken of is the Church community. The children are the members of the church. There is a long tradition of referring to the Church with a feminine pronoun, e.g. Mother church, or the church as the Bride of Christ. Here again we see the commandment to love one another as an ongoing theme and focus, as well as the presence of antichrists that distort teaching and deny the importance of the incarnation.

- Once again, the measure for discerning if a person is remaining in God is whether or not their doctrine remains true to what is taught. Specifically, some Gnostic groups at the time denied that the coming of Christ in the flesh was central to Christian belief. They taught that the incarnation was an inferior step to understanding the true spiritualized Christ. The teaching office of the Church has always guided believers into Truth and preserved the apostolic teachings down to today. How aware are we of the importance of the Church for preserving this Truth?

3 John

Background: Read summary in New American Bible for background.

- What does this letter tell us about the importance of supporting one another and staying together as a church community? Are there divisions in the Church today that need to be healed?

Bring the Word to the Week:

What is one thing we can do in the next week that will help apply what we've found today to our everyday lives? How can I share what I've received from the Word today with others?