

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 1-3

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 1 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. In the first letter we see the theme of being aware of the presence of antichrists—those who distort the teachings of Christ and fragment the community. We also see the theme of witnessing faithfully to Christ, and adhering to the teachings they have received.

Chapter 1

Background:

You will notice the similarities in style between the beginning of the Gospel of John and the beginning of 1 John. Here the emphasis is not on the preexistent Word, but on the witness by the community to the Word made flesh.

- What is the proper way to witness to Christ, according to this first chapter of 1 John?
- What does this chapter say about how we are to understand sin and how we are to deal with our sin? Do you see this understanding present in our Christian communities today?
- According to this chapter, how does our ability to admit our sin and to recognize our need for Christ affect how we can witness to Christ? How does "walking in the light" affect our ability to witness to Christ?

(over)

Chapter 2

Background: Here we begin a series of teachings directed towards the community, with a focus on loving one another in the community in both word and action. There is also a focus on preserving the authentic teachings of the community. The “world” is a term used to identify those things that lead one to sin, or are not of God. It does not mean a hatred of world in general in favor of some kind of purely spiritual existence. The term “antichrist” is used to identify those who are false teachers.

- This chapter places emphases on “walking the walk” and not just “talking the talk”. What are some of the examples he provides of how we ought to live in a way that truly witnesses to Christ?
- From reading the warnings of this chapter, what can you conclude were some of the issues with which the Johannine community was struggling? Do we experience these same struggles today in our communities?

Chapter 3

Background: This chapter turns again to the theme of loving one another. See John 17:20-26 for parallels and background to understanding the kind of love spoken of here to these later generations of Johannine Christians.

- What kind of love is identified as Christian love?
- What are the practical implications for living as a Christian community? What are some practical applications for our parish communities?

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?