

Mercy Hill Church

1 John • Certainty of God's Testimony • 1 John 5 • No Date

Main Point

Because of who Jesus is and what He does for us, we can have confidence in our relationship with Him.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Think about the closest relationship you have with another person. What are some of the things that make you confident in that friendship? How do you know that person cares about you?

On the other hand, what are some of the things you do to show other people that you love and care for them and to make them feel confident in your relationship with them?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read 1 John 5:6-10.

Why do you believe that Jesus is God? According to John, how can we know that Jesus is who He claimed to be?

What are some of the arguments people make today for who Jesus was/is?

Why is it so important that we believe Jesus is God? What changes if we don't believe that?

One of the main reasons John wrote this letter was to address the false teachings of his day that made a distinction between Jesus the man and the divine Christ. Fellowship with God and with other believers is based on a correct understanding of who Jesus is and why He came. John emphasizes that we can believe Jesus is God because God Himself testifies to this truth.

What is the significance of the water, the blood, and the Spirit all testifying that Jesus is God?

The water is a reference to Jesus' baptism and the blood is a reference to His death on the cross. Both water and blood refer to historical events in the life of Jesus on earth. John was claiming that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, truly was baptized and died on a cross. Historical facts, divine testimony, and Christian experience all testify that Jesus is God's Son.

| Have another volunteer read 1 John 5:11-13.

What differences does John list between those who believe Christ is the Son of God and those who do not believe (vv. 9-12)?

How does the gift of eternal life change the way you live today?

The theme of eternal life dominates John's thinking in 1 John. Eternal life is the quality of life God gives to those who believe in Christ. This life comes as God's gift. It involves a transformed life, fully opened to God and centered in Him. The blessings of eternal life are both a present and a future reality. The future reality, already experienced to a limited degree in the present time, involves fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Death cannot destroy this fellowship.

Throughout his letter, John gives his readers several assurances that they have received the gift of eternal life. Read 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:9; 1 John 3:14; 1 John 4:7-8; and 1 John 5:4. What insight do these verses give us into the person born of God?

Are these characteristics of a Christian—practicing righteousness, not practicing sin, loving others, and overcoming the world—evident in your life? Which is the biggest struggle for you as you live as a child of God?

| Have a final volunteer read 1 John 5:14-15.

What do these verses say about prayer?

In 1 John 5:14-15, what does John teach us about how to pray?

Describe some of the differences between praying according to your will versus praying according to God's will. What do we communicate to God when the majority of our prayers are rooted in our will, rather than in His?

Prayer must be viewed not as our attempt to get God to see things from our point of view but as our attempt to see things from God's point of view. When we grow, mature, study, and meditate on Scripture and seek the will of God, we try to ask ourselves not what we want, but what God wants. Then we make progress in prayer.

John tells us to pray in line with God’s will, but how can we know what His will is?

God has given us two ways to know His will—Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Decisions in line with God’s purposes will glorify Christ, bring us into conformity with His image, and free us for ministry. We can be confident that God will answer our prayers when we pray in faith, according to His will and prompted by His Spirit.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you have the assurance of faith that John describes in today’s text? If not, where does your faith waver?

Why is it important that you have confidence in your relationship with Christ? When you are confident in Him, what do you feel motivated and empowered to do?

Pray

As you close your group time in prayer, thank God for the blessed assurances He gives us so that we can be confident in who we are in Christ. Thank Him for sending His Son, that we may have eternal life. Also thank Him for answering our prayers and revealing His will to us. Challenge your group members to prayerfully assess their confidence and assurance level this week.

Commentary

| 1 John 5

The phrase water and blood (v. 6) automatically makes us think of the incident during the crucifixion of Jesus when the soldier pierced his side and water and blood came out (John 19:34). However, this is probably not a reference to that event, but to Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion. Cerithus, a false teacher of that time, taught that Christ was a spiritual being who came down on the man Jesus when he was baptized, but left him before he was crucified. That way, Christ came through water (baptism) but not through blood (crucifixion). To correct this lie, John wrote that the one whom believers acknowledge to be the Son of God (v. 5) came not by water only, but by water and blood. The one who hung on the cross was the same person who was baptized in the Jordan River.

Our witness of what we have seen and heard (1:2, 4:14) is important, but there is a greater witness—the Holy Spirit (see John 15:26-27). The witness of the Spirit is joined to the witness of the water and blood, so that the three are in agreement. The witness of the Spirit may be understood as the testimony of God (see v. 9)

through the prophets (including John the Baptist) and the Scripture. All witnesses converge—the testimony of the Spirit through the prophets and Scripture, and the testimony of the historical facts of Jesus' life from the beginning of his ministry (baptism) to the end (crucifixion).

If human testimony is accepted on the basis of three witnesses, how much more should God's testimony be accepted (vv. 9-11). Two points are made before specifying God's testimony in verses 11-12. First, divine testimony should be accepted because it is greater than human testimony, which everyone accepts. Second, willful unbelief is sin. If we trust people to be true to their word, why would we not trust God, who is more trustworthy than humans? If a person accepts the testimony of God, he has an internal (in his heart) assurance that what he has believed is actually true. Reformers called this the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*, or the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is given in addition to the historical evidence (Rom. 8:16). Anyone who rejects God's testimony has made him out to be a liar. There is no middle ground. You are either with God or against him.

So what is being testified to? That eternal life comes from God through his Son Jesus and through no other way (vv. 11-12). This statement is very likely directed at the antichrists who charged that the readers did not really have eternal life through Christ. Scripture makes it clear that we do have eternal life through Jesus. To deny this is to deny God's testimony and to call God a liar.

Toward the end of his first epistle, John stated his purpose for writing it: That you may know that you have eternal life. First John is written to those who are Christians to give them assurance that they are saved (v. 13).

The Christian may have confidence in approaching God in prayer (vv. 14-15). Our confidence in prayer is a natural consequence of our assurance that we have eternal life (vv. 12-13). We may ask anything according to God's will, and we will receive it. This leads many Christians to ask, How can I know what the will of God is? Sometimes Scripture will tell us what the will of God is, either explicitly or in principle. It may take spiritual maturation and discernment to learn which principles of Scripture should guide our prayers.