

Mercy Hill Church

1 John • Children of God • 1 John 2:28-3:3 • No Date

Main Point

John exhorts believers to remain in Christ and remember His love as we wait for His final return.

Introduction

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

When was the last time you waited in a really long line? What were you waiting for?

How did you occupy your time while you waited?

Why do you think most of us have such a difficult time in waiting?

We live in a fast-paced culture in which we don't like to wait for information, food, or anything else. Contrary to this on-demand world, a big component of the life of the Christian is waiting for the sure and certain return of Jesus Christ. But our waiting for Him is far from passive; in fact, because we are certain Jesus is coming back, John wrote that we must remain in Christ and remember His love until His return.

Understanding

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

| Have a volunteer read 1 John 2:28.

Why do you think John addressed his readers as “little children” in this verse?

What, in your own words, does it mean to “remain” in Christ?

What will be the effect of remaining in Christ? Does that mean we will be filled with pride when Jesus comes back? Why or why not?

The word translated “remain” in verse 28 can also be translated “abide.” It's a term that emphasizes the constant connection the Christian should have with Jesus. John used this word in his gospel as well, along with an image that helps us see more of what it means.

| Have a volunteer read John 15:1-8.

What similarities do you see between this passage and 1 John 2:28?

How does John's image in John 15 help us understand what it means to remain or abide in Christ?

What are some practical ways we can remain in Him?

When we live a life that is unwavering in our relationship with Him, we will remain in Christ. We will be ever more aware of our dependence on Him for true life, joy, and direction. As a branch is connected to the vine, we look to Christ for everything we need each day. Some of the practical ways we maintain this connection are through Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians. We don't do these things to merit God's approval; rather, we do them because of the great love God has already shown us in Christ. John turned his attention to the subject of God's love in 1 John 2:29.

| Have a volunteer read 1 John 2:29-3:3.

Does verse 29 indicate that anyone who does the right thing is born again? If not, what does it mean?

Why is remembering the love of Christ by which we were born again essential in order to rightly remain in Him?

What will our efforts to remain in Him look like if we don't remember the love of Jesus?

What, according to John, is so remarkable about this love of God in Christ?

We remain in Christ because He has demonstrated His love for us at the cross. He did this not because we were righteous or deserving, but because He is good and loving Himself. Our effort to remain in unwavering relationship with Him is born out of this love which has transformed us into the children of God.

In what sense has our identity not yet been revealed?

What is the difference between the way people currently see Christ and how they will view Him when He returns?

How is the identity of the child of God tied to the return of Christ? Why is that tie meant to give us hope?

How does having that hope change the way we live on a day to day basis?

Because of His patience, God has not yet sent Jesus back to the earth. Because He has not yet returned, people have the luxury of viewing Jesus however their minds lead them. But when He returns, there will be

no doubt as to His true identity and glory. Similarly, though Christians might suffer right now in seemingly unjust ways, when Jesus reveals His true self at His return, the children of God will be seen as they truly are—the transformed and glorified coheirs along with Christ.

Application

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

What are you doing during this season of your life in order to remain in Christ?

How are you reminding yourself of Christ’s love? How can you serve as a reminder for other people of that love?

Does your schedule and priorities rightly reflect the certainty of Jesus’ return?

Pray

Close by praying as John did in the book of Revelation: “Come, Lord Jesus.” Thank God that this return is sure and certain, and thank Him for His great love that has transformed us into the children of God.

Commentary

| 1 John 2:28-3:3

Verses 28-29 introduce the concerns of chapter 3. Now, dear children seems to introduce a major new section. Christians begin by believing and trusting in Jesus. Then what? We are to remain (or abide) in him so that when Jesus comes again, we may be confident and unashamed. Experiencing shame at living an undisciplined life might be part of what we could face. First John 2:28 reassures those who live normal Christian lives that they will not experience this shame. Only those who do not remain in him will do so. That shame, should it be experienced, will be relatively short-lived. Revelation 21:4 promises that God will wipe away every tear, as the things of this world pass forever. The shame is not a perpetual thing, but is something to be avoided.

John goes onto say that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. At first impulse, we can think of plenty of people who have done what is right but were not believers in Jesus. Does this mean they were born of him anyway? If we had only this verse, we might come to this conclusion. But balanced with the rest of Scripture, this impression is reversed. Scripture makes it clear that it is through Jesus—and Him alone—that we receive salvation (John 14:6). A correct understanding of and belief in Jesus is necessary for salvation (1 John 2:22–23). Therefore, someone who knowingly rejected Jesus, could not be born of God.

To understand these difficult sayings, we must continually come back to their context and intent. The church had been invaded by Gnostics. They claimed to know God through special inner knowledge. They believed that the spirit was good and was untouched by the physical, which was evil. Therefore, the Gnostics believed they could sin flagrantly without remorse or consequence, since their spirits remained untouched by sin. They claimed to be Christian, to know God, but they hated Christians and lived sinful lives. God inspired this letter to challenge such people's claims to know Jesus. They must do what is right to validate that they are Christian. Only when our good deeds are done in response to our desire to serve Jesus—only when our acts are an expression and outworking of our faith in him—is God pleased.

In 3:1-3, the apostle breaks out in spontaneous wonder at the love of God in making us his children. A further wonder grasps him: that is what we are. The world does not know us, because it does not know our Father. To “know” in this context has the sense of “accept.” Just as the world did not accept Jesus, it will not accept us.

Even though we are children of God, we don't grasp the full significance of what it means to be God's children. We now have only a dim perception of who we are and what we will be (what we will be has not yet been made known). When we see Jesus, our understanding will expand, and we will see it all. If we begin to understand the unimaginable wonder of this fact, we will want to live pure and holy lives, for we will want to be pure as he is pure. Our weak commitment to absolute holiness stems in large measure from our dim perception of who Jesus is and who we have become in him. When we grasp more fully that we are now coheirs with Jesus (Rom. 8:17), we are destined to rule and reign in heaven with him. Slated for perfect holiness, united in spirit with the Creator-God of the universe, we will no longer want to fiddle around with the “mud pies” of this world. We will prefer the spotless beauty of a banquet table.