

**Group Notes 5 February 2012**  
*Series on John's first letter #1 – Living in the Light*

**Welcome - Ice Breaker**

The dog ate my homework! What is the lamest excuse you have ever heard? Or used yourself?

**Word – 1 John chapter 1**

Vs 1-2 There are very strong connections here to John's Gospel. 1 John has almost the same opening verses as John 1 - *In the beginning was the word* etc. There is a similar style, repetitive, simple and general yet very deep and mystical. There are similar themes – light v darkness, truth v lies, love v sin. It is clearly the same author as John's Gospel. The writer tells us that he is an eyewitness to the coming of the Word of life: "I heard him with my own ears, saw him with my own eyes, I reached out and touched him"... The Gospel is not just an abstract philosophy or a mystical experience: it is a real event featuring an historical person.

**Question 1: How important is it that there are eyewitnesses to Jesus' life? Would the Gospel still make sense if it were purely spiritual and without a physical and historical basis?**

Vs 3-4 John states the aims of his letter: *so that you may have fellowship with us, and to make our joy complete*. Although he was an eyewitness of Jesus' life and we are not, if we receive John's message we also have fellowship with the Father and with Jesus. Our fellowship with each other is in direct relationship to our fellowship with God, in fact John treats them here as if they are practically the same thing. To love God is to love one another. This fellowship with God is the source of joy: through it our joy is made complete.

**Question 2: What advantages and disadvantages do we have over people who were eyewitnesses of Jesus? Is our fellowship with God really the same as John's?**

Vs 5-7 *God is light, in him there is no darkness at all* says v.5. It is very hard for us to imagine a being who is good all the way through, with none of the mixed motives, half truths, and compromises that taint so much of human experience. This seems very daunting. If we have the least shadow of darkness in us, how can we possibly have fellowship with someone who is so completely pure? How can human beings *walk in the light as he is in the light*? Here are some ideas:

- Keep short accounts with God. Yes we often mess up, that's part of being human, but we can bring those things to God sooner rather than later.
- Keep our attention on God – spend time focussing on Him.
- Listen to God's word
- Spend with others who are close to God.
- Find a Christian mentor to help you stay on track.
- Think of the light as God's love, searching our hearts because He loves us and wants to set us free.

**Question 3: Which of these do you think are most helpful? Do you have your own suggestions to add?**

Vs 8-10 warn us against self deception – *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*. We cannot walk in the light by pretending to be something other than we are. Sadly the human race is extremely good at self-deception! We make excuses, we blame our parents or our upbringing or our circumstances or other people, we convince ourselves that God doesn't really mind about this sin or that, or even that He's telling us to do something which we know the Bible forbids. This brings us into a whole world of pretence. We can't deceive God, so we deceive ourselves, and our pretence takes in other people too. We put on masks, wanting to be seen as the big macho Christian... We might have good motives: "the faith of people who look up to me might be troubled if they knew what I'm really like" "Everybody else looks so together, I don't want to be the one who lets the side down..." The trouble is that once pretending gets into the system, everyone else is forced to play along as well!

John warns us that this self-deceit destroys our relationship with God: *If we claim we have not sinned we make him out to be a liar*. The Cross says we have sinned, so deeply and badly that only the most extreme measures

can help us. God would never have sent Jesus to the Cross if there had been any other way. The truth about us is that we need His forgiveness, and we cut ourselves off from Him if we say that we're OK without it.

**Question 4: What masks do people wear? Why do we wear them? What would it be like if we could all just stop pretending and throw those masks away?**

Let's finish with one of the greatest promises in the Bible – verse 9. If instead of deceiving ourselves we confess openly to God, He will forgive us and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness. Some of us play the keeping up appearances game because actually there's something we've said or done or failed in or lusted for that we secretly think cannot be forgiven. Take this verse to heart and learn from it. He cleanses ALL sin. The light overcomes the darkness. The Cross tells the truth about us, not only that we are sinners desperately in need of mercy but also that we are deeply, infinitely loved. Because of that love, it is OK to be me. I can come to Jesus just as I am. I don't need to pretend ever again.

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**Worship ideas for groups with no musicians.**

Light a candle and read out the following Bible verses (you could give a verse each to your members). Leave space for reflection between each one.

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever believes in me shall not walk in darkness

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

God has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.

**Works/witness.**

Is there someone who needs your help in the bad weather? Cut off and unable to get to the shops? Needing their drive cleared so they can get out of doors? Lonely because the family can't visit for now? Can your group help?