

Bible Study Questions

Back to Basics

READ 1 John 1:1—2:1

1. Are there any things that strike, intrigue, or puzzle you? Discuss ...
2. Often we can identify the biggest concern a writer of a letter has by the first thing they start to talk about. What does John seem to be concerned to get across to his readers in the opening couple of verses of this letter? Why do you think he felt the need to stress this?
3. Have you ever met anyone who holds the view that Jesus wasn't real; that he didn't really live and die, or that he wasn't really God? If so, what did they say about Jesus? And what did you say?
4. Why does John say he is reminding them of what he has preached about Jesus [verses 3-4]? What is he implying is the risk is of not believing this?
 - a. The New Testament often urges us to make a high priority of maintaining unity in the church [see for example John 17:23; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 2:2; Colossians 3:13-14; 1 Peter 3:8].
 - i. Where does unity in the church come from? Is it because we share the same beliefs, or because we are loyal members of the same organisation?
 - ii. At what point does John suggest this unity of fellowship is broken?
 - b. This issue of what we believe comes up again later, in chapter 4, verses 1-6 [READ].
 - i. Where does it seem some people were getting their "truth" from? By contrast, where does John say the truth is found?
 - ii. Have you ever met someone who claimed to have spiritual truth that came by some form of spiritual experience? If so, did it fit with the truth as you know it? How could you decide which was right?
 - iii. What would you say to someone who suggested that our beliefs are based on subjective things like emotion and experience, rather than on objective fact?
5. In 1:5-2:2, three times John uses the phrase "If we say ..." Clearly, he is not expressing what he himself believes, so presumably he is repeating what some other people have been saying.
 - a. What is it that some people are apparently saying in the churches that John is writing to? What were they denying?
 - b. What does he say in response? What are the implications for their relationship with God?
 - c. What does he say they need to do instead? Where and how are forgiveness found?
 - d. Do you think that Christians should, or need to, continue to confess and repent of their sin? Is it appropriate that we do this every week in church?
6. What do you think of the following quotes ...?

"I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying." — Nelson Mandela

"There is no sinner like a young saint" — Aphra Behn

"I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints" — Billy Joel

"Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly." — Martin Luther