

making disciples  
growing disciples  
being disciples

# Blessed Assurance

Christ Church  
Homegroups  
Summer 2018

We live today in a world which is full of uncertainty, and that is seen so clearly in our society's approach to faith. For most people, you can believe whatever you want, and 'if it works for you, that's great.' Faith is usually seen as the opposite of facts – something you cannot be sure of. And as Christians living in that environment, it is easy to end up feeling unsure ourselves.

It is not a new situation. John's first epistle seems to have been written for much the same reason. Within the early church there were those who were saying that Jesus wasn't really God, or that he wasn't really human, and saying that as long as you believed the right things, it didn't matter how you lived. It all left Christians feeling uncertain, and John wrote to help them regain their confidence in the gospel and in the relationship with God which Jesus had made possible through his death.

It is not always an easy letter to follow, and there are sections which have perplexed Christians for centuries. Sometimes what John says seems more likely to make us feel discouraged

rather than encouraged in our discipleship. But the key reason that John wrote is that those who believe in Jesus “might know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). So although as you read through the letter there might be many things you want to ask about, the main thing we are focussing on is encouraging one another. Feel free to use the questions in these studies as springboards to help you to do that.

If you do have any questions which have perplexed you, do please let the church office know, and we will try to pick some of them up as we preach through the letter during June / July.

#### HOMEGROUP PROGRAMME for this series

w/b Mon 11 <sup>th</sup> June	Study 1 – The heart of the matter
w/b Mon 18 <sup>th</sup> June	Study 2 – Walk in the light
w/b Mon 25 <sup>th</sup> June	Study 3 – Family likeness
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> July	Prayer Meeting
w/b Mon 9 <sup>th</sup> July	Study 4 – True love
w/b Mon 16 <sup>th</sup> July	Study 5 – A certain faith

# 1. The heart of the matter

## WELCOME

What ambitions do you have for the rest of 2018?

## WORSHIP

Psalm 32 is a great reminder of the wonder of forgiveness. Use it together.

## WORD

It's often been noted that although less people go to church than was the case in past generation, interest in spirituality has not gone away – in fact it seems to be on the increase – Google gave me 512,000,000 results when I just typed in 'spirituality'!

Wrapped up in all that is a bewildering array of views about who Jesus was. Many people I speak to say that they believe in Jesus, but what they believe varies a lot. People do sometimes say that Jesus was a spiritual leader, but they seem to have no interest in whether what the Bible tells us about him is true or not.

The same seems to have been true when John wrote his first Epistle. And John starts by insisting that the whole gospel, and hence our hope of eternal life, has to start with knowing the truth about Jesus.

## Read 1 John 1:1-4

- John is obviously writing about Jesus, so why do you think he calls him 'The Word of life' rather than 'Jesus'?
- Why do you think John places such emphasis on seeing, hearing and touching?
- What do you think John means when he says that certainty about Jesus and eternal life makes our joy 'complete.'
- How could sharing the truth about Jesus make our own joy complete?
- What difference does being assured of eternal life make to your life now?

## Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

- What does John mean when he says that 'God is light'?
- John wrote this letter because of the claims of false teachers who were leading Christians astray. In verses 1-4 he tackled false claims about Jesus, what false claims is he tackling in verses 5-10?
- John opposes people who don't take sin seriously. How might a weak view of sin affect our spiritual lives?

- When are you most tempted to think that sin doesn't matter? What kind of sins might you think of as little and insignificant?
- Twice in chapter 1, John talks about fellowship (verses 3, 7). What does these tell you about Christian fellowship?
- To what extent do we see that in Christ Church? In your home group?

John is speaking to two different groups of people: those who think that because they sin they can't really be Christians, and those who think that because God forgives them it doesn't matter how they live.

- Which of the two is the greatest danger for you to fall into?
- How can these verses help you avoid that danger?

### WORK

John writes about our joy; part of the fruit of the Spirit is joy, in fact joy seems to be one of the dominant things in the Bible.

Are you all experiencing that joy at present? If not, what things are preventing it? How can you help each other to know the joy which God obviously wants for us? Are there issues which you can pray about for each other over the coming week?

## 2. Walk in the light

### WELCOME

We ended last time by thinking of things which could hinder our joy, and which we could pray about. Have there been any answers to those prayers among your group?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 27 reminds us that the Lord is our light, and then speaks about opposition and enemies which can bring darkness into our lives, which only the Lord can take away. Use the psalm, and then praise God for times when you have known his light in your darkness.

### WORD

In Colossians 1:13, Paul writes that God has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.” Christians should be people of light. We saw last time that we should “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7)

The image of light is a powerful one – we need light to show us the way, but light also exposes what is wrong. And so living as children of light will involve the way that we live, but it will also involve repentance for the times we have turned back to the darkness.

### Read 1 John 2:3-6

- Who is John referring to as ‘him’ in verse 3 (We know that we have come to know him)?
- So – how can we be sure that we know him?
- Does that mean that if you are a Christian you will never sin? (Look back at 1 John 1:8-2:2)
- If John doesn’t mean that, what does he mean?
- What does it mean to ‘live as Jesus did’?

### Read 1 John 2:7-11

In the first section John talked about the importance of obeying Jesus’ commands, not as a way of gaining salvation, but as a way of showing that we have received salvation. He now homes in on one particular command.

- What is the commandment that Jesus refers to in verse 7-8 (look as well at John 13:34-35)
- In what way is it old, and in what way is it new?
- Why does John make hatred or love towards other Christians the test of true conversion?

## Read 1 John 2:12-17

- List the blessings that John's original readers (and us as Christians today) enjoy as children of God (verses 12-14)
- What things in the world are we told as Christians not to love?
- Why is love for the world so destructive for Christians?

## Read 1 John 2:18-27

John describes the group who had left the church as 'antichrists' (verses 18,22), which sounds rather dramatic. In the Bible, 'Christ' (or 'Messiah') is the title given to the person God has appointed to rule the world. The antichrists were denying that Jesus was this ruler. They might have claimed to believe, but in fact they rejected Jesus as God's king. Most likely the people John wrote about in this way were Jews who refused to believe that Jesus was their Messiah.

- What do we learn about them from this passage?
- What do we learn about the people who remained?
- What does John mean when he urges his readers to remain in Jesus? (Look also at John 15:1-11)

## WORK

“As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and the Father” (1 John 2:24).

We live in a world where we are constantly bombarded by false ideas of God and where what the Bible says is generally ignored or actively rejected.

How can we help one another to 'remain' in the truth? Are there specific challenges that you face in doing that? Pray for each other about those challenges.

### 3. Family likeness

#### WELCOME

Which of your features have you inherited from one of your parents?

#### WORSHIP

One of the amazing things the Bible tells us is that as Christians, we can know God as our Father. Thank God for this amazing privilege.

#### WORD

How much do you resemble your parents? Most children do have either physical characteristics, or things that they do or say, which they have inherited from their parents. And, of course, most children do their best to hide the fact – being told that I looked or sounded like my dad was never something I appreciated!

But when it comes to our heavenly Father, then we should be eager to be more and more like him – that is at the heart of being disciples.

In our first two studies we have seen that because Jesus, who was both God and man, died for us, we can enjoy fellowship with God. And that fellowship should make a difference to the way we live.

#### Read 1 John 2:28-3:10

- How does 1 John 3:1 describe Christians?
- What two things does John tell will happen when Jesus returns?
- Why should that hope make us want to be pure?
- So – how should we be acting now as a result of knowing what will happen in the future?
- What two things does John remind us Jesus did when he first appeared (verses 5,8)?
- How do these things affect the way we live now?

#### Read 1 John 3:11-18

- Why is love so important in the Christian community?
- In what way is the world similar to Cain?
- What is the difference between loving ‘with actions and in truth’ and loving ‘in words or speech’?

#### Read 1 John 3:19-24

- Why might our hearts condemn us (verse 20)?
- When this happens, how can you reassure your heart?

- How does the idea that we live in God and that God lives in us (verse 24) help you as you live the Christian life?

### WORK

What will it mean for you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ 'with actions and in truth'?

What would this look like in your home group?

What would it look like during the week?

What would it look like when we gather as a church on Sunday?

What are the biggest challenges you face n doing it? Pray about those things over the coming week.

## 4. Real love

### WELCOME

Last time you were challenged to pray about things which make it hard for you to love other Christians, especially those in your group or in Christ Church. Have you found that as you've prayed God has been changing your heart?

### WORSHIP

*'This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.'* (1 John 4:10)

Praise God for his love for you.

### WORD

Perhaps the most abused phrase in the English language is 'I love you.' Instead of communicating unselfish caring, it often expresses self-interest, manipulative affection, or sheer lust. As my Ethics tutor used to say, "I love you" can easily mean "I love me and want you."

Love is one of the dominant themes of 1 John – but what exactly is John talking about?

### Read 1 John 4:1-6

- How can we tell when the Holy Spirit is at work (verses 2-3)?

- Both inside and outside the church today there is a huge range of teaching which claims to be spiritual. How can we recognise what is true from what is false?

### Read 1 John 4:7-21

- What is the difference between saying “God is love” and saying “God is loving”?
- Is love for others or belief in the truth the most important sign that someone follows correct teaching?
- In verse 9 how does John define love?
- In verse 14 how does John define truth?
- Why is it important that love is defined by what God has done and not by what we have done (verse 10)?
- How can thinking about the love that God has shown us in Jesus help us to love other Christians?
- What do you think John means when he says that “perfect love drives out fear”?
- How can people see the invisible God (verse 12)?
- Why does loving one another allow us to have confidence on the day of judgment (verses 17-18)?

- Why is it impossible to love God if you don't love other Christians?

### WORK

John tells us that if even though God is invisible, when we love each other his love is made ‘complete’ or visible. Our love for one another should be a powerful witness to the world of the reality of God.

Pray that your group, and Christ Church generally, will have the sort of love for one another which will make God visible in our society?

## 5. A certain faith

### WELCOME

What is your favourite Bible verse, and why?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 19 tells us of the perfection of God's word. Use the psalm to praise God, then pray that as you study his word it will refresh your soul.

### WORD

As we have studied 1 John, the same themes have been repeated, each time with a bit more detail. We have been reminded that it is only through the stoning death of Jesus that we can be forgiven and be accepted as God children. We've seen that as God's children, we need to walk in the light, and that specifically we need to love other Christians. We've been reminded that love for others can only flow from understanding the great love which God has shown us in Jesus.

Now John finishes by picking up these themes again. Parts of 1 John 5 are very difficult (1 John 5:6-10 are regarded as some of the most confusing verses in the New Testament). But within that he once again reminds us of the confidence we can have. It only contains one instruction (in verse 21) – instead it tells us again about what God has done.

### Read 1 John 5:1-12

- Why does believing that “Jesus is the Christ” show that a person is born of God (verse 1)?
- What other things are associated with being born of God (verses 2-4)?
- John says that God's commands “are not burdensome.” Do God's commands sometimes seem burdensome to you? How can we grow so that isn't the case?
- What do you think John means when he talks about overcoming the world (verses 4-5)?
- Do you feel as if you have overcome the world?
- What does John mean when he says that Jesus came by water and blood (verse 6)? Why are both important?
- 1 John 5:12 is the climax of the whole letter. What does John mean when he says that “whoever has the Son has life”?
- How might this verse shape what we do as a church to fulfil our vision of Making Disciples?

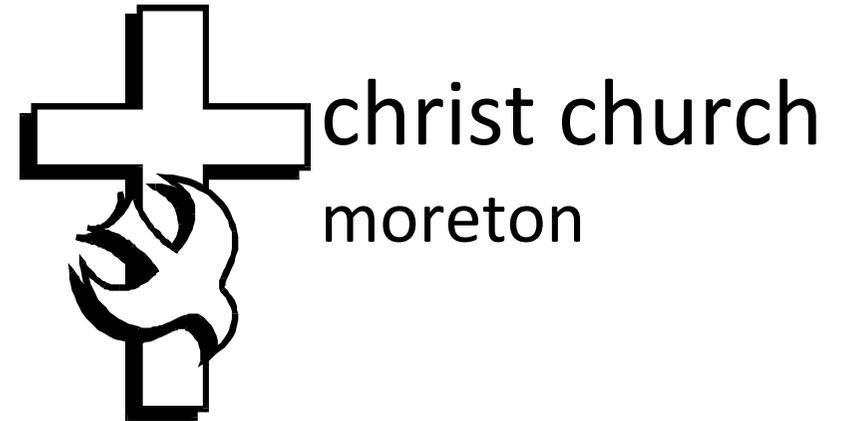
## Read 1 John 5:13-21

- John says that he has written this letter so that his readers “may know that you have eternal life” (verse 13). Has studying 1 John helped you to be sure about that?
- Assurance that we are children of God leads to assurance that we can approach God in prayer. What does it mean to pray “according to his will” (verse 14-15)?
- Why do you think John ends his letter by urging his readers to keep themselves from idols?
- What idols in our society can keep us from having confidence about our acceptance by God?

### WORK

This brings us to the end of this home-group series. We won't meet officially until we restart in the autumn – almost 2 months away. But the challenge to love each other, and to go on walking in the light and remaining in the truth will still be there.

How can you support one other over the coming weeks of our summer break?



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