

Small Group Guide: The Real Thing - Family Resemblance

The Real Thing: Week 5

Based on 1 John 3:4–10

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by thanking God for making us His children through Jesus Christ. Ask Him to reveal areas of rebellion or sin in our lives, help us abide in Christ, and transform us so that His character becomes increasingly visible in the way we live and love others.

Icebreaker Question

What is one way you resemble someone in your family—whether it is your appearance, personality, habits, or even something you say? How can family resemblance help us understand what it means to resemble our Heavenly Father?

Key Scripture

“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother and sister.”

1 John 3:10

Discussion Questions

1. Sin Reveals Rebellion

1 John 3:4–6

John describes sin as “lawlessness.” Why do you think it is important to understand sin as rebellion against God’s authority rather than simply making a mistake?

- What are some ways we tend to minimize or excuse sin?
 - How does viewing sin as a question of “Who will rule my life?” change the way we respond to temptation?
 - What is the difference between a believer who struggles with sin and someone who becomes comfortable living in continual, unrepentant sin?
 - Jesus came to take away sin and break its grip. How should that truth affect the way we respond when we stumble?
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2. Abiding in Christ Changes Us

1 John 3:5–6, 9

John connects abiding in Christ with a changed life. What does it practically mean to “abide” in Christ?

- How does staying close to Christ affect our desires, decisions, and response to temptation?
 - What are some signs that God is changing us from the inside out?
 - How can we recognize the difference between genuine spiritual growth and simply trying harder to follow religious rules?
 - When God convicts us of sin, what does a healthy response look like?
 - How does the truth that Christ saves us from sin's penalty and also works to break sin's power give us hope?
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3. Righteousness Reveals the New Birth

1 John 3:7–9

John teaches that righteousness is evidence of the new birth—not the cause of our salvation. Why is that distinction important?

- How can we fall into legalism if we forget that salvation is by grace?
 - How can we fall into complacency if we forget that genuine salvation produces a changed life?
 - What kinds of new desires, convictions, or directions might we expect to see in someone who has been born of God?
 - How does Jesus' mission to "destroy the works of the devil" give us confidence when we are fighting sin?
 - Where have you seen evidence of God changing you over time?
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4. Family Resemblance Includes Love

1 John 3:10

John connects practicing righteousness with loving our brothers and sisters. Why do you think these two characteristics belong together?

- What does growing in love for other believers look like in everyday life?
 - How can patience, forgiveness, compassion, encouragement, and service demonstrate our family resemblance?
 - Is there someone in your church family whom God may be calling you to intentionally love or serve?
 - How does remembering that we are children of God change the way we treat other members of His family?
 - What is one practical way you can reflect the Father's character through love this week?
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Key Takeaways

1. **Sin is rebellion against God's authority.**
 2. **Jesus came to take away sin and break its grip on our lives.**
 3. **Righteousness is evidence of the new birth, not a way to earn salvation.**
 4. **God's children increasingly resemble their Father through righteousness and love.**
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one or more of the following:

1. **Do a Rebellion Check:** Identify one area where you have been choosing your own will instead of submitting to God's. Confess it to God and intentionally surrender that area to Him.
2. **Abide in Christ:** Spend intentional time each day this week in 1 John 3. Ask God to reveal sin, strengthen your relationship with Christ, and transform your desires.
3. **Look for Family Resemblance:** Choose one characteristic of Christ—such as patience, compassion, forgiveness, obedience, or humility—and intentionally practice it this week.
4. **Love on Purpose:** Identify one person in your church family whom you can intentionally encourage, serve, forgive, or bless this week.

Reflection Questions for Personal Time:

1. Is my life increasingly reflecting the character of my Heavenly Father?
 2. Is there any sin I have begun to tolerate instead of repent of?
 3. Am I abiding in Christ, or am I trying to overcome sin in my own strength?
 4. What evidence do I see that God is changing my desires, direction, and obedience?
 5. Who can I intentionally love this week as a member of God's family?
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Closing Prayer Points

- Thank God for making us His children through Jesus Christ.
 - Confess areas of sin or rebellion that we have been tolerating.
 - Ask God to help us abide closely in Christ.
 - Pray for evidence of the new birth through growing righteousness and obedience.
 - Ask God to help us love our brothers and sisters in a way that reflects His character.
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Next Week's Preparation

Read **1 John 3:11–24** and come prepared to discuss what genuine Christian love looks like in the life of a believer.

Leader's Notes

- Create an environment where people can honestly discuss struggles with sin without fear of condemnation.
- Keep the gospel central: **righteousness is evidence of salvation, not the means of earning it.**
- Help the group distinguish between struggling with sin and becoming comfortable with continual, unrepentant sin.
- Encourage specific, practical applications rather than vague intentions.
- Remind the group that the goal is not perfection or self-effort, but growing in Christ and increasingly reflecting the character of our Heavenly Father.