

Small Group Guide: The Real Thing - Children of God

The Real Thing: Week 4

Based on 1 John 3:1-3

Opening Prayer

Begin by thanking God for His incredible love and the privilege of being called His children. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and apply His truth to your hearts.

Icebreaker Question

When you were a child, what made you feel most loved by your parents or caregivers? How does that compare to how God shows His love to us?

Key Scripture

"See how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and in fact we are." (1 John 3:1)

Discussion Questions

1. Marvel at the Father's Love (1 John 3:1a)

Q: John uses the word "see" to get our attention. Why do you think we so easily lose our sense of wonder about God's love for us?

- What circumstances or distractions cause you to forget God's love?
- Share a time when you were genuinely amazed by God's love for you.

Q: The sermon emphasized that God's love is unlike any earthly love because it's "the holy, perfect, and righteous God pouring out His love on guilty, rebellious sinners." How does understanding this change how you view your relationship with God?

2. Understanding Our Identity (1 John 3:1b-2a)

Q: What's the difference between being called a "servant of God" and being called a "child of God"? Why does this distinction matter?

- How does knowing you're God's child (not just His servant) affect your daily walk with Him?
- What inheritance and privileges come with being God's child?

Q: The sermon stated: "Our obedience doesn't create our identity. Our identity shapes our obedience." What does this mean practically? How does this differ from trying to earn God's approval?

Q: John says "the world does not know us because it did not know Him." Have you experienced misunderstanding or rejection because of your faith? How did you respond?

3. Our Future Hope (1 John 3:2)

Q: John writes, "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him." What aspects of being "like Jesus" are you most looking forward to?

- No more sinful thoughts, pride, jealousy, selfishness, fear, shame?
- Which of these do you struggle with most now?

Q: How does the promise of Christ's return and our transformation give you hope during difficult times?

Q: The sermon said, "Don't evaluate God's final masterpiece by what is still under construction." How does this perspective help when you're discouraged about your spiritual growth?

4. Hope Produces Holiness (1 John 3:3)

Q: John says "everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself just as He is pure." How does hope in Christ's return motivate holy living rather than complacency?

Q: The sermon warned against reducing Christianity to a checklist (Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, etc.). How can we pursue these spiritual disciplines out of relationship rather than obligation?

- What's the difference between doing spiritual activities to "check the box" versus doing them to know Jesus better?

Q: What does it practically look like to "purify yourself" this week?

- Are there specific sins you need to confess and turn from?
- Are there habits you need to surrender?
- Are there relationships you need to restore?

Key Takeaways

1. **Marvel at the Father's Love:** Never lose the wonder that the God of all creation calls us His children.
 2. **Remember Who You Are:** Your identity is not found in success, failure, career, or past—it's found in being God's beloved child.
 3. **Fix Your Hope on Christ's Return:** One day we will be like Jesus—completely free from sin and perfectly reflecting His character.
 4. **Let Hope Produce Holiness:** Because we know what we will become, we should desire to become more like Jesus now.
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

- **Option 1: Daily Wonder** Each morning this week, read 1 John 3:1 and take 5 minutes to marvel at God's love. Journal about what it means to you personally that God calls you His child.
- **Option 2: Identity Check** When facing temptation, discouragement, or pressure from the world, pause and remind yourself: "I am a child of God." Write down how remembering your identity changes your perspective or response.
- **Option 3: Purification Project** Identify one specific area where the Holy Spirit is prompting you to become more like Jesus. Share this with one trusted person in the group for prayer and accountability.
- **Option 4: Hope Focus** Spend time each day this week thinking about Christ's return and what it will be like to see Him face-to-face. Write down how this hope affects your daily choices.

Reflection Questions for Personal Time

- If someone looked at my life, would they see someone whose hope is fixed on Jesus?
- Is there an increasing desire in my life to become more like Jesus?
- Are there sins I am daily putting to death?
- Where am I looking for my identity besides being God's child?
- What would change in my life if I truly lived like the child my Father has declared me to be?

Closing Prayer Points

- Thank God for His incredible love and for adopting us into His family
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live in the wonder of being God's child
 - Pray for strength to pursue holiness motivated by hope, not obligation
 - Ask God to help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus
 - Pray for one another's specific struggles and growth areas
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Next Week's Preparation

Continue reading through 1 John. Come prepared to discuss how your identity as God's child has impacted your week.

Leader's Notes

- Create a safe environment where people can be honest about their struggles
- Emphasize grace—we're not perfect, but we're being transformed
- Be prepared to share your own journey of understanding your identity in Christ
- If someone is struggling with assurance of salvation, consider meeting with them separately or pointing them to pastoral care
- Celebrate growth and testimonies of God's work in group members' lives