

Small Group Guide - Know So

The Real Thing – Week 10

1 John 5:13-21

OVERVIEW

This week's sermon from 1 John 5:13-21 brought us to the close of John's first letter. John wrote this letter so that genuine believers would not live in constant doubt about their standing before God. His purpose was clear: that we may KNOW we have eternal life. This guide will help your group explore what it means to move from a "hope-so" faith to a "know-so" faith and to live with the confidence that comes from truly belonging to Christ.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not through religious effort, good works, or church membership.
 - John wrote this letter not to make believers doubt their salvation, but to give genuine believers confidence that they truly belong to Jesus.
 - We can know four things with certainty: that we have eternal life, that God hears our prayers, that God keeps those who belong to Him, and that we belong to God.
 - Praying according to God's will is not weak faith. It is mature faith that asks boldly while trusting God completely with the answer.
 - God's children may stumble into sin, but they cannot remain comfortable in it. The new birth produces new desires.
 - Our security does not depend on how tightly we hold on to Jesus. It depends on how faithfully Jesus holds on to us.
 - An idol is anything we allow to become more important to us than God, including good things that take His place in our hearts.
 - The best protection against a counterfeit is knowing and loving the real thing.
-

GETTING STARTED

Use one of these questions to open your time together and help the group ease into conversation.

1. Think about an area of your life where you moved from uncertainty to confidence, such as a relationship, a skill, or a decision. What made the difference? How did that confidence change the way you lived?
 2. If someone asked you right now, "Do you know that you have eternal life?" how would you answer? Would your first instinct be to say "I hope so," "I think so," or "I know so"? What shapes your answer?
-

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Section 1: We Can Know We Have Eternal Life (verse 13)

1. The pastor pointed out that John wrote this letter not to make believers doubt, but to give them confidence. Why do you think so many Christians still struggle with assurance of their salvation? What tends to fuel that doubt in your own life?
2. John says eternal life belongs to those who believe in the name of the Son of God. The pastor explained that this belief is more than agreeing Jesus existed. It is an ongoing trust and dependence on Him. What is the difference between believing facts about Jesus and actually trusting Him? How does that distinction show up in everyday life?
3. The pastor said, "Your faith may be weak, but your Savior is strong. It is not the strength of your faith that saves you. Your salvation rests on the strength of your Savior, not the strength of your faith." How does this statement challenge or encourage you? Does it change the way you think about seasons when your faith feels weak?
4. John says we "have" eternal life right now, not simply that we will have it someday. How does understanding eternal life as something you possess in the present, rather than only something waiting in the future, change the way you think about your daily life with God?

Section 2: We Can Know God Hears Our Prayers (verses 14-17)

5. John says we can have confidence before God in prayer when we ask according to His will. The pastor described this as bold prayer that also trusts God with the answer. In your own prayer life, do you tend to lean more toward boldness or surrender? Which one is harder for you, and why?
 6. The pastor used the illustration of his daughter learning that demanding her way was not the right approach, but coming with love and trust opened the door. How does approaching God as a Father instead of a distant authority change your prayers?
 7. John calls believers to pray for a brother or sister caught in sin rather than condemning them or gossiping about them. The pastor said, "Before we talk about them, we should talk to God about them." Is there someone in your life right now who needs your prayers more than your criticism? What is holding you back from praying for them?
 8. The pastor acknowledged that the "sin leading to death" in verse 16 is one of the more difficult passages in this letter. Without needing to resolve every detail, what does this passage tell us about how seriously God takes sin and how seriously we should take the spiritual wellbeing of those around us?
-

Section 3: We Can Know God Keeps His Children (verse 18)

9. John says no one born of God makes sin a settled pattern of life. The pastor clarified this does not mean Christians never sin, but that they cannot remain comfortable in sin. How do you personally experience that tension? What does it feel like when the Holy Spirit is convicting you versus when you are drifting toward comfort with sin?
 10. The pastor said, "Our confidence is not that we are strong enough to keep ourselves saved. Our confidence is that Jesus is strong enough to keep us." How does this truth practically affect the way you handle failure, guilt, or shame after you sin?
 11. The pastor noted that Satan can tempt and attack believers, but he cannot ultimately claim those who belong to Christ. How does knowing that your security is in Christ's grip rather than your own help you face spiritual battles? Does this truth feel real to you in the middle of a difficult season, or does it feel more like something you know in your head?
-

Section 4: We Can Know Who We Belong To (verses 19-20)

12. John draws a sharp contrast between those who belong to God and a world that lies under the influence of the evil one. The pastor warned that even believers can begin thinking more like the world than like the God they belong to. Where do you see that pressure most strongly in your own life or in the culture around you?
 13. John says Jesus came and gave us understanding so that we may know the one who is true. The pastor said, "Jesus didn't just send us information about God. God took on human flesh and came and dwelt among us." How does the fact that God revealed Himself personally in Jesus shape the way you relate to Him, as opposed to simply following a set of rules or beliefs?
-

Section 5: Guard Yourself from Idols (verse 21)

14. The pastor said an idol is anything we love more than God, trust more than God, or look to for security, identity, or satisfaction instead of God, and that many of our idols do not look evil. They can even be good things. What are some "good things" that can quietly become idols in the lives of believers today? Have you personally experienced a good thing becoming an ultimate thing?
15. The pastor also connected idolatry to a false view of Jesus, warning that it is possible to believe in a Jesus who is not the Jesus of the Bible. What are some ways people shape Jesus into something more comfortable or more culturally acceptable? How do we guard against doing that ourselves?
16. John closes the entire letter with a warning to guard against idols, right after pointing us to Jesus as the true God and eternal life. Why do you think John ends here? What

does this placement tell us about where John believes the greatest ongoing danger lies for believers?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or two of these to discuss as a group or to take home as individual commitments for the week.

For your assurance: If you struggle with doubting your salvation, spend time this week reading through 1 John slowly and noting every place John gives evidence of genuine faith. Ask yourself honestly which of those marks you see in your own life, and let God's Word speak more loudly than your feelings.

For your prayer life: Identify one specific request you have been afraid to bring to God or one you have been holding onto too tightly. Bring it to Him this week in honest prayer, and practice ending that prayer with the words, "Your will is better than mine. I trust you with the answer."

For someone caught in sin: If God brought someone to mind during the sermon, commit to praying for that person every day this week before you talk to anyone else about them. Ask God to open a door for you to encourage them with truth and grace.

For your fight against sin: Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one area of sin you have begun to tolerate or rename rather than confess. Confess it specifically to God this week, and if appropriate, ask a trusted believer to pray with you and hold you accountable.

For your identity: Identify one area where the world has been shaping the way you think more than God's Word has. It might be related to your worth, your purpose, your relationships, or your definition of success. Bring that area back under Scripture this week and let God define it.

For your heart: Honestly ask yourself, what has my heart right now? Name anything that has been competing with Jesus for first place. It does not have to be something sinful. It simply needs to be something that has quietly moved into the space that belongs to God alone. Confess it and ask God to reorder your affections.

CLOSING REFLECTION

John closes this letter the same way he opened it, pointing us to Jesus Christ as the true God and eternal life. Everything he has written has been moving us toward this: that we would know the real thing and never settle for a counterfeit.

Before you close your group time, take a moment to sit quietly and ask yourself this question: If someone asked me today whether I belong to God, would I say "I hope so" or "I know so"? Let your answer be honest, and let it lead you either to deeper confidence or to a genuine conversation with God about where you stand with Him.

Close your time in prayer together, thanking God that He does not ask His children to live in uncertainty, and asking Him to give each person in your group the kind of know-so faith that John wrote this letter to produce.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

1 John 5:13 -- John tells us that he wrote these things to those who believe in the name of the Son of God so that they may know they have eternal life. Reflect on this verse throughout the week and let its purpose sink in: God wants you to know.