

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are.” 1 John 3:1(RSV)

Reasons for suggesting a group Bible Study:

1. My personal experience – In college, when my faith was newly realized, I was allowed to join a home Bible study with, among others, people that were on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. This proved to be an incredibly succulent time in my personal faith and discipleship.

2. It is our birthright:

Ephesians 1:17-19 (NRSV): I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious *inheritance* among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

3. It is what we vow. In the last year we were blessed to *participate* in several baptisms. In those celebrations, we vow to do all in our power to support these persons in their life in Christ, and after reciting what we believe, we vow to “*continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship*, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.” (BCP, p304)

1 John 1:3-4 (NRSV) “we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have *fellowship* with us; and truly our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

4. Other reasons:

- a. Caring fellowship
- b. Encouraged regularity of fellowship/study
- c. Benefit of other people’s insights
- d. All get a chance to participate
- e. No one need be an expert or trained theologian

Reasons for suggesting an *inductive/immersive* Bible study:

1. *Inductive* in the sense that we are not looking for proof-texts to support our pet theories. We are looking for:

- a. Truth (observation)
- b. Meaning (interpretation)
- c. Direction (application)

2. *Immersive* – like plunging into cool waters; staying in it long enough to adapt to the new environment, such that it may develop a healthy craving.

[*Psalm 42:1 (NRSV)* “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.”]

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Background information

Authorship – John, the apostle, the son of Zebedee, and the author of the Gospel of John has from earliest times been identified as the author. Much of the writing style, phrases and expressions would support the claim.

Timing – The presumed date of the letter is somewhere between A.D. 85 and 95, after the writing of John’s gospel.

Circumstances – The letter seems to be written as a reiteration of the faith and a rebuke of an early form of Gnosticism. The gnostic teachings proposed a dualism between spirit and matter; the created world was evil and separate from the world of the spirit. This dualism presumed:

1. Man’s body is matter (therefore evil) as opposed to God, who is spirit, and therefore good.
2. Salvation is escape from the body, not achieved by faith in Jesus, but by special knowledge (*gnosis*).
3. Christ’s true humanity was denied, either by saying that Jesus only appeared to have a body (Docetism) or that the divine Christ only came upon Jesus at his baptism and left before his death (Cerinthianism).
4. The body should be treated harshly, or paradoxically licentiousness might be allowed (since matter was evil, not the breaking of God’s law).

Resources

The NIV Study Bible, New International Version, The Zondervan Corporation, 1985.

New Bible Dictionary, Second Edition, Inter-Varsity Press, 1982.

New Bible Commentary: Revised, Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

David Jackman, *The Message of John’s Letters, Revised Edition*, InterVarsity Press, USA, 1988.

John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964, 1978

John Stott, *Letters of John: Embracing Certainty in Times of Insecurity*, John Stott Bible Studies, InterVarsity Press USA, 2020