

Relationship Reboot

DEVOTIONAL | RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

APRIL 4, 2021

Discussion Starter: How would you describe to a nonbeliever who is open to truth what it means to have a relationship with God?

Key Passage: “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 John 2:28-3:3)

We are Family

The New Testament uses family terms to describe the believer’s relationship with God. God is our heavenly *Father* (Romans 8:15), we are His *children* (Romans 9:8), we enter a relationship with God through *adoption* (Galatians 4:5), and we relate to fellow believers as *brothers and sisters* in Christ—spiritual siblings (Romans 12:1).

Discuss: What family terms do you see are used in our text for today: 1 John 2:28-3:3?

Discuss: How does the fact that God considers believers to be His children in His forever family affect your view of Christianity?

Discuss: How does the use of family terms to describe our relationship with God and with one another make Christianity different from other religions?

Two Benefits of Staying Close to Christ

In our text for today, the apostle John mentions two benefits of abiding—staying close—to Christ:

We have confidence in our relationship with Him.

“...abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence...” (2:28a)

We will not be ashamed of how we are living.

“abide in him...and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.” (2:28b)

Discuss: Why do you think staying close to Christ results in each of these two benefits?

Living like Christ is the Evidence That We Belong to Him

In 2:29, John asserts that when we see someone living like Jesus, we can be confident that the person belongs to Christ and abides in Christ: “*If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*” Of course, practicing righteousness (2:29) does not produce salvation; rather, it is the result of salvation. We do good works to be saved, but because we are already saved (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Discuss: How does your relationship with God motivate you to live righteously—to live like Jesus?

God’s Astonishing Love for Us

In 3:1, John uses a Greek term of exclamation, *ideate*, which means “Look at this!” John is expressing his astonishment that God would love us so much that He makes us His children! John even emphasizes in 3:1 that we are not just *called* God’s children—we really *are* His children: “*and so we are*” (3:1).

Discuss: In John 3:1b, what does John say is the reason the unbelieving world does not understand us?

Jesus’ Resurrection Assures Us That He Will Return to Us

It is at Easter that we pay special attention to the resurrection of Christ. History and Scripture testify that Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and three days later rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Then, 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:11) with the promise to return to us (John 14:3).

In our text for today, the apostle John refers to Christ’s Second Coming as a hopeful time of future transformation when believers will experience a new body and exist forever in the Lord’s presence (3:2), and also as motivation to live pure lives like Christ lived (3:3).

Discuss: John makes the point that we are not yet what we will be (3:2). It is expected that the Christian will increasingly grow in Christ-likeness until that moment when Jesus returns and instantly completes the work and transforms us into His perfect likeness. How would you instruct a new believer to be intentional about growing increasingly in Christ-likeness daily?

For Further Study

The Case for Easter by Lee Strobel

“The Resurrection of Jesus - 7 Facts to Know” article at www.crosswalk.com

Abide in Christ by Andrew Murray