



NG Study Guide: 1 John 3:1-9 “Purify” [4.14.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: The Christian life is a constant battle between a fleshly desire to sin and a spiritual desire to glorify God. God has called believers to live lives that are purified from sin and unrighteousness, and looking to Jesus is the only way to experience victory over sin and live the purified life God has called you to.

In order to be purified you must understand...

I. Why to live pure: your new identity as God’s child (v.1-3)

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

A. You are loved by God (v.1)

Behold what manner of the love the Father has bestowed on us. John appeals to his readers to recognize the magnitude and scope of God’s love in that he would call believers his children. What makes this aspect of God’s love so amazing is the fact that all have rebelled against God by sinning against Him and therefore are utterly undeserving of His love or to be called His children. The Apostle Paul unpacks this same concept in the book of Romans. There, he notes that, because of sin, believers were once enemies of God (Ro 5:10), but that even still, God demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to the Cross (Ro 5:8) and because of Christ’s sacrifice, the believer is adopted as God’s child (Ro 8:14-17). This new identity God sets us apart from the unbelieving world.

B. You have hope in God’s promises (v.2-3)

1. You will be like Him (v.2a)

As a child of God, you know you belong to God and have the hope of eternity with Him. Nonetheless, there is so much we don't know about what it will look like when we go to spend eternity with God. This uncertainty about your eternal experience with God should not serve to frighten you, but rather to excite you as you wait eagerly for the coming day when Jesus will reveal Himself. John tells believers that they will be like Jesus. It's not that we will ever be equal with Jesus, but that we will no longer be imperfect beings broken by sin's limitations, free suffering and sorrow and perfectly satisfied.

2. You will be with Him (v.2b)

Scripture promises us, in many different places, that when Jesus returns we will "see Him as He is". In other words, we will see Jesus face to face and this is what will make our eternal existence in His presence so satisfying.

3. You will be made pure (v.3)

Because we have the expectation of Jesus' return & are aware of the reality we will see Jesus face to face, our lives should be marked by a greater desire for purity. As Christians, we don't primarily live to find satisfaction in this life/ world, because we understand something better is coming. This truth should be followed by a desire to yield to God and allow Him to purify you by making you more like Jesus.

II. How to live pure: your call as God's child (v.4-9)

A. Eliminate sin (v.4-6)

⁴Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

According to v.4, sin is "lawlessness" or rebellion against God's authority. Someone who lives in habitual sin is blatantly ignoring God and living in rebellion. Because all of humanity is guilty of sinful rebellion, we were unfit to save ourselves. God then took saving action on our behalf by sending Jesus to the Cross. Jesus was the only one fit to be our substitute in taking the penalty for sin because He lived a perfect life in our place and then suffered the Cross, also in our place. Jesus, therefore, is the only one who can truly eliminate sin. Just as Jesus was the only one who could ultimately defeat sin with His sacrifice, *abiding* in Jesus is the key to overcoming sin issues in your life as a believer. *Abiding* in Jesus means to rely on Jesus for everything. As a Christian, you must become aware of your dependance on Christ and take the necessary steps to ensure you are abiding in Him.

B. Do not be deceived (v.7)

⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous

To deceive means to be led astray. In John's time, just as today, there were many who were seeking to pervert the truth about Jesus. In order to overcome deception, it's important to remember the fundamental truths of the Gospel. One of these is God's holy nature and His call towards righteous living. In today's society, there are many "false gospels" that would point us away from Jesus and seek to give permission for us to embrace a sinful lifestyle. As believers, we must be on guard against these false messages by remembering who God is and what He has done.

C. Keep the focus on Jesus (v.8-9)

⁸He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the work of the devil. ⁹Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in Him and he cannot sin because he has been born of God.

John reminds us that the ultimate source of sin is the devil, Satan. It's not that we can "blame" Satan for our sin, but we must remain ever aware of his presence and the fact that he is a cunning and intelligent being who is opposed to God's kingdom. However, we must also be aware that Jesus was manifested to defeat Satan and he did so at the Cross. We cannot take the battle against Satan's spiritual powers of darkness into our own hands, because we are not powerful enough to defeat Him on our own. Thus, you must look to Jesus and remember you were 'born of God'. As a believer, you are a new creation in Him (2 Co 5:17). Knowing you are loved, accepted, and eternally secure in salvation helps you to overcome the temptation towards sin. This ensures you that despite the fact you will fail, you can still have a life of continual victory and purity because of God's grace.

Study Guide Qs

Q1: When you think of God "purifying" your life, what comes to mind?

Q2: How do you "abide" in Christ & how has this helped you overcome sin?

Q3: What are some ways people try to purify themselves apart from Jesus?

Q4: How can you better focus on Jesus in this season & how do you hope to experience God's purifying work in your life?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

Digging Deeper

- 1. Read John 15:1-17 and discuss what it means to abide in Christ. What did you learn about God, yourself, and how you can better depend on God's power in your life?**
- 2. Try and identify some of the 'false gospels' in our culture which promote an accepting/ embracing attitude towards sin. What is the problem with this in light of the True Gospel & how can you respond as a Christian?**

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?**
- 2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?**
- 3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:**

As the weather becomes warmer and the days grow longer, look for more opportunities to be outside. Take walks, take your kids to the local park as this will create opportunities for conversations and interactions with your neighbors.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity** to get to know one another better.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.
 - b. How would each of us like to apply the truths we learned to our life?** This question may be answered simply by completing the study guide. Nevertheless, it will generally be beneficial for leaders to encourage each participant to conclude the study by considering how he or she desires to apply the lessons learned.