

## Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service and in particular with the Congregational Bible passage.

## Week beginning Sunday 6 May 2018 Children of God

Pray that we would recognise the wonderful privilege to be counted as children of God in Jesus and that we would appreciate the need to act in line with the responsibilities it brings. Pray that we would be able to demonstrate our status by loving God and our neighbour as we love ourselves

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). 1 John 5: 1-6.

Background It is worth bearing in mind John's concern, expressed in the earlier chapters of the letter, for believers' faith to be worked out in practical terms. He sees a very close correlation between belief and practice. In essence, we can assume that he could not envisage true believers NOT demonstrating the reality of their faith in love and practical service towards others, particularly those who were facing hardship. Clearly, the vast injustices that exist in the world are a clarion call for a fresh appreciation of such teaching – but it is not easy!

Possible questions/points to consider

1. What do you understand by the word “family”? What does it mean to you? How important? How does family figure in your life? How would people see your interaction? How might your understanding/experience of family differ from others? How do we cope with the different understandings?
2. In 1 John, there is a lot of talk about child/children of God. What lessons are we to take from this? The key is that we are children of God through our love for Jesus, God's Son. Why is it so important to focus on our bond with Jesus? We tend to major on what we believe and how we express that belief and clearly that is important. However, how might we need to change to put more emphasis on the practical outworking of our faith?
3. John can't really envisage a child of God “turning their back” on another child of God. Yet, the fact that there are so many people across the world living in abject poverty and in conditions of injustice suggests that many of us are failing to love our brothers and sisters. It is not a comfortable position to be in and we can't solve the problem overnight but what steps can we take (must we take??) to bring faith and practice into sync and demonstrate our love for God and our neighbour?
4. Although the good news of Jesus would have been spreading geographically by the time John's letter was written there would not have been a fully worked up understanding of the world Church. Nowadays the vast majority of Christians live in countries in Asia, Africa and South America – not the traditional heartlands of Christianity. How might we gain a better understanding of the worldwide nature of the Church and learn, in particular, from Christians overseas who are facing challenges unknown to us?
5. John assures us that we will have victory over the world though not in any sense of power or might. We have to be honest about the challenges facing Christians but taking account of the worldwide nature of our fellowship we need to see that the Church is growing! How might we take encouragement and apply lessons to our setting where the Church is on the defensive and where its reputation is waning?
6. Anything else arising from the passage or the service?

Prayer Thank you Lord, that we belong to a worldwide family linked together in your love. Deepen our love for you and for our sisters and brothers wherever they live and help us together to respond to the challenges to tell and live out the good news in our communities. Help us to draw strength from you and from one another so that we might be more effective in your service. Amen.