

Focus on 1 John 3:1–7

WHAT is important to know?

— From “*Exegetical Perspective*,” David L. Bartlett

One of the main themes in our passage is the assurance of the present and the promise of the future: verses 1–4. In the Gospel of John, which is the source book for this epistle’s theology, eternal life is understood both as the promise of life with God beyond death and as genuine, fruitful, Spirit-guided life in the present (see the dual assurances of John 11:25–26). Our passage also claims that the relationship between believers and God has both present and a future, eschatological dimension. In the present believers have the assurance that they are God’s children.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “*Theological Perspective*,” Ronald Cole-Turner

The source of our oddness is the love of God that makes us into God’s children. Knowing that we are loved by such a love, confessing it and consenting to it, we agree to be made different, to let ourselves enter a process of transformation that uproots us from our natural identity and reconfigures the fundamental definitions of our lives. Our birth certificate states our natural identity. Our baptism certificate declares our true identity. By God’s love, we are no longer strangers, orphans lost in the cosmos, without hope or direction except for our own imagination and self-rescue. We are loved, claimed, and redefined as nothing less than God’s children.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “*Pastoral Perspective*,”
Claudia Highbaugh

The most difficult part of this passage is working to open minds to a central kind of relationship that does not define itself by difference. In this text, cooperation is the goal; difference in name and culture and place is a distraction to the goal of right relationship. Children of God attend to right relationships. In the early church, people formed tight communities based on their faith in Jesus. Our job is to work at this sense of relationship one to another, and sometimes that makes us go back to start over.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “*Homiletical Perspective*,”
William L. Self

The opening chapters of this letter make it clear that Christians do sin. We not only need to have a clear understanding of God’s grace and an experience with that grace through Jesus; we also need to know the power and destructive nature of sin. No compromise can be made with evil. This text makes it clear, and our churches should take note. The journey to the center of the faith proclaims without compromise John’s way of making believers stronger and protecting them against the destructive message of those who would lead them astray. We would do well to learn from him.