

Module 21: 1 John 5:10-12

Group Exercise 1

What title do you suggest for the paragraph in 1 John 5:10-12? What words do you see as important in this paragraph?

Group Exercise 2

Based on verses 10-12, place these three terms in order of which leads to which: belief, life, testimony. (They are listed here in alphabetical order.) Is there more than one correct answer?

Group Exercise 3

List all the points of agreement you find between verses 6-12 and John 20:31.

1) Observations and Observational Questions that guide Interpretation

- a) Read 1 John 5:1-12 for context.
- b) What words do you see as important, either because they are repeated often or they are part of a key teaching in verses 5:10-12?
- c) What title do you suggest for the paragraph starting in verse 5:10?
- d) Transition – links to previous verses
 - i) Immediate context:
 - (1) “one who believes” (10) (cf. 1, 5)
 - (2) “Son of God” (10, 11, 12) (cf. 5, 9)
 - (3) “testimony” (10, 11) (cf. 6, 7, 9)
 - ii) Book context:
 - (1) “Him a liar” (10) (cf. 1:10)
 - (2) “life” (11) (cf. 1:1, 2; 2:16, 25; 3:14, 15, 16; 5:11, 12, 13, 16, 20)
 - (3) “Son” (10, 11, 12) (cf. 1:3, 7; 2:22, 23, 24; 3:8, 23; 4:9, 10, 14, 15; 5:5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20)
 - iii) How can we come to faith in the divine-human Person of Jesus? (Stott)
 - (1) Faith depends on testimony
 - (2) Reasonableness of belief is based on the validity of the testimony
 - (a) Nature of the testimony (threefold divine witness to the Son, with God behind these three) (6-9)
 - (b) Results of belief in the testimony (10-12)
- e) “The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself;” (10a)
 - i) “believes in the Son”
 - (1) Present-tense participle
 - (2) “It involves not merely an acceptance of the truthfulness of the message but also a personal trust in or committal to the one to whom witness is borne.” (Hiebert)
 - (3) Literally, “believing into the Son”
 - (4) Faith pictured as “moving toward and entering into union with the one who is the object of his faith.” (Hiebert)

- ii) “has the testimony in himself”
 - (1) The content of “the testimony”
 - (a) Is now possessed by the believer
 - (b) Is the same reality witnessed to by “the Spirit and the water and the blood” (8)
 - (c) Is also confirmed by God as His own witness (9)
 - (2) “Following his regeneration there develops in the believer the growing inner conviction that the things that the Spirit has borne witness to are true and that they are true in his own life.” (Hiebert)
 - (3) Romans 8:16, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”
 - (4) The believer “is given a yet deeper assurance by the inward witness of the Spirit that he was right to trust in Christ” (Stott)
- iii) “Testimony is thus both the cause and the consequence of belief, and belief is a stepping-stone between God’s first and further testimony.” (Stott)
- f) “the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.” (10b)
 - i) “does not believe God”
 - (1) Present-tense participle
 - (2) The use of the negative *me*, instead of *ou*, “lays emphasis on the character rather than the fact of nonbelief” (Brooke)
 - (3) Not completely parallel with 10a
 - (a) does not believe “God” versus “in the Son of God”
 - (b) Not just a failure to receive the Son, but a refusal “to accept the Father’s testimony concerning His Son.” (Hiebert)
 - ii) “has made Him a liar”
 - (1) The unbeliever’s rejection of God’s witness is not an acceptable option. “He does not have the freedom to take or leave it without obligation, for God gives him this testimony with royal authority.” (Hiebert quoting Kistemaker)
 - (2) “Unbelief is not a misfortune to be pitied; it is a sin to be deplored. Its sinfulness lies in the fact that it contradicts the word of the one true God and thus attributes falsehood to Him.” (Stott)
 - (3) See also 1:10 for another example of making God “a liar”.
 - iii) “because he has not believed”
 - (1) The negative *ou* denotes the actual fact of his rejection of God’s witness. (Hiebert)
 - (2) Perfect tense
 - (a) Indicates a past “crisis of choice” (Westcott)
 - (b) Stresses the continuing result of his negative response (Hiebert)
 - (c) “The unbeliever . . . forfeits the possibility of receiving any further testimony from God because he has rejected the first” (Stott)
- g) “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (11)
 - i) “And”
 - (1) Another connected and important matter concerning the testimony of God.

- (2) Previously, in verse 9, the testimony of God is that He testified concerning His Son.
- (3) Now, in verse 11, the testimony is that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
- ii) “has given”
 - (1) Aorist tense stresses that God made this gift available. When?
 - (a) Historical career of Jesus (1:2; John 10:10, 28; 17:2)
 - (b) Our conversion (3:14)
 - (c) Maybe both. Stott suggests this. Hiebert declares this.
 - (d) My leaning is that “has given” refers specifically to our conversion (and not to Jesus’ historical career on earth), while the following phrase “and this life is in His Son” adds the notion of the Son being the source of eternal life and may imply His incarnation.
 - (2) “Our part is but to receive God’s bounty pressed upon us in Christ; it is merely to consent to the strong purpose of His love, to allow Him to ‘work in us to will and to work, on behalf of His good pleasure’ (Philippians 2:13)”. (Findlay)
- iii) “us” – John once again includes himself as one of the believers
- iv) “eternal life”
 - (1) emphatic in the sentence
 - (2) “the record is that it is eternal life which God gave us in giving His Son”
 - (3) Three truths about eternal life (Stott)
 - (a) “It is not a prize which we have earned, but an undeserved gift.”
 - (b) It is found in Christ
 - (c) It is a present possession
- h) “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (12)
 - i) “Eternal life is in His Son and may be found nowhere else” (Stott)
 - ii) “It is as impossible to have life without having Christ as it is to have Christ without thereby having life also. This is because the Son is the life (1:2; John 11:25; 14:6).” (Stott)
 - iii) The negative *me* “serves to generalize the portrait of this individual as representative of his class.” (Hiebert)
 - iv) Position of “the life”
 - (1) After the verb in 12a.
 - (2) Before the verb in 12b, emphatically stating the life as out of reach for the one who does not have the Son.
- i) Verses 6-12 agree with and elaborate on John 20:31.
 - i) The way to life is faith.
 - ii) The way to faith is testimony.
- j) What other observations do you see? (Words, grammar, construction, history, content, etc.)

2) Interpretation

The one personally trusting in the Son of God, moving toward and entering into union

with Him, possesses the same inner conviction of the reality of God's Son about which the Spirit, the water, and the blood bear witness, the same testimony of those three also being proclaimed by the Father. The one not personally trusting God in essence accuses Him of being a liar, because in the past he did not accept the truth of God's declaration about His Son, with the ongoing result of alienation from God and forfeiture of further testimony from Him.

And here is another connected and important matter concerning God's testimony. God gave us unending life at our conversion and this life is found in His Son Jesus and is also our present possession.

He who is in union with the Son has this specific eternal life. This life is not the possession of him who is not in union with the Son of God.

3) Applications

- a) Considering belief, life, and testimony, what led you to become a child of God? Did they occur in a specific order? Does your experience validate the order taught in verses 10-12? (Can you think of other verses which refer to the order of these items?)
- b) How can you use these items to reassure you in your daily walk if you get discouraged?
- c) How can you use these items and their order when sharing your faith with unbelievers?
- d) What other application do you have?