



theme: To Whom Do We Belong?
materials: Candle, matches, bibles

The theme for this month of cells is belonging. How does one belong to a group? To a church? To Christ? Are there those in your midst who feel that they do not belong? Do you need to believe anything or behave in any way in order to belong to a Church or cell group?

welcome

What signals the beginning of the Christmas season for you?

interact

Coming up on Christmas it would be a good time to celebrate the lighting of advent candles together. Lighting candles symbolises the coming of light into the world (as Jesus is the Light of the world.) Get four big candles, and light a new one each week.

This first week, have someone read out Luke 1:5-25, the story of the foretelling of John the Baptist. This is a story about the one who would prepare the way of the Lord Jesus.

Remind everyone that John the Baptist's message was one of preparation. He told people to prepare their hearts for the coming of the Lord, by repenting of their sins. As you light the first candle, have everyone ask the Lord to prepare their hearts for the coming of the Lord, for the time of Christmas. Ask if there is any darkness that the light of the Lord needs to shine upon in your hearts, any lack of faith as Zechariah displayed.

You might like to sing a Christmas carol in your group at the end, or maybe a song like "Light of the World."

read

Read 1 John 1:5-10, 2:1-27

How do you know that you belong to a group of people, be it a club, a church, or a group of friends?

How does someone belong to your cell, or your youth group?

What does it mean to "belong to Christ"?

What is the difference between belonging to the world and belonging to Christ?

What do you think of the instruction to not love the world or anything in the world (1 John 2:15-17)? What do you think that means?

Is belonging to the Church the same thing as belonging to Christ?

If yes, why are there people in the Church who don't seem to do the will of God?

If no, what is the point of the Church? Do you need to bother with other believers at all?

Who is described as an "anti-christ" in this passage?

Read 1 John 2:1-2 again. What is your response to this? What can you say to Christ in love and worship for what He has done for us?



think

What do we do with this passage? How do we apply it to our own lives, so that we can know we belong to Christ, and so that we can spread the knowledge of him? Start with 1 John 2:9-11. Are you blinded by hate, or do you show you belong to Christ by loving your brother and living in the light? Is there anyone you have not been showing love towards? Start by asking the Lord to help you change that this week.

live & pray

Each morning this week take a moment to light a candle in your room when you wake up. Do this to remind yourself that the light of God has come into the darkness of the world, and that you want to belong to the author of this light, Jesus Christ. Ask Jesus everyday to reveal any darkness in you, and ask Him to shine His light upon it.

useful resources

Website: <http://www.cresourcei.org/cyadvent.html> – A website on Advent

Website/Painting: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Light_of_the_World - information on a painting entitled "Light of the World."

leader's guide

This passage begins the exploration in 1 John of what it means to belong to Christ, as opposed to belonging to the world. The essence of belonging to Christ is belief in Jesus as the Christ and the son of God, obedience to His commands, avoidance of sin, and loving your brothers (in the sense of other believers).

This is simply what it means to be citizens in the Kingdom of God; it doesn't make sense to say you follow Christ if you don't believe, don't obey, continue to sin, or hate your brother. If you do, it means you belong to the world. (For instance, this passage calls anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ an antichrist).

You can't just be an independent – you either belong to Christ or to the world. The world and everything in it, which will pass away, should not be "loved" by those who belong to Christ. This does not mean we shouldn't love people; 1 John is quite clear that we should. It means our loyalty and devotion must be absolutely devoted to Christ, not "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does." (v.16). It means we don't buy into the world's system or values, because they are opposed to the Kingdom of God.

The chapters in 1 John, the whole book really, repeat the themes of belief, obedience, righteousness, and love over and over again to bring emphasis to them.

There is a suggestion in verses 18-19 that those who left the fellowship showed that they did not belong either to the fellowship or to Christ. To become a Christian is to become a member of the Body of Christ. The Church is not perfect, individual Christians are not perfect, so we see evidence of people not obeying perfectly the commands of Christ or the instruction to love each other. Thank God for the grace shown in the words "But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." The rest of 1 John makes it clear that we should never take that grace lightly, but we mustn't forget also that this is our one hope for salvation.