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# Speak of the devil

## 1 John: Confidence and faith - Session 5

*To show us what life looks like in God's family - from 1 John: 3:7-10.*

**Q1. In what ways, for better or for worse, are you starting to take on the mannerisms of your parents or siblings?**

### **1 John 3:7-10**

*7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*

Note: John is writing about two groups of people: the children of God, and the children of the devil. Each group has a certain family likeness.

**Q2. What distinguishes the children of God?**

· They do what is right (1 John 3:7, 10), they don't sin (1 John 3:9), they love each other (1 John 3:10).

**Q3. 'No one who is born of God will continue to sin' (1 John 3:9). Does that mean followers of Jesus will never sin?**

· Not at all! It is the whole family likeness thing...it means sin is not on in God's family...it doesn't mean it doesn't happen – it means it shouldn't happen. For example, a parent might admonish their child by saying 'we don't tell lies in our family'. Does that mean the child never tells another lie? (...or the parent for that matter!). In God's family his children know they shouldn't sin, but there will be times when they slip up and they do. When they do slip up, they need to ask for forgiveness.

**Q4. What distinguishes the children of the devil?**

· They do what is sinful (1 John 3:8, 9), they don't love each other (1 John 3:10). The children of the devil look quite normal (they don't have pointy ears and a pitch fork!)

## Q5. How do we know that the devil even exists – or that the devil has children?

· The existence of the devil in this world isn't something we can work out by human observation. If we think evil exists (some atheists will question whether evil exists) then there needs to be some accounting for it – but that doesn't automatically imply the existence of a malevolent spiritual being (devil). The same point can be made about the devil having children.

“Just because I don't choose to be a child of God doesn't make me a child of the devil”.

No one wants to be told they are a child of the devil! Here's what City Bible Forum staff member Ian Powell thought upon first hearing this:

“I was a happy arrogant atheist. The death of a friend by drowning, made me realise that I could just as easily die as Jack had, and so I could quickly be wherever he was, wherever dead people went. Even I knew you are a long time dead. I wasn't particularly frightened of death, but I knew that if my Christian friends were right, that there was something after death that was terrifying – Hell. So I thought I should spend some time checking it out.

After a few months of arguing with the smartest Christians I could find, I was slowly, reluctantly persuaded that there was a God of some sort, behind this magnificent world. A bit of reading about Buddhism and Hinduism left me unconvinced about either of those as holding the truth about God. I was left for a few months, sort of knowing that the Jesus thing was almost certainly true, but really not wanting to face it and not wanting to give my life up to Jesus, as I liked my life of ease and selfishness. I had bought a New Testament, which I kept hidden under my mattress so my older brother wouldn't see it and give me a hard time – I read it as I went to sleep most nights.

I was reading through 1 John. It was clear from that book, that to be a child of God you had to believe in Jesus, love others and be determined not to sin too much. I continued thinking I was like Switzerland – neutral, sort of pro God but not committed to Jesus. Pretty ambivalent when it came to my sin (because I liked my life of ease and selfishness). Then I got to 1 John 3:10 “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother”.

The effect of reading these words were like someone poured icy cold water through my ear into my head and into my spirit or soul. I suddenly saw that since I was happy to just go on sinning, that it was no big deal to me, then as far as God was concerned I was not on His side, but on the devil's side. That I was either a child of God or of the devil – though I was no Satanist or anything crazy like that, God clearly took the view since I was not seriously for Him, and not serious about my sin, then there was only one position I could be in – I was a child of the devil. Yikes.

1 John 3:8 suddenly had a new meaning. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work”. I knew at that moment that if I were a child of the devil, I would be one that God's Son would ultimately destroy.

I was like a man, enjoying himself in a home, when the police and the bomb disposal team came hammering on my door, urging me to get out as the house that was soon to

blow up with a large amount of TNT under the floorboards. Though I liked being in the house, and did not really want to go out – going out was the only half sensible thing to do.

So I decided I had better become a Christian – become a child of God. I had to cease living as if God was not real and rightfully in charge. I needed to accept God's offer of forgiveness in Jesus. I began to start taking my sin seriously (obeying God will always be a work in progress with me).

It was reading 1 John 3:8,10 that I changed sides, changed families, changed destinies – and I thank God for it.

**Q6. John writes: *'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work'* (1 John 3:8). How does Jesus the Son of God move people out of the devil's family?**

(Note: It has something to do with 1 John 2:2, *'He (Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.'* and 1 John 1:7, *'But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin'.)*

- Jesus Christ by his death on the cross has atoned for sin – been the sacrifice to pay for sin (1 John 2:2).
- If someone's sin is atoned for, then they have relationship with God and become his child. Moving into God's family means the devil has lost one of his children, and his work is destroyed in this way.
- Followers of Jesus don't move in and out of God's family, depending on whether they have had a good run with obedience or a bad run with sin. If they trust Jesus (despite their sin) then they remain children of God, and Jesus' death continues to purify them from the consequences of their sin (1 John 1:7).

Getting back to John's letter ...

**1 John 5:13**

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

Note: By "know" John means that his readers might have greater confidence and assurance in what they believe.

**Q7. How does this section on the family likeness help with their confidence, do you think?**

· As followers of Jesus, if they are taking on more of the family likeness – doing what is right, not sinning, loving others – this is evidence that their faith is real (personally true for them rather than evidence that the Christian faith is absolutely true)...this is confidence-building.

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