

# A Reminder of Good News

1 John Series #6

1 Jn 2:12-14

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## INTRODUCTION

### A. It's interesting how we use categories to help us understand or explain things

1. Putting things into categories gives us a way of organizing or arranging information so that it is more useable
2. It is also possible to access that information more quickly, to retrieve it for some important or practical use
3. Categories may be simple or complex, but usually the more simple and easy to use we make our categories, the more useful they really are
4. There are many ways to create categories
  - a. we could use colors and organize things by a color code
  - b. we could use numbers
  - c. we could identify information based on its type or use
  - d. we could organize information in thousands of different ways
5. We even categorize people
  - a. the tall from the short
  - b. the thin from the fat
  - c. the kind from the mean-spirited
  - d. the motivated and productive from the lazy an incompetent
6. One humorous effort to categorize also illustrates our inventiveness
  - a. several years ago, there were some people categorized by the name yippies – these were sort of a drop-out category
  - b. then there were the yuppies – young, upwardly mobile professionals, who traded the beads and sandals of the yippies for the preppie look of comfortable success
  - c. recently I heard another term that may have been around a while, but I've missed it – woopies – stands for well-off, older people!
  - d. all you have to do is use the term yippie, yuppie, or now woopie and you're able to discuss an entire category of people

### B. Another way to use categories is to use age groups

1. You sometimes hear people speak about the 20 somethings, or the 30 somethings
2. One man illustrated his growing spiritual maturity this way:  
When I turned 30 I wanted to build a large church. At 40 I wanted to learn how to preach. But at 50 I want to know God deeply. -- Truman Dollar in Fundamentalist Journal (Nov. 1987). Christianity Today, Vol. 32, no. 5

**C. In our study of John's first letter, we find that he too, made use of some categories**

1. 1 Jn 2:12-14
2. We will focus on these verses this morning, for there is great encouragement here
3. John has given us a useful tool to organize and retrieve some vitally important information

**D. Though not really a summary of what he has said, it does give us a way of remembering  
The gospel of Jesus Christ and of recalling the security of its promise**

**I. TO THE CHILDREN, THE FATHERS, AND THE YOUNG MEN**

**A. The first thing that stands out about this section are the categories**

1. Many scholars think that these verses are written in a poetic form rather than simple narrative, and most likely this is the case
2. The difficult thing is to understand the use of the categories
  - a. did John just list three obvious age-group related categories?
  - b. did he, as some suggest, use one term (little children) to refer to all believers and two others (fathers and young men) to divide all believers into two sub-groups?
  - c. is his use of categories more spiritual in nature than just age or physical maturity?
  - d. the fact is, it's not entirely clear

**B. There are some problems with understanding these categories as simple age based divisions**

1. John frequently used the term "little children" to refer to his readers
  - a. seven times in this letter, John uses that term to address the believers who were his audience
  - b. it's obviously a term of endearment, not simply a category to put people into
2. Since the section is poetic in form, it's likely that a literal meaning detracts from the real message
3. The specific blessings mentioned to each of the three groups, is not really limited to to that group – the blessings are, in fact, available to each one
4. The order is not logical – in fact, it's the only order of these terms that is "out of order"
5. We might also ask, are such blessings as John mentioned only for males, not females?
6. On the other hand, perhaps John is using these categories to emphasize something very important

**C. The terms are very good descriptions of all believers in one sense, and of various stages of Spiritual maturity in another sense**

1. Perhaps the categories were simply intended to gain attention to the information
2. It's the information in the categories that is important

**D. What would be important information to anyone appropriately described by these categories**

1. Think about the terms used
  - a. little children – John's obvious choice of a term of endearment, a word of tenderness, love and concern
  - b. fathers – a word that brings to mind people of maturity, responsibility, and leadership
  - c. young men – a term that brings to mind vitality, youth, energy, those who are in the midst of life and taking it on to build and succeed
2. The truth is that all believers are in one or more of those categories, and each one brings it's own need for information to help us with our faith

## **II. A LOOK AT THE BLESSINGS**

### **A. Little children**

1. Your sins have been forgiven; you know the Father
2. For any of God's messengers, whether apostle, prophet, evangelist, or teacher, there is no more important message when talking to the body of Christ
  - a. too often the messages we hear fail to proclaim the truth
  - b. too often all we hear is gloom and doom and failure
  - c. it's one thing to warn people of the dangers of sin, and to make them aware of all the varied traps of Satan, but it's another to make it sound like there is no hope at all
3. I've got some good news for you this morning – if you are a child of God in Christ then your sins have been forgiven, you know the Father
4. Do not be moved away from this foundation
  - a. Galatians 1:8-10 -- But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. NASB95
  - b. once you have obeyed the truth, do allow anyone to confuse you and derail your faith
  - c. Acts 4:12 -- "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." NASB95

## B. Fathers

1. You know him who has been from the beginning; you know him who has been from the beginning
  - a. it's the same thing said twice
  - b. you get the idea that it is an important statement, deserving emphasis
2. Perhaps this is an ingenious way of saying something that the spiritually mature need to know
  - a. we sometimes think that spiritual maturity is locked up in ever increasing knowledge about God, about Jesus Christ, about spiritual things
  - b. no one would want to suggest that we ought not grow in those things
  - c. however, John specifically avoids any suggestion that spiritual maturity is based on anything other than knowing more deeply, that which is already known
3. William Barclay
  - a. "To know God was not merely to know him as the philosopher knows him; it was to know him as a friend knows him."
  - b. "When John spoke of the increasing knowledge of God, he did not mean that the Christian would become an ever more learned theologian; he meant that throughout the years he would become more and more intimately friendly with God."
4. We have a terrific need to understand this point in our own time
  - a. too often spiritual maturity is measured by one's ability to make the right theological argument, but not by one's ability to walk with God
  - b. do not ever think that those two things are one and the same, for they are not
  - c. what we need in our world are some "fathers" who truly know Jesus Christ, the one who has been from the beginning, to remember who they know, and to know him better with each passing year

## C. Young men

1. You have overcome the evil one; you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one
2. The obvious emphasis is on overcoming the evil one
  - a. John personifies the conflict – it's not just that the young men have overcome evil, but they have overcome the evil one!
  - b. but even young men, full of strength and vigor, need help
  - c. Isaiah 40:30-31 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. NASB95

3. Ephesians 6:10-17 -- Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. NASB95

## CONCLUSION

### A. Essentially, John has provided a reminder of the gospel of Jesus

1. Your sins have been forgiven and you know the Father
2. You know him who has been from the beginning, and you are getting to know him even more as you walk with him
3. You are strong in the word of God and have overcome the evil one

### B. We sometimes think ours is a different reality

1. "Well, I just don't feel like this at all"
2. "You don't know what I'm going through and how terribly I've failed"
3. "But I'm so confused and full of doubt"
4. To all who would say such things -- who do you think John is writing this to?
  - a. if his readers didn't have the same struggles as you, he wouldn't have a need to write such things
  - b. the truth is he wrote this, putting it into helpful categories, to give us a reminder of the good news

### C. These things can be true about you today

1. Obey the gospel
2. Remember what you put your faith in, if you're already a Christian

### D. Invitation