

INTRO

- What activity/place brings you a sense of peace and rest?

READ

1 John 3:18-24

REFLECT & RESPOND

For John's audience, they were in a real crisis. He writes to assure them of what an authentic Christian is and that they indeed have such a relationship with God. In other words, he helps put their hearts at rest.

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

By now, we've seen John repeatedly come back to 3 tests for authentic faith:

- *Truth*—we need to receive Jesus as he reveals himself to us, not what we think about him.
- *Obedience*—our faith is evidenced by our actions, how we live our lives.
- *Love*—selfless, sacrificial love for one another.

Qu: which test has been the most challenging for you?

Read 3:23. John makes Christianity sound so simple: believe in Jesus and love one another.

Qu: Are there ways you tend to overcomplicate or add to what it means to follow Jesus?

Simple? Yes. Easy? No! Oftentimes, our hearts condemn us. John anticipates this. Our conscience is like an internal moral guide, but is often conflicted. Rom 2:15 tells us our conflicted conscience will accuse or even excuse us.

A HEART THAT EXCUSES

"What the heart trusts, the mind justifies, the emotions desire, and the will carries out. Everything follows the heart." — Tim Keller

Sometimes, our hearts will excuse us from not doing what we should (sins of omission) or doing what we shouldn't (sins of commission).

A HEART THAT ACCUSES

Many sincere Christians battle with condemnation: an internal accusation that they don't measure up or are not authentic.

Both an accusing and excusing heart make for a heart of unrest before God and we lose confidence in our relationship with Him (3:21). (Note: our hearts should be *convicted* but not condemned)

A HEART AT REST

Read 3:20 again.

Qu: in what does our ultimate assurance rest?

That God is greater than our hearts and knows everything means your human heart is not the final standard of judgement or mercy; God is. In other words, you are **fully known & deeply loved**. God's love toward you is the key to being freed from condemnation, full of confidence before Him, able to fulfill His commands:

"Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom 13:10)

It's Christ's love **for you**, then Christ's love **through you**. This is the key to an ongoing authentic walk with Jesus.

Qu: how has the authentic series challenged your understanding of what it means to be a Christian?

PRAY

- Pray that each one would enjoy the simplicity of loving God and one another in a refreshing new way.