

IN WHICH CATEGORY ARE YOU
(1 John 2:12-14)

I. Little children.

- A. The first group addressed is little children.
- B. He uses a different word for children each time.
 - 1. There is a lot of speculation about why this may be the case.
 - 2. However, he uses these same two words throughout the book (2:18 is the second word; 2:28 is the first).
 - 3. It just seems that he uses the two interchangeably.
- C. Who are these little children to whom he writes?
 - 1. They must be Christians because their sins are forgiven.
 - 2. They know the Father - only way that God is Father is if they have become Christians.
 - a. It is true that God is the Father of all in a general sense by creation.
 - b. However, that is never talked about in 1 John.
- D. It seems that the little children refer to new converts.
- E. More than likely, their sins being forgiven and knowing the Father are two ways of saying the same thing.
 - 1. Only those who are forgiven know the Father.
 - 2. Only those who know the Father are forgiven.
- F. The words "are forgiven" are written in a tense that shows past action with continuing results..
 - 1. It carries the idea that they had been forgiven and still are forgiven of their past sins.
 - 2. Immature Christians need reminding of this important fact.
 - a. Immature Christians are more carnal minded than mature Christians.
 - b. Therefore, they have the tendency to forget spiritual things and worry over past sins.
 - 3. John reminds them, and those today who are new converts, babes in Christ, that they have been forgiven and will always be forgiven of those sins committed before conversion.
- G. I have never met a Christian who I consider mature to worry over past sins for which they have asked forgiveness and truly repented.
 - 1. The reason is they have a great faith in God's willingness and ability to forgive.
 - 2. Immature or new Christians have not yet gotten to that point.
- H. Thus, they need reminding and encouraging that God has forgiven their sins because of Christ's redemptive work and their obedience to the word of God.

II. Young men.

- A. Another question that some have now comes up: Is John only referring to males here?
 - 1. I don't believe that is the case at all.

2. Before we got so politically correct, male terms were used regardless of gender when referring to a group.
 3. That is how John describes this second category?
- B. I am taking these out of the order we find them but putting them in order by categories.
- C. This stage is seems to be where one has grown a great deal in knowledge and faith but not to the highest levels of maturity.
- D. This group is told that they have overcome the evil one.
1. Evil one is a reference to Satan.
 2. John is not saying that they are sinlessly perfect.
 - a. He has said if we believe this we are liars.
 - b. He means that they have reached a level of faith where they won't get caught up in youthful lusts and things such as this.
 - c. The word "overcome" means to maintain ones cause.
 - d. Through the battles new converts face, if they come through them, the have maintained their cause in the face of Satan's attacked and gained maturity.
- E. How do they make it through these battles: strength.
- F. From where does this strength come: God's word abiding in them.
1. This is why Peter tells his readers to desire God's word like a newborn does his milk.
 2. The Psalmist said that keeping God's word in his heart kept him from sin (Ps 119:11).
- G. One writer had this to say: "When a babe in Christ feeds upon the milk of the Word, making good use of the cleansing blood of Christ, remaining in fellowship with the Father and sharing in eternal life, it will not be long before they enter" this stage of young men.

III. **Fathers.**

- A. Again, this is a general reference to all of this group not to just the males of the church that fall into this group.
- B. This seems to refer to those Christians who have reached the highest level of spiritual maturity.
- C. It is a term that suggests some things:
1. This group has been in and passed through many storms in life which strengthened their faith.
 2. There is a great reliance on God in this person.
 3. They have brought others to Christ.
- D. Those in this group have come to have a deep and lasting knowledge of Jesus, the One from the beginning.
- E. What is the difference in the little children knowing the Father and the fathers knowing the Son?
1. To be honest, I don't know for sure.
 2. It may be that it is with a study of God's Word and conversion by it we come to know God.

3. And then it is with a continued study and weathering of storms that we learn to walk as Christ walked as John has already commanded (2:6).
4. Peter commanded that we grow in the knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18).
5. This only comes with maturity.