

1 JOHN

Section 1 – 12 weeks

- 01 – Touch Jesus 1:1
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This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

Most Bible scholars believe John was the last of the original apostles to die. It is accepted by most that the letters we know as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John were written some 60 years after the death of Christ. Believing John was about 20 years old when he was following Jesus as a disciple, John would have been in his early 80's when he wrote these letters.

As with any serious investigation – it seems important to hear first hand from the last living eye witness to an incident. So, in this sense – it is important to read what John wrote.

At this particular time – the church was being infiltrated by the teachings of Gnosticism. The Holy Spirit – speaking through John – addresses some of the false teachings of the Gnostics. There are still some today who teach the same kinds of things that the Gnostics were teaching in those days. So that makes these little letters of John relevant for us today.

The Gnostics were teaching that Jesus Christ was ONLY spirit – that he did not have a “real” physical body. This is a part of the Gnosticism that is still being taught today. The Gnostics would admit that Jesus was God, But they would argue that He was not actually, physically man, Instead, they would teach that He was some kind of pseudo-physical phantom. John says, “I heard Him! I saw Him! I studied Him! I touched Him!”

And what's the big deal about such a testimony? Let's take a look into this 1st letter of John and see.

Read 1 John 1:1 and make notes:

“That which was” from the beginning:
That - which was – “He” which was the Word himself
Which - was - Namely, with the Father
From the beginning - from eternity,
being equivalent with, "in the beginning," John 1:1.

The beginning John wrote of:
Some argue it is the beginning of this world. Some teach it is the beginning of Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 - the beginning that was before there was anything, when all there existed was God.

This can produce some interesting discussion – but either way it doesn’t change the message in this passage. If we get too bogged down in this argument, it can prevent us from seeing the message that is here for us.

The beginning of John 1:1 is profound: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John takes us back to this time in eternity past, to meet this One which was from the beginning.

Jesus did not “begin” at our world’s beginning – He already “was” when our world began. John said his subject is eternal - and therefore - is God, because He existed before all else, and He is the source and basis of the existence of all things.

“which we”

Remember after the resurrection in the upper room with Thomas. Thomas was given permission to put his hands on Jesus; Jesus had a real physical body and John observed it. John speaks of events occurring 60 years earlier as if they happened yesterday. John’s mind is clear, his witness is valid and his testimony is true.

“Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled:”

So in John’s desire to impart the process of real fellowship, he states “our hands have handled.”

This is a direct reference to Luke 24:39 and John 20:27.

Read Luke 24:39 and John 20:27 and make notes:

This is not Jesus' appearing to Thomas. This is when Jesus appeared to the disciples. If all we read is the text in Luke – we can get the idea that the disciples didn't touch Jesus when He invited them to do so. We might think they just stood there in awe and wonder – sort of dumbfounded. And I am sure some must have done just that.

But in 1 John verse 1 - John says, “our hands have touched.” This simple detail is very important! Had John only testified that he had seen Jesus – this might have fueled the Gnostics. Right up front – John is refuting the Gnostics - how many of the Gnostics spent several years with Jesus?

John looked upon and handled Jesus. It was John who reclined on Jesus at the last supper - you couldn't lean on a ghost could you?

The idea that this eternal subject of John has been audibly heard. The subject has been physically seen, - The subject has been intently studied (have looked upon), - and the subject has been tangibly touched (hands have handled).

This proclamation would have enormous implications for his readers. Enormous because it said that this eternal God became accessible to man in the most basic way, - a way that anyone could relate to. This eternal One can be known, and He has revealed Himself to us. Enormous because it proves that John's words have the weight of eyewitness evidence.

John did not speak of a myth or a matter of clever story-telling. He carefully studied this eternal One - and he knew whom he spoke about. Enormous because it debunks dangerous teachings that were creeping into the church, known as Gnosticism.

Once handling takes place certain things follow.

In Luke 24:39 after the disciples had handled the Lord, the text indicates that because of their exhilarating joy. They almost could not comprehend the resurrection of the Savior. “Joy” comes through handling the Word of Life.

Secondly, in John 20 one discovers the test of handling is offered to Thomas. Thomas had also been wounded by his doubt and discouragement at seeing the Lord crucified. In fact, Thomas could be considered as the consummate pessimist. He had heard the Lord speak of His death and had determined that the best thing for all of the disciples to do was to go and die with the Lord (John 11:16).

Now, confronted with the physical presence of the Lord, he could see, hear, and look upon the physical form - but until Thomas touched the Lord, his doubt held him captive. And then, once he touched the marks of the Cross great revelation flooded his soul. “My Lord and My God!” became the great exclamation of Thomas.

It seems today that a great many people are content to just sit in the same room as Jesus. They have no desire to touch Jesus – or to be touched by Him. But when we are willing to touch the marks of the Cross – an immediate transformation occurs today just like it did back then.

Far too often in the modern church there is a real hesitation to handle the Word of Life. What happens is the result of “hearing.” And when the “hearing” is nothing more than just an archaic doctrine – it has little effect on our world or ourselves. And what we see often arouses nothing more than just a mere nod of assent. Due to the fact that the doctrine “works” in the lives of some but maybe not our own.

When the modern church will grasp the thought that we must handle this Jesus of Nazareth. Then the attributes of Christ can work through human hands. Contact with Calvary always brings about: transformation (“My Lord”); - and revelation (“My God”). Contact with the Holy Spirit will bring more transformation – and more revelation!

Let's get back to Thomas and his touching.

It is almost shocking that the Lord would literally demand for Thomas to touch His scarred hands and pierced side. In the natural you know that would be painful. The underlying thought very well could be that Jesus understood that out of His own pain, Thomas would gain revelation.

“we proclaim:”

John was saying, "We are not delivering anything to you by way of hearsay," - "we are not just bringing you tradition," - "we are not bringing you mere conjecture;" - "what I am bringing you is that which we have had the fullest certainty of all that we write and preach."

The Word of Life:

John was not “dilly dallying” with some lesser form of God but with the Word of Life itself. John had met God in the form of Jesus Christ. John refused to describe Jesus Christ. If He did, we just might put His picture on a CD and sell it.

There is basically one thing about God that we can grasp here, and it is a very important truth that we often overlook. God came in the form of man. Jesus was true man. Christ never had a beginning. He never got off to a good start; His glory could never get better. He was fully God from the beginning.

John used his senses to emphasize that this was no dream or fascination, but an actual - real down to life experience. Jesus spoke, and he heard. Jesus was in his presence, and so John saw him with his own eyes. John didn't just see Jesus walk across a stage, but he “beheld” Jesus. He intensely focused on Christ. He even touched Jesus. John recognized that this experience didn't make him an expert in describing God but a humble man who was defeated in attempting to describe God.

What he details here is a real, on earth, in the flesh, experience with the Word of Life. God spoke and the world came into existence. God spoke and life formed. Who is this Word of Life?

It is God Himself - and yet John saw Him - and held Him - and ate with Him.

How is this possible? A man meeting with God? Is John at all credible? Can mere man meet with the One who spoke the vast universe into creation? Man might claim such things but is it really true?

John knows what he saw, and felt, and beheld and touched. He wasn't fooled. He knew who Jesus Christ was. The same Logos spoken of in John 1:1. The idea of the Logos - of the Word - was huge for John. It was huge for the Greek world of his day, and it was for the Jewish world of his day.

For the Jew, God was often referred to as the Word, because they knew God perfectly revealed Himself in His word. For the Greek, their philosophers had spoken for centuries about the Logos – the basis for organization and intelligence in the universe, the Ultimate Reason which controls all things.

It is as if John said to everyone, “This Logos you have been talking about and writing about for centuries – well, we have heard Him, seen Him, studied Him, and touched Him! Let me tell you about Him.”

This “Logos” – was manifested as “life.” This life was manifested, that is, made actually and physically real. This is no fairy tale, no “once upon a time.” This is real, and John tells us about it as an eyewitness. We declare this to you about the Word of life. The Word existed before the world began.

John and those who were with him knew the Lord Jesus. He heard what he said. He listened to what he taught. He was with him. He actually saw him. He watched him. He lived with him for 3 years. He knew that Jesus was a real human person.

Even though some people denied that God really came as a human person. John knew that he did come. John knew that He is Jesus Christ. John says that they have had a real experience of him. Jesus Christ was God with them here on earth.

The first three terms that John used all involved the physical senses that did not require touching. When one momentarily goes back to John 1:1, - when John wrote his Gospel, he made use of the word “beheld” - which indicates to us that the beloved Apostle steadily sought to apprehend everything about the Lord with deep understanding. This requires far more than the physical senses are going to be able to provide.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and God has to be very clearly viewed through the lens of Scripture and not that of human experience. We declare this to you about the Word of life. The Word existed before the world began.

When John says things like:

This is what we have heard. - We have seen it with our eyes. - We watched it. - We touched it with our hands. - This is about the Word of life. John is being doctrinal and experiential.

John met God through Jesus Christ and invites each one of us to share in this knowledge and experience. God didn't intend it to be just for a few back then and never again. This is not a past relationship or experience but an ongoing one.

Our joy springs forth – not from a one time experience - but a lifetime of radical exposure to the One who creates life with a Word. We need to get the message out like John did. He proclaimed it so that we could hear and participate. We must likewise be firm and convinced that man can know the almighty creator God.

It is this meeting with God that will bring meaning into our lives. When people meet God for the first time they will understand how joy can be fulfilled in their lives.

John sets forth some things that are crucial to fellowship with Jesus Christ. Please pay attention to these next few words:

- .1. What we handle is what we will fellowship.
- .2. The manner in which we handle – determines the manner of our fellowship.
- .3. The level of intimacy with which we handle – determines the level of intimacy we share.

I hug a lot of women and men. But there is not one of them that I hug in the same manner as I hug my wife. I share a level of intimacy with my wife that I am not willing to share with any other.

I have kissed a number of young girls on the hand – and a few women on the cheek. But I never kiss any other person like I kiss my wife. I share a level of intimacy with my wife that I am not willing to share with any other person.

Can we all agree that for the most part – the level of intimacy we share with another person – determines the way in which we handle the other person.

We can sit around and talk about the “One who the Law and the Prophets proclaimed” would come - and many did in John’s day. We can sit around and talk about the One “who came in the flesh and lived among men” – as many did in John’s day. But until we touch Jesus – nothing much changes in our life.

However, when we will do more than talk about Him. If we will reach out and touch Him – and allow Him to touch us – we will be changed – from the inside out for sure – and the change on the inside will ultimately change the outside.

We have to handle Him for real transformation and revelation to occur. If we are hesitant to handle the Word of Life - Then transformation and revelation cannot occur.

The obvious question that should arise is determining how are we to handle the Lord? How one handles the Lord greatly determines the true spiritual health of a disciple.

Our view of God and our view of sin will greatly affect how we handle the Word of Life. If we allow Jesus to touch us as our Savior – Oh how good that is – because it will change our eternity as nothing else can. But if that is the only way in which we allow Jesus to touch us – as Savior and nothing else – we are going to be cheated out of so much in the way of blessing and ministry right here on this earth.

We can sit around and debate whether or not healing is for today. We can offer up some very convincing arguments about how miraculous healing was necessary to help birth the church and how divine healing does not happen today. But when someone has touched Jesus and has received healing – you will never be able convince them that it isn't real today.

We can offer up some impressive arguments about how we are free to choose. And if we make really bad choices and destroy our life - that we will have to live with the consequences with no hope of deliverance on this earth. But when someone has touched Jesus and has been delivered from a nasty attitude - When someone has touched Jesus and has been delivered from addiction - When someone has touched Jesus and has been restored in family – or career – or in other ways - We will never be able to convince them that Jesus doesn't restore today. Even the biggest pessimist on this earth will be changed when they touch Jesus!

In the words of John the Baptist – Jesus will baptize us with Spirit and with fire. We can debate it for months and years – if we want to - about what it means to be baptized “in or with” the Holy Spirit. We can debate it for months and years – if we want to - About what changes – if any – will take place in a person who has experienced the Holy Spirit of God

Those who have received the Holy Spirit know - and they know how they have and how they have not changed. And those who have been baptized “in” the Holy Spirit know what has happened to them. And no amount of debating is ever going to convince them it is not for today.

So when you meet someone that tries to tell you that is not for today - Don't be angry with them – and don't be harsh with them. It just tells you that they have not touched the Holy Spirit!

It's one thing to "receive" strawberry preserves. It is another thing to dip your finger into the strawberry preserves and then taste it. And it is quite another thing to be baptized "in" strawberry preserves.

And here's the beauty of God's plan – we get to decide just how much we want to be "touched" by the Holy Spirit. The level of intimacy we share with Jesus will determine the level of our touching - both how we touch Jesus and how we allow Him to touch us. And how we touch Jesus will determine how our life is changed - And how our actions are changed - And how our attitude is changed.

Have you been touched by Jesus as deeply and as intimately as you desire?

Do we want more of Jesus' power and more of Jesus' Spirit to be manifested in our life?

I do - not only for myself, but I desire for every person who is a part of my church - to be continued touched by Jesus – and to be touched in every area of your life. And to be touched as intimately and as completely as is possible for a human to be touched by the Holy Spirit.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Would we be honest if we said , “I would like to be a Stronger Christian?”
Would we like to be better able to stand in times of testing or trial? Do we find ourselves saying sometimes “I wish I was as strong as that Christian”?
For those who have that desire – to be stronger as a Christian – there is some really good news for you in this lesson.

In the first verse of 1 John - we saw the importance of touching Jesus and allowing Jesus to touch us. Verse 1 helped us see that real and lasting transformation takes place when we touch Jesus and allow him to touch us. The more we touch Jesus – the more transformation we experience.

John was probably the last of the original apostles to be alive - even Paul was gone. By the end of John’s life, he had become known as the “apostle of love.” He used the word “love” 33 times in this letter. But John wasn’t always the apostle of love. His life is an example of how Jesus can transform anyone’s life.

Earlier in John’s life we see him being:

Prejudiced and exclusive in Mark 9:38

Judgmental in Luke 9:54

Prideful and ambitious in Mark 10:35-37

Only later did John become known as the apostle of love. Jesus had a lot of work to do with John. And this gives me hope. There are some days when I take a good look at myself and think, “Wow! I’ve got a long way to go.” Then I think about how this apostle was transformed - and I am encouraged that I too can experience such transformation.

This brings us to verse 2. There are things that have been “thought of” - or things that have been “contemplated” by someone - and then there are things that have been “seen” by someone. There is an interesting difference between that which has been contemplated and that which has been seen.

It is not always possible to tell – or express clearly - to others what we have contemplated – or only “thought of.” But we can tell and express to others what we have seen. Verse 1 talked about Jesus and called Him “the Word.” Verse 2 gives more explanation about the Word mentioned in verse 1.

Read 1 John 1:2 and make notes:

Let's break this verse down into bite size pieces before we take a look at the overall message for us today:

“the life appeared”

The verb used in verse 2 to describe the Life revealed is frequently used in the Gospel of John to refer to Jesus' revelation of himself to his disciples (2:11, 21:1; 21:14). The statement here that it was the “eternal life” that was with the Father echoes John 1:1 where it was the Word who was with the Father.

In verse 1 it was the pre-incarnate “Word” who was with the Father and revealed Himself to mankind. In verse 2 it is the pre-incarnate “Life” who was with the Father and revealed Himself to mankind.

Having introduced the “word of life” in verse 1 as the subject of the apostolic eyewitness testimony about which he is writing, verse 2 now picks up the theme of “life” and carries it further. Verse 2 explains that it was this “life” which was with the Father and has now been revealed to the apostolic eyewitnesses.

This subtle shift in emphasis – stresses the importance of the earthly career of Jesus as the incarnate Word in John's dispute with the opponents. Here, the term “life” rather than “word” refers to Jesus as he revealed himself in his earthly career, including his person, words, works, death, and resurrection.

“we have seen it and testify to it”

What the apostles saw was eternal life. God gives this life. John knew that he had this life now. And this life will never end. John wants to share this life with the readers of his letter. This life is in the Lord Jesus.

Those who know Jesus have this life. The Lord Jesus, who is life, was with God the Father. But he came to us and he showed us this life. These witnesses have received this life from God. Eternal life comes from God the Father. For the life - The living Word - was manifested in the flesh, to our very senses.

Jesus himself said he was one who bore witness to what he had seen and heard with the Father (John 1:18; 5:19, 36; 15:15; compare Revelation 1:2, 5; 12:17; 22:20). In turn, the disciples were commissioned as witnesses of Jesus (John 15:27). In the epistles we see the continuing role of those who bear witness to Jesus. They do so not only by giving reliable testimony to an event, but also by carrying out the commission to interpret to others the reality of what they had experienced. Witnesses must tell others what they have seen and experienced.

“we proclaim it”

And we testify - we testify by declaring, by preaching, and writing. Preaching lays the foundation and writing builds on the foundation laid down by preaching.

“to you”

To you - Who have not seen. The eternal life - which always was, and afterward appeared to us. This is mentioned in the beginning of the letter. And at the end of this letter - it is mentioned the same eternal life..

“eternal life”

In calling Jesus eternal life, John recalled the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John (John 5:26; 6:48; 11:25; 14:6). The eternal existence of Jesus is also declared in Micah 5:2. The word everlasting here literally means, “beyond the vanishing point.”

Some people like to stress the idea that people are going to exist forever. People, however, are not eternal as is Jesus. Jesus is eternal and existed before our world began and will exist after our world ends. People on the other hand, are not eternal like that. People have a beginning – there is a time that existed BEFORE we began to exist.

So while people did not exist forever in the past – people will exist forever in the future. The question becomes – where will we exist forever? Will we be forever in the smoking section or the non-smoking section? Will we exist forever in the tormented section or in the blessed section?

“was with the Father”

The word “with” indicates that this being, who is eternal, and is eternal life Himself, is distinct from the Father. John speaks of the New Testament understanding of the Trinity – that one God exists as three Persons, equal and one, yet distinct in their person. The Bible links together the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a way that is unimaginable for other persons.

We read in the Bible, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28:19 NIV). But we would never say, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of Michael the Archangel."

We read in God’s Word,

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV). But we would never say, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Apostle Paul, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

We read in the Bible, *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:2 NIV). But we would never say, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of the Apostle Peter."

While, as human beings, we may not be able to fully understand how - as Christians, we accept as reality that Jesus was WITH the Heavenly Father long before we existed.

“has appeared to us”

Since Eternal Life has been manifested in the Historical Jesus – that which earlier could only be experienced by the heart of man – can now be seen by the eyes of man as well. And seeing with the eyes brings joy to the heart. Seeing with the eyes brings healing to the heart.

If you have ever been apart from someone you love - then you understand this little principle. When we love someone, it is surely good to hear from them. A letter is better than not hearing – but hearing their voice is so much better. And no matter how often you can talk with them on the phone - No matter how many letters you get with their smell on the letter - None of that brings the joy that we receive when we get to see them.

And that is what is wrong with so many Christians today. There are a lot of Church People who negative and joyless. They walk around as the town sour puss - Because they don't “see” Jesus.

That's probably enough “breaking down” for this verse for today. So let's take a look at the message we should take home with us. Let's summarize John's testimony which the Holy Spirit has inspired him to give:

Jesus came from God to show us real life. The person who gives life came. He showed this life to us. We saw this life and we are witnesses to this life. We declare to you that this is eternal life. This life was with the Father. This life has now appeared to us.

The Lord Jesus came from God. Jesus became a real man. Jesus showed us what real life is. Real life is life in the spirit. Jesus has that life and Jesus came to give it to us. This is eternal life. God gives eternal life to those who believe in his Son.

Even among those who are not Christians themselves – in this country, most people understand that the Christian message is about bringing people to eternal life. As we read this letter identified as 1st John - it is clear that the Holy Spirit is directing John to tell the readers that the life that has appeared to man is the historical Jesus. The life that God gives to mankind - has been revealed in the Historical Jesus.

Why is this important enough to give time and attention to in the letter and in our teaching of the letter? When someone makes a statement that they “saw the wind outside” – There is often someone - trying to sound intellectual – who will jump in and start saying “you saw the affects of the wind” – “you saw things being moved by the wind” – “but you didn’t see the wind.”

The person who said they “saw the wind” - probably knew that technicality. Everyone else who heard their statement probably understood not only the technicality, but what the person meant.

The one who likes to make others think they don’t know what they are talking about – will jump in with the corrective technicalities of speech.

When someone – as did John in this letter – says something like “I saw this life” – the devil will stir someone up to say things like, “well, you didn’t actually see life” – “what you saw was the affect life had on some being” – “but you didn’t see life itself.”

When we understand what the Holy Spirit said in this letter through John – that the Eternal Life that God gives to men was actually revealed in this historical person Jesus - then it is a true and accurate statement to say “I have seen eternal life”!

If you find someone being stirred to jump in with statements like “you can’t see life” Be loving about it, but tell them to just chill out and calm down. We can see life – and tell them in a loving tone of voice - “if they will just touch Jesus and allow Jesus to touch them – they will see life too.” It is correct for John to say “I have seen this life” – and many of us can say that as well.

One of the important aspects of being a Christian - is that we are to be witnesses. As Christians, the Bible is very clear, we are expected to tell others what we have seen in Jesus – and what we have experienced with Jesus.

In the very beginning of this little letter of John, we can see that John is being very faithful and obedient to this aspect of being a Christian. And here is the part of this witnessing thing that most people – including Christians – don’t know.

Witnessing for Jesus is not about validating Jesus. Our witnessing to others about Jesus isn't about empowering Jesus. Witnessing improves, strengthens, and clarifies the one doing the witnessing.

This is why an experienced investigator doesn't want to hear a person's testimony just one time. A really good investigator will ask the witness to share "what they saw" several times. There is something about our human nature – things become more clear to us as we tell the story. We remember things the second or third time that we didn't remember the first time. The more we tell the story about Jesus and what He has done in our life - the stronger we become in our own faith – and the clearer the Christian message becomes to us. This means we become better able to resist the false teachings of "agnostics", the "Gnostics", and the just plain "nasties" (naw-stees).

Being a witness is important for the Lost People to hear about Jesus and hopefully hear the Holy Spirit invite them to accept Jesus to be their Savior. But One of the little secrets that will help transform our life right here on earth is this: Being a witness for Jesus is more for us - than it is for the ones we tell.

Something else – that is a little subtle - is revealed in this verse. Something that was common to all the apostles of that day - and is something common to all who are ministers today that do not give up. Here it is:

There are 3 verbs used in this verse that reveal the sequence that brings one to the place of being an enduring minister. (read verse 2 again)

First He experienced;
secondly he made a personal affirmation;
thirdly, he proclaimed.

People can give testimony that they are saved – when they are not, but it won't last a lifetime. People can set out proclaiming the Word of God – when they are not saved themselves - but it won't last a lifetime. When the attacks come – when the the tough times come - those who have not had a personal experience with Jesus – will quit.

1 John - 02 – Tell About Jesus

For those who endure – those who make it through the tough times and the outright attacks - You find they have each shared this 3 step process:

- 1 They had a personal experience with Jesus –
- 2 they were faithful to share the testimony of their experience over and over -
- 3 and then they came to the place of sharing with authority the message of the Gospel.

If you are one who finds yourself thinking from time to time, “I wish I was strong enough to stand when trials and temptations come” - “I wish I was as strong in my ability to stand as that Christian”- Here is the “key” to becoming that strong standing witness:

First make sure you have a personal experience with Jesus.

Secondly make a personal affirmation of that experience -
and every experience you have with Jesus – big or small.

Thirdly, tell of your experience with Jesus as often as you can.

The more we share, the stronger we become.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the previous verses, we were encouraged to “Touch Jesus” and to “Tell about Jesus.” Why? The answer to that question is addressed in today’s text.

Read 1 John 1:3 and make notes:

The purpose for this proclamation is that the readers might have true fellowship. Our fellowship is not just with other believers, but with the Father Himself. This is amazing. Why would the almighty God want to fellowship with us? I have no idea, but He does.

Contrast this with the Old Testament - only the High Priest could enter the presence of God, and only once a year. The idea that we each can fellowship with God is a radical idea for a first century person.

To illustrate God was available to everyone, after Jesus died the veil was torn in two - symbolizing the Spirit is available to all who want to enter. But do we take advantage of our direct line to the throne room of the universe?

We can enjoy this fellowship even though we do not understand all the intricacies of the trinity. We can use our eyes even though we don't know every detail of how our vision works. We can know God and believe in Him as He has revealed Himself, even though we can't understand everything about His person or nature.

Read 1 John 1:4 and make notes:

We write these things in order that our joy might be fulfilled as the believers continue in fellowship with Christ and the other believers. What are “these things”? “These things are all that is in the letter.

He writes so that both he and the readers may have much joy. It would give them all much joy if they believed the message of the gospel. The purpose of the letter is that the readers would share the same life as John and his friends.

Many people equate joy and happiness, but they are not the same. For example, if I give you a check for \$10,000 you will be happy - until you try to cash it. At that time - your happiness will depart. Happiness is temporary and subject to the conditions. Joy isn't - that's why Paul could be filled with joy - while chained in a dungeon. It's unlikely he was happy in his situation, yet he was filled with joy. But without fellowship with God, there is no Joy.

Anything the world has, simply won't do it — money, power, prestige, drugs, etc. The only way to have joy is by fellowship with God. What is required?

We can look all around this world for joy, but we truthfully must come back here. Our joy stems not from a one time experience but rather from a lifetime of radical exposure to the One who creates life with a Word. It's easy to become casual and forget this powerful advantage we have. Again, the only way to have joy is by fellowship with God.

The Greek word in this verse is the word “*koinonia*”. This concept behind this Greek word is difficult to translate into English. Various suggestions have been “fellowship,” “partnership,” “communion,” or “community.”

People who are in fellowship share some reality in common. Many of you are probably already aware of these basic translations of this word - but it is also defined as: “a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution”

People who are in “*koinonia*” share some reality in common. But 1 John 1:7 indicates that this “fellowship” - is not so much based on mutual commitment to a common purpose, but is a relationship created when believers walk in the light as God is in the light. Once fellowship is established - it may very well go on to find expression in a common purpose, but it would be wrong to characterize fellowship simply as based upon mutual assent to a common purpose.

If we really want to expand our understanding of this word, we can note where it is listed in other places throughout the New Testament. In some cases, the word is translated differently than fellowship:

Acts 2:42 to the fellowship and breaking of bread

1 Corinthians 1:9 into fellowship with His Son Jesus

2 Corinthians 8:4 sharing in this service

Philippians 3:10 the fellowship of sharing in his suffering

(Sometimes fellowship can involve suffering.)

1 Corinthians 10:16 communion meal

(Fellowship involves communion with Calvary.)

Hebrews 13:15-16 communicate

Romans 15:26 contribution

(Fellowship involves contributing to the saints who are in need.)

Fellowship - the idea of fellowship is one of the most important ideas in this letter of John's. It speaks of a living, breathing, sharing, loving relationship with another person.

The use of the word in Acts 2:44 is very helpful: “*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.*” Fellowship . . . with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This simple and bold statement means that one can have a relationship with God. He can be - not only our Savior, - but also our friend and our closest relationship.

Sadly, for many people this is totally unappealing. Sometimes it is because they don't know who God is, so an invitation to a “personal relationship with God” is about as attractive to them as telling an eighth-grader they can have a “personal relationship with the assistant principal.” But when we know the greatness, the goodness, and the glory of God, we want to have a relationship with Him.

Other people turn from this relationship with God because they feel so distant from Him. They want a relationship with God, but feel so disqualified, so distant. They need to know what God has done to make this kind of relationship possible.

The word fellowship has in it not only the idea of relationship, but of sharing a common life. When we have fellowship with Jesus, we will become more like Him. We enter into a relationship of a shared life with Jesus. We share our life with Him, and He shares His life with us.

“That you also may have fellowship with us:” We may think it curious that John first considers fellowship with God’s people; but this is often how people come to experience a relationship with God. They first encounter God through relationships with God’s people. There is a fellowship with the saints. There is a fellowship with God. And there is a tandem between this fellowship with God and the saints that produces joy. The matter of fellowship is also very closely related to separation.

When John sets forth this principle, he is clearly indicating that the church was to have no fellowship with the Gnostics. The fellowship was to be limited only to those who embraced the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Paul exhorted the Ephesians to have no union with the unfruitful works of darkness in Ephesians 5:11. This theme was a common one with Paul and John.

Why would the apostles spend any of their time telling other Believers that we need to be committed to “fellowship”? Because they understood something that so many Christians today do not! The fellowship these apostles are talking about is so crucial in our lives. The level of our fellowship with God and His family – will dictate the amount of separation from the things of this world that we are willing to commit to.

True Fellowship – the kind the apostles wrote about – in the true sense of the word will add numerous benefits to our lives. But let me share with you perhaps the 5 most notable benefits:

#1 - True Fellowship brings comfort.

This was demonstrated in Luke 24, when the Lord revealed Himself to the two weary disciples on the road to Emmaeus.

#2 - True Fellowship brings spiritual growth.

The old adage from the Proverbs 27 that “iron sharpens iron” is true because other believers will cause us to be challenged to grow in our prayer, worship, fellowship, and experience with God.

#3 - True fellowship will bring peace.

Paul encourages the growth of peace and unity in the church at Rome (Romans 14:19).

#4 - True fellowship provides an atmosphere of conversation and sharing.

This can be understood when we realize that True fellowship takes place in an atmosphere of serving one another (Acts 2:44).

#5 - True fellowship helps make our prayers more effective.

Malachi 3:16 tells us that true fellowship will lead to effective prayers.

Acts 2:42 tells us that True fellowship will bring a lift to our prayers.

True fellowship is how we are shaped by God. Revelation 3:14-22 describes the church of Laodecia. The desire was that God wanted to fellowship in this church. Yet, their preoccupation with this world had caused them to lay aside their important devotion toward God.

It is important to understand that when we receive the Holy Spirit, this is only the beginning for the Believer - this was never intended to be a one experience is everything to our relationship thing.

Some question the importance of a fellowship of believers in a church or in a corporate body of believers. They insinuate that there is no real reason to be associated in a local church. Can one really have fellowship and not be embodied in a local church?

When we realize the church is the family of God it would be unconscionable to think that we can dissociate it. In Psalm 84:10; Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere- In Psalm 92:12-13; The righteous will flourish like a palm tree planted in the House of the lord.

Fellowship with God is to have a high priority in our lives! There are without question, many who claim to be a Believer, but have no interest in fellowship with God or with other Believers. Real Believers Fellowship!

And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. The result of true fellowship is fullness of joy. This joy is an abiding sense of optimism and cheerfulness based on God, as opposed to happiness, which is a sense of optimism and cheerfulness based on circumstances.

John clearly echoed an idea Jesus expressed to His disciples the night before His crucifixion. He wanted fullness of joy for them - even knowing that the cross was directly in front of them. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15:11). - Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24). - But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves (John 17:13).

Fullness of joy is certainly possible for the Christian, but it is by no means certain. John wrote with the desire that believers would have fullness of joy - and if it were inevitable or very easy to have he would not have written this. The Christian's joy is important, and assaulted on many fronts. External circumstances, moods and emotions, or sin can all take away our joy. Yet the Christian's joy is not found in the things of this world, as good as they might be.

When John wrote about these things, he wrote about this relationship of fellowship and love we can share in with God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ. Too many Christians are passive in their loss of joy. They need to realized it is a great loss and do everything they can to draw close to God and reclaim that fullness of joy.

If we discover that we have lost the joy of the Lord. Please, I beg you - do not think it a small loss. It is this fellowship with God and the resulting joy that will bring meaning into their lives.

Not sure where you stand on this issue of True Fellowship? Let me share with you a simple means of determining. We can ask ourselves:

Do I strive for fellowship among the Church?

Have I developed a critical spirit?

Have I become isolated in my walk with God?

Have I become distant in my relationship with God?

True fellowship is motivated by a living and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. When one considers this concept, it is amazing that we could even live with God and have fellowship.

We need to get the message out like John did. He proclaimed it so that some could hear and participate. We must likewise be firm and convinced that man can know the almighty creator God.

If we introduced this book by modern methods, we would probably start with verse 4. We would point out to someone their felt need in their lives and then come to fill that need. This is the way we sell cars, stereos and perfume. I am not saying John is trying to sell God, but he is pointing us back to a point in our lives when for real we sensed a need for something. And God presented Himself as the solution to our dilemma.

For some reason the mass of Christian Believers today have accepted an attitude that “I’m okay and You’re okay.” And we must really believe that everybody is okay, because so few of us are concerned that this person next to us is on their way to spending an eternity in a really painful existence.

When Christians share True Fellowship with the Christ and True Fellowship with other believers – we cannot help but come to the place where John had come. We will desire with intensity that others around us will get to know the Joy of the Lord.

John was writing so that the joy of others would reach to the greatest heights. He wanted them to have access to pure unadulterated joy.

Today we spend huge amounts of money on cheap rides that give us momentous thrills. But down deep we know these joys are finished along with the ride. These desires for excitement, fantasy, fascination, exhilaration all point to a greater joy, a full joy. We might look in many places to find this something to satisfy our hunger for “joy,” but we will not find it until we become convinced that John the apostle knew what he was talking about.

This is why he was writing. He wanted us to come to this joyous meeting with God which would not just at one point give us that sense of great delight but an ongoing fullness of delight.

Those who first believed - spoke.
They described what they had seen.
They repeated what they had heard.

The Word of life (that is, Jesus) appeared to them. And we need to believe in him. They heard what he said. We too need to hear what he says. And we need to believe it.

The message of life in the Lord Jesus was not only for them. It is for Us as well. And it is for all those we meet. Fellowship with Christ! - Fellowship with other Believers!

Please, please don't ever believe the lie that we already have enough fellowship. Please don't believe the lie that we don't need more fellowship. - That we don't need deeper fellowship - That we don't need more intimate fellowship.

True fellowship with Christ and other believers Is an ever increasing – a always going deeper experience - that we will never “max out” on this side of Heaven.

1 John - 03 – Fellowship With Jesus

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

So far in this letter we call 1st John - we have been instructed to “Touch Jesus” – we have been instructed to “Tell about Jesus” – and we have been instructed to “Fellowship with Jesus”.

As mentioned in previous messages – there are different ideas among men – as to who has and who has not “touched” God. Sometimes conflicting things being told about God - and some very contradictory things called fellowship with God. It was a problem in John’s day – but it is at least as big a problem in our day. This makes today’s message important for us to grasp clearly.

Read 1 John 1:5 and make notes:

“this is the message”, the word of eternal life

The message refers to the eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This message relates to the salvation of the hearers/readers, since its purpose is to bring them into fellowship with God and with other Believers. This is God’s message about Himself. What we are told in this letter about God is what God has told us about Himself.

What is the message that John passes on? “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.” How profound! John begins with an assertion about God, the simple statement that *God is light*. Everything depends upon and flows from that statement. It is worth examining.

Instead of coming up with all the answers as religions and philosophies try to do, we are asked to understand God as light. God does not just HAVE light, He IS light!

In many ways the statement that *God is light* is the thesis of the epistle. It includes a definition of God's character as well as implications for the life of Christian discipleship. Light is absolutely pure, impossible to defile. You can block light – You can reflect light – but you cannot pollute light.

In Genesis, the first thing God creates is light. Even today, light is a symbol of good, and darkness is a symbol of evil. There are a number of movies where the battle is between the light side and the dark side.

Light as an idiom is something we still use today. Here's a little nugget before we continue:

Light in this verse is the Greek word "*phos*" - which means light never kindled and therefore never quenched.

So that there can be no misunderstanding, John emphatically restates the point: *in him there is no darkness at all.*

The phrase "God is light" is not a theoretical assertion about the nature of God. It is a statement that drives us to the heart of what God is like. John uses the word "light" to mean all that is good, holy and right.

Another way of saying that God is perfect is to say that God is light. God is pure light, not diluted or mixed in any way with evil, hatred, untruth, ignorance or hostility. God is pure light, and for John this statement rings with implications for the Christian life. Thus it is crucial that we correctly grasp this basic truth.

Let's consider some aspects of light for a few minutes:

We have discovered that "White" light is actually made up of all the other colors of light. When we see "White" light – it consist of every color of light – both visible and invisible colors of light. If we block any one color of light – it is no longer "White" light – but begins to appear to be various shades.

Man has discovered materials that can be used as filters. You can hold one of these filters in front of white light and it will allow only certain wavelengths of the light to come through. So while there is white light on one side of the filter – there might only be red, or blue, or green, or yellow, or some other color of light on the other side of the filter.

This is important – please don't miss it:

The filter does not change the light – the filter only allows part of the light to show through. But the light remains unchanged – unpolluted if you please.

1 John - 04 – God Is Light

God is like the “White” light. Every color of light is there. Since no color is missing – there is no darkness within God.

God is light by nature. All light comes from God. God created light. As light shines, so God shows himself. There can be no darkness in God. Those people who do evil acts cannot share life with God. Those who believe God must live in the light.

The content of the message, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all, is a description of a quality or attribute of God. John 8:12 and 9:5 record the words of Jesus saying, *“I am the light of the world”*.

The work and words of Jesus were testimonies to the God who is light.

Colossians 1:12 - Believers share in the Kingdom of Light

John 1:4 – Jesus is the Light of men.

Psalm 104:2 - God “wraps Himself in light”

1 Timothy 6:16 - God “lives in unapproachable light”

James 1:17 - “Father of the heavenly lights” is one of God’s names

God is light is not a particularly startling statement. This assertion would be at home in many of the world's religions, including those in John's first-century world.

Who would quarrel with depicting the Deity, the greatest power and greatest good in the world, with the symbol of light? There can be nothing bad in God. He is perfect and he can do nothing wrong.

Some people love darkness more than the light. John 3:19 tells us Light came into the world and men loved darkness rather than light. Some people may turn from the light. This is because their actions are evil. John 3:20 tells us the person who does evil hates the light and John 3:21 tells us those who live by the truth come into the light.

Light – it is such an appropriate symbol for the One who is pure, righteous and holy.

Psalm 104:2 - pictures God clothed in garments of light

1 Timothy 6:16 - declares God lives in unapproachable light

Isaiah 60:20 - the LORD will be your everlasting light,

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a light for my path.

Psalm 119:130 - The unfolding of your words gives light

Psalm 43:3 - Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me

Psalm 56:13 - For you have delivered me...

that I may walk before God in the light of life.

Proverbs 6:23 - For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light,

Job 24:13 - "There are those who rebel against the light,

Job 29:3 ... by his light I walked through darkness!

Isaiah 2:5 - let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Psalm 36:9 - in your light we see light.

Psalm 27:1 - The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear?

Psalm 18:28 - my God turns my darkness into light.

Light is a favorite image of the prophet Isaiah to depict God's saving activity on behalf of the people of God.

Isaiah 58:8 – says when God's light breaks forth – healing quickly follows

Isaiah 60:19 - The sun will no more be your light by day,

...the LORD will be your everlasting light

As light shows the way in darkness, by virtue of God's revelation - we are able to know God and thus know the path in which we are to walk. We are going to look at the implications of the fact that God is light.

Let's first look at the common objection offered by skeptics. Perhaps you've been faced with something along the following lines:

Did God create everything? Yes.

Is God good? Yes.

Did God create Satan? Yes.

“Then I can't follow God because that means God created evil, and that contradicts the idea God is good, since a good God would never create evil and suffering.”

The skeptic wants to put the Christian into a position where they are boxed in by contradiction. But there is NO Contradiction in this scenario. The faulty logic of the skeptic is the only source of contradiction.

Please don't leave me for the next couple of minutes – the principle we're going to look at is very important. Consider these two little questions:

Does heat exist?

Does cold exist?

Our first impulse may be to answer both of these questions as “yes” – but that would not be correct. Heat does exist, but cold doesn't – for cold in reality is only the absence of heat.

Before you accuse me of just being picky over a technicality – there is a temperature beyond which you can not get any colder - absolute zero (-459.67 F). Temperatures colder than this are not possible. Why? Because once we've removed all the heat nothing remains - at that point we are as low as we can go.

Heat on the other hand does not appear to have a limit. Cold in itself is not an entity. We experience cold only as the heat is removed. The more heat we lose – the more we experience cold. And a little but important thing to remember: Cold cannot dispel heat – but heat can dispel cold.

Now let's consider a parallel concept:

Does light exist?

Does darkness exist?

If you've caught on - now you know darkness isn't an entity. We experience darkness as the absence of light.

Have you ever been in a situation where you were enveloped by complete darkness? I'm talking about darkness such that you can't even see your hand in front of your face. Can it get darker? Nope!

Once you've removed **all** the light - you have darkness. Darkness as a separate and individual entity doesn't exist. And another little thing: Darkness cannot dispel light – but light can dispel darkness.

Now with this background; let's get back to the skeptic's question. You might have a clue from the previous ideas, along with the fact God is light. Think about it for a moment.

Does good exist? YES

Does evil exist? NO

Get the point?

God is good. God created Satan. Satan was originally good, but has come to be seen as evil. Why? He quenched the light of God. God did not create Satan as evil. Satan chose to quench the light, and the result is evil. Evil is not a real entity - evil is the absence of goodness and perfection. Thus evil is the absence of light (or the absence of God).

The concept of evil being created is false. Evil is what naturally results when you turn away from God. Thus God did not "create" evil, as it's not a real entity to create. And evil cannot dispel God – but God can dispel evil.

This is the sum of the message which we have heard of him - The Son of God. That God is light - The light of wisdom, love, holiness, glory. John declares this on the simple understanding that God Himself is light; and light by definition has no darkness at all in it; for there to be darkness, there must be an absence of light.

The context and the introduction of the light/darkness imagery is clear. This involves the moral realm and thus is a description of God's character as pure and completely sinless. God allows us, who are born in sin's darkness, to be born again into His marvelous light! And in him is no darkness at all - No contrary principle. He is pure, unmixed light. God is Light; let's embrace His holiness.

The sum of all moral excellence is found in Him.

He is absolute purity.

No flaws.

No divisions.

No slight imperfection.

How foolish we are if we allow ourselves to be deceived to think God makes mistakes. I find it interesting that the truth “God is love” is not here spoken. This is because of our need of first knowing God as light before we know Him as love. We should understand that meeting God would differ from every other relationship and experience we could ever face. Romans 3 - says we do not even have enough sense to go and look for God.

God is of such intense holiness, of such complete absolute infinite purity, that meeting with God is not a trite experience. It is not just another relationship.

John’s avoidance of detail in describing God should be obvious to us all. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all: Therefore, if there is a problem with our fellowship with God, it is our fault. It is not the fault of God because there is no sin or darkness in Him at all.

Any approach to relationship with God that assumes, or even implies, that God might be wrong, and perhaps must be forgiven by us, is at its root blasphemous and directly contradicts what John clearly states here.

Why is this “declaring God to be light” such a big deal to Believers today? Because Satan has used several different means and methods to spread lies about what he can do and what he will do. If we were to be deep inside a cave with all the lights turned off – it would be so thoroughly dark that we could touch our face and never ever see our hand. We could wait and wait, and our eyes would never adjust enough to the darkness that we would be able to see.

I know this to be true, I have been there. But even in such darkness that you think you can “feel” the darkness – the smallest amount of light will pierce through that darkness. And the darkness cannot hold it back.

There is no level of evil that the smallest amount of Good cannot penetrate. It is a fanciful myth that Satan could ever hold God back. We cannot, and neither can Satan, defile God. We cannot stop God – and neither can Satan.

1 John - 04 – God Is Light

We can refuse to allow all of God to flow through us – and as such we can present God to others as only a small part of what He really is. We can produce a really bad reflection of God and cause others to think God is very different from reality – based upon our presentation. But we cannot change God – we cannot distort God – we can in no way defile God. And the really important part – neither can Satan.

As we refuse to live Holy lives – we allow ourselves - and those we come into contact with - to experience evil. The less Holy our living and lifestyle – the more evil we and those around us experience. Evil is the absence of God - just as darkness is the absence of Light.

If we fail to grasp the concept that is contained within the statement that “God is Light” - We will not receive the full message and impact of this little letter we call 1st John. Once we understand that God IS Light - and we understand to some degree the principles concerning Light we discussed today - the question for you and me becomes really simple. When I allow God to show through me so that others can see - When I tell others that what they see is God showing through me - Am I showing them some color of God but not really God as He is? Am I showing others a faulty reflection of God?

I won't even try to speak for anyone else - But for me – I desire to show through all of God to others. I am quick to let people know – that if you see or hear anything faulty in my actions or words - That part is not God – that unfortunately is the faulty me you are experiencing. I desire for there to be no evil – that is no absence of God – in my lifestyle. I desire for there to be no color of God – but the pure “white” light of God showing through to others. And when it is less than that “white” light – I confess that is a result of me not allowing all of God to show through.

1 John - 04 – God Is Light

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

A few years ago an article entitled "Pick-and-Choose Christianity" appeared in a major national magazine. This article summarized the results of a three-year study of Christians of all denominations in a mid-western state.

The results of the study pointed out most church members "pick and choose" which teachings of Christianity they will accept and which they will leave behind. One of the least popular teachings was that of sin. The article stated, "Many have left behind a pervasive sense of sin." Although 98% said they believe in personal sin, only 57% accepted the traditional notion that all people are sinful and only one-third allowed that they "make many mistakes but are not sinful themselves."

No doubt there are many reasons for the loss of a consciousness of sin, but the phenomenon is scarcely new nor is it endemic to the United States in the twentieth century. First John reflects a similar situation, for apparently some people in the church were claiming to have fellowship with God and yet they continued to do very sinful things.

It seems that some people had taken the belief that God is light and from there drew an extreme conclusion:

If God is light-- it follows that those who are God's children are children of light and, hence, as such, are pure and righteous, reflecting the character of God. They claimed to share God's state of purity. After all, they were "born of God". What more did they need?

Their claims to be sinless were strikingly similar to--and probably no less sincere than - those of the American Christians who responded to the study that they do not sin. No one, whether in the first or twentieth century, relishes the thought of labeling our actions as "sin."

Today, in fact, we study the psychology of human actions so that we may better understand their causes and then use this understanding to help to change destructive behaviors. But failure to act with love and justice toward others is still sinful. However much we may provide explanations or rationalizations for sin, our sins will never be excused.

Read 1 John 1:6 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit speaking through John, refutes the claim made by those who are teaching heresy in the church: “We have fellowship with him” (God). we understand that it is possible for some to claim a relationship with God that they do not have. We can also say that it is possible for someone to think they have a relationship with God that they do not have.

Many Christians are not aware of their true condition. They know they are saved, and they know they have experienced conversion and they know they have repented at some time in their life. Yet they do not live in true fellowship with God.

In John’s day, those who were teaching heresy claimed “we have fellowship with God.” Their argument was that they are having fellowship with God and that they see no reason to give up the lifestyle they have or to change their teachings. John’s reply to this claim was that “if you believe that, then you are still living in darkness”!

Let us make no mistake. No one is let off the hook who thinks that somehow, within the Christian, light and dark may safely and happily coexist. Light and darkness are cannot co-exist – because light always dispels darkness.

One cannot have fellowship with God with one foot in darkness and one in light, since God is light; and in him there is no darkness at all. One cannot serve God, who is light, while continuing to dwell in the realm that is hostile to or ignorant of God, which is the realm of darkness, for that is to deny the very nature of God as pure light

Here it is crucial to take note of what the author does not say. "Darkness" is not simply equivalent to sin or wrongdoing. It is the realm that opposes and is hostile to God. This realm is characterized by disobedience and lack of relationship to God. Christians are exhorted not to walk in darkness.

But do you notice that he never says "Let there be no darkness in you," as if he were saying, "True Christians are without a trace of sin." Darkness is not a synonym for "indwelling sin." Darkness and light are not realities that are found within each of us. Rather, they are realities greater than and external to us.

Darkness and light are two opposing realities. We can not live in both – We can only live in one. We are challenged to decide in which reality we will choose to live, and then we are to endeavor to live within it. This is to live by the truth.

We understand that impure actions or attitudes cannot simply be tolerated or ignored. We understand the implications of what it means that "God is light." But we also understand that we are not perfect light as God is. And yet we can also be confident that the blood or death of Jesus serves to wash away the impurity so that the believer may continue in fellowship with God.

This acceptance of Jesus' death on our behalf is an ongoing part of our own walking in the light. Fellowship with God is not mystical communion with a vague divine entity but a commitment to a righteous God, a commitment that in turn lays the demand upon us to walk in the light.

Against the Gnostics, then, the Holy Spirit asserts that not every experience which is claimed as an experience of God is in fact fellowship with God. According to v. 6, if a person says we have fellowship with him (God) and yet goes on walking in the darkness, that person is lying about having fellowship with God and is not practicing the truth.

The phrase practicing the truth means living out the truth in a lifestyle obedient to God. The problem with the opponents lies not with their boast that they have fellowship with God, but the problem lies with their contradictory behavior - they continue walking in the darkness. And this proves conclusively that they are lying.

1 John - 05 – Fellowship Changes Us

The contrast with light occurs because the opponents claim to have fellowship with God, who has been characterized as “light”. In the last lesson, we shared a number of text from the Old Testament where God is compared with light. The contrast between light and darkness is also a major theme in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The light/darkness motif occurs in a number of places in the New Testament. And at the top of the teachings on light and darkness – Darkness cannot remain where the light exists.

This is not a new teaching, but it is one that we need to grasp more thoroughly. These people were living in this world, which is opposed to God, and this kind of life is characterized by darkness.

People living in this world are walking around in complete darkness, but since that is all they have ever known, they think they are able to see just fine. The Holy Spirit was quick to point out that these people are deceiving themselves. As long as they live the way they do they are still in sin and just don’t understand it.

It would be an incompatible situation, for the character of God to fellowship with those who have the character of one living in darkness. The Christian understands that living the life of sin makes it impossible to fellowship with God.

If you want a picture of a Christian living in this world, then imagine a person walking out onto a dark stage, and the spot light makes a circle of light all around them. The spot light does not light up the whole stage, but only the area around the person upon whom it is shining.

A Lost person is like the person walking around on the dark stage without the spot light. They are likely to bump into props on the stage and perhaps even step off the edge of the stage and fall into the pit. John’s reply clearly and simply declares, that it is “impossible” to have fellowship with God and continue to live in the darkness.

The person who has fellowship with God is like the person on stage with the spot light shining upon them – and it lights the area around them. Because of the light – they can clearly see the things on the stage near them and can step clear of them so that they do not stumble over them – and they can see the edge of the stage and avoid stepping into the pit.

Can we know that we have fellowship with God? Yes, we can.

If you will remember, in a previous lesson - I shared 5 notable benefits from Fellowship with God.

#1 – brings comfort

#2 – brings spiritual growth

#3 – brings peace

#4 – provides an atmosphere of conversation and sharing

#5 – helps make our prayers more effective

How does Fellowship with God bring about these benefits?

When we meet God and have real fellowship with God, some things happen within us and to us:

#1 - Meeting God takes us to a place that unapologetically cripples our pride.

We see our sin for what it is. And we desperately search for refuge. The person who really meets God Discovers that they do indeed begin to walk as God is.

#2 – When we meet God, we find a place in his heart to confess our rebellious ways to God.

He brings them up rather than hiding them. The light has exposed them, and he only wants to have them taken away.

The person who truly meets God and experiences real fellowship with God wants to have every last sin and shame and every bit of darkness stripped from them. They want a covering for their sin. Not an excuse.

1 John - 05 – Fellowship Changes Us

If you want to know if you are having True Fellowship with God – Just ask yourself – Am I experiencing these benefits in my life? - Am I seeing the changes in my life that come about from True Fellowship with God?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In this 1st letter of John, a contrast is presented. Let's summarize what we have seen so far. The person who does the wrong things lives in darkness. But the person who does the right things lives in light.

A person may say that he lives with God. But if that person does evil acts, then he lies. His actions are not right. Those actions are darkness and not light. That person is like someone who walks in darkness.

Darkness and light cannot be in unity. That person does not share the life from God. The false teachers said that they walked in the light. However, what they did were works of darkness. They did not do what was right. They did not obey the truth.

Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites - they didn't walk the talk. If we claim to follow God, yet walk in darkness, we are a hypocrite.

From time to time I hear a complaint about there being so many hypocrites in the Church, and I agree that there are a lot of hypocrites in the church. I have 2 things I like to point out to people who make that complaint:

First – these people wouldn't be much of a hypocrite –
if they didn't come to church.

Second – where are these hypocrites have a better chance to learn
to be a truthful person – hanging out with the lost
people are hanging out with the Saved People?

It is best that we don't assume just because someone claims to be a Christian they are one. And not everyone who goes to church is a Christian . I am so sorry to have to say this, but not everyone who claims to be a pastor is a Christian.

This is precisely the point the Holy Spirit is making in this 1st letter of John - liars exist in the church. If we try to persuade either ourselves or others - That we have fellowship with God, while we walk, either inwardly or outwardly, in darkness - In sin of any kind - We do not tell the truth. Our actions prove, that the truth is not in us. Having reviewed the first 6 verses of this 1st chapter - Let's take a look at verse 7.

Read 1 John 1:7 and make notes:

Let's chew on this verse for a few minutes.

“if we walk in the light”

God is in the light because He **IS** light. To live in the light is to be true to God. This is to live in the same manner as God lives.

“walk in the light”

This means to live in a generally obedient life, It means living without harboring known sin or without resisting the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The message here means that a walk in the light **IS** possible. We know that on this side of eternity, sinless perfection is not possible. Yet we can still walk in the light, which means obedience. Here is where we might be tempted to quit, to give up Or to say, “I can't live a perfect life”!

Some teach that Christians can become light, as God is light. But the Holy Spirit seems to indicate that this is not the goal. We are to walk **in the** light; we are never told **to be** light.

People who do evil things do not share God's life. John speaks of a walk, indicating a pattern of living. “Walk” does not speak of an occasional lapse, but of a lifestyle of darkness.

“we have fellowship with one another”

Real Christians live in the light. They believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They all share the same life. This unity among Christians shows that they belong to God.

Real Believers are united with each other. They are united with God. The Christian life is described as walking, which implies activity. "Walking" implies action, continuity, and progress.

1 John - 06 – Evidence of Fellowship With God

Since God is active and walking, if we have fellowship with Him we will also be active and walking. We are together with Him in fellowship. We have fellowship with one another.

We might have expected John to say, "We have fellowship with God." That is true, but already in the idea of walking together **with** God in the light. John wants to make it clear that fellow Christians who walk in the light enjoy fellowship with each other.

This leads to an important idea: if we do not have fellowship with one another, then one party or both parties are not walking in the light.

Two Christians who are in right relationship with God will also naturally be in right relationship with each other. The result of committing oneself to God and to walk in the light is twofold. First, we have fellowship with one another. Second, those in this fellowship can be assured that the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin ("all sin").

In other words, those in the light do occasionally sin - but they recognize the need to be purified from sin. On the other hand, those who claim they can walk in darkness deny the need for purification. Even though sin appears to belong in the realm of darkness, the continued intention to walk in the light and to shape one's life by God's own character will itself lead to a recognition of what is false and impure in us.

Here is one of the ways to recognize a truly saved person: When a truly saved person recognizes something as false in their life – they want to correct it and bring Truth in its place. When a lost person recognizes something as false in their life – they want to hide it.

“the blood of Jesus purifies us”

God has made the remedy for our sin. By this, he can make us clean from all sins. So, we can keep our unity with him. This remedy is the blood of his Son Jesus Christ.

The word ‘blood’ here means the death of Jesus. The Old Testament says that the life is in the blood. Jesus gave his life for us. By his death, Jesus has taken away our sins. He removes all sin from us. But we must believe in him.

Nobody can be perfect while we are here on earth. But God forgives those who believe. He makes us clean from all sin. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. As we walk in the light we also enjoy the continual cleansing of Jesus. The verb used here for “cleanses us from all sin” is in the present tense, not in the future tense. We can do more than merely hope we will one day be cleansed. Because of what Jesus did on the cross for me, I can be cleansed today.

Please take note that in the verse there is no mention of emotions, feelings, or achievements, as co-operating with the blood to take away sin. Christ took the sins of his people and was punished for those sins as if he had been himself a sinner, and sin is taken away from us; but in no sense or form is our sin removed by attainments, emotions, feelings or experiences."

This continual cleansing is ours by the blood of Jesus. This does not mean the actual drops or molecules of His literal blood, but His literal death in our place and the literal wrath of the Father He endured on our behalf. The blood of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all our sins - past, present, and future. The work of Jesus on the cross doesn't only deal with the guilt of sin that might send us to hell. It also deals with the stain of sin what hinders our continual relationship with God.

We need to come to God often with the simple plea, “cleanse me with the blood of Jesus.” Not because we haven't been cleansed before, but because we need to be continually cleansed to enjoy continual relationship.

“The blood” is more specific than “the death” would be, for “the blood” denotes sacrifice. It is always the blood that is shed.”

Please note also, that nothing said about rites and ceremonies. The text does not say “the waters of baptism together with the blood of Jesus” cleanses us. It is the blood of Jesus – the shed blood. Without even one drop of baptismal water.

And note that it does not say “the Lords Supper and the blood of Jesus.” It is the blood of Jesus – the shed blood - Without one bite of bread or one sip of the fruit of the vine.

"Does my walking in the light take away my sins? Not at all. I am as much a sinner in the light as in the darkness, if it were possible for me to be in the light without being washed in the blood.

Some want to protest: “but we have fellowship with God, and doesn’t having fellowship with God take away sin?” No person can have fellowship with God unless their sin is taken away; Our fellowship with God, and / or our walking in the light, does not take away our sin!

“From all sin” –

We can be cleansed, by the blood of Jesus, from all sin. The sin we inherited from Adam, the sin we have committed as kids, the sins of our growing up. We can be cleansed from our sins against our father, against our mother, against our brother and sister. Sins against our husbands or wives, against our children. Sins against our employers or our employees, sins against our friends and our enemies. Lying, stealing, cheating, adultery, swearing, drugs, booze, promiscuity, murder. We can be cleansed from the sins that haunt us every day, The sins we don’t even know we did – all sin can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Why do we want to be cleansed from “all sin”? Sin is the hindrance to fellowship but the blood of Jesus, received by faith as the payment for our sin, solves the problem of our sin and opens the way to fellowship with God.

We can't come to fellowship with God through philosophical speculation. We can't come to fellowship with God through intellectual education. We can't come to fellowship with God through drugs or entertainment. We can't come to fellowship with God through scientific investigation. We can only come to fellowship with God by dealing with our sin problem through the blood of Jesus.

1 John - 06 – Evidence of Fellowship With God

There is something many people miss when they read this verse. And having missed it they ask:

“If we are really walking in the light, why do we still need to be purified from sin?”

Walking in the light cannot mean living a perfect life, without need of cleansing. We will never reach total perfection in this life, but this does not give us a license to sin – in fact, it should push us toward more serious consecration.

We CAN walk in the light – in FREEDOM from sin! We can lead a blameless life, even though we still need to be purified by the blood of Jesus! In fact, it is the purifying by Jesus’ blood that makes our life blameless. The 13th chapter of John gives us clarification and insight. Jesus was doing more than initiating foot washing!

Read John 13:10 and make notes:

Even though Christians have been cleansed in an important general sense, our “feet” need cleaning. The statement “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” does not refer to initial justification but to ongoing sanctification for the Christian?

The Holy Spirit speaking through John is not worried about the initial justification (salvation) of the people to whom he is writing. He is reassuring them about forgiveness of sins committed after having become Christians. If we understand these statements to refer to initial justification, the force of the conditional construction (“if we walk in the light”) would make one’s justification contingent upon one’s deeds or behavior, and this is bringing one’s salvation back into the arena of works.

1 John - 06 – Evidence of Fellowship With God

It seems almost certain that “walk in the light” refers to what one does after one has “come to the light.” This is in stark contrast to the condition of the false teachers, who profess to have fellowship with God, but deny their profession by their lifestyle. But if we walk in Light, his blood cleanses us from all sin - continually (cleanses is in the present tense).

When we get saved, we get bathed from head to toe spiritually – all the years of filth and pollution are washed away, and we are made as white as snow ... totally cleansed from sin! Many text in the Bible speak of God’s people being washed. The problem we have to deal with is that we live in this world! We still have to walk along “dirty roads” and sometimes our feet get dirty even though we have been washed.

There’s simply no way to avoid all the dirt all the time! We sit in a room full of smokers – we will smell like smoke. We work where there is a lot of profanity on the job site – we will find ourselves letting a profane word come out. We hang around those who tend to dress or behave in a lewd manner – well we’ve seen it happen. God required purification from Israel for uncleanness as well as sin – that principle still holds true!

Sometimes a Saved person will step out of the Light. Sometimes we momentarily sin, we temporarily fall short, we have a fleeting envious thought, speak a judgmental word, we cast a fleeting lustful glance, or we quickly become swelled with pride because the Lord saw fit to use us. A child of God will have temporary shortcomings and failures, but that doesn’t mean we need to get saved all over again!

In this 1st letter of John, we do not find a picture of one attaining a plateau - rather, we find the picture of a pathway along which we walk. We are to walk in the light and toward the light. Within that light we know ourselves to be sinners and we know God to be all righteousness and truth. To know these truths about ourselves and God is the essence of what confession is.

The imagery of this passage--walking, confessing, purifying - leaves us with a picture of true allegiance to God is not something that is static – not a one time event but as dynamic – as in an ongoing relationship. People should be able to tell the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. If we can't it might be a hint something is wrong.

So, how can we tell if we are in fellowship with God. There are 4 indicators of a person being in fellowship with God.

.#1. We Imitate God.

Imitation of God is the only sure proof of our having fellowship with him.

.#2. We Are Quick To Repent.

We know that we are walking in the light when we are quick to repent and also careful to guard our hearts. We live in purity to the point that sin is an abnormality merely dust and dirt on our feet while our whole body is clean. This is in total contrast to those who despise the grace of God and go back to their old ways.

.#3. We Focus On Fellowship Rather Than An Event.

The issue here is fellowship, not salvation. The Christian who temporarily walks in darkness is still saved, but not in fellowship with God.

.#4. We Fellowship With Other Believers.

Fellowship with one another is also something shared between believers and is a result of a righteous lifestyle (“walking in the light”).

Please don't get angry with me – when we find someone who says they are a Christian, but they choose to live their Christian Life all alone- and avoid fellowship with other Believers - there is reason to question their Salvation. Let's be honest with ourselves - Do we have these evidences apparent in our daily life? If the answer is “no” – then this is a great day to begin fellowship with God.

1 John - 06 – Evidence of Fellowship With God

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Our Human nature is very real and is an active part of who and what we are. Our Human nature has direct input into the things we do and the choices we make. It is this “nature” which is the root cause for the need for a message today on denial.

Most people can tell the difference between right and wrong. And yet, when they are approached with their own need for forgiveness and cleansing from sin - denial sets in and many will declare that they are okay even though they know it to be a lie. Even after the truth is seen, we have a habit of slipping back into denial.

Denial is very natural and goes way back to the beginning of man’s existence:

Adam, Eve, Cain - all expressed their own personal denial.

Abraham - she’s not my wife, she is my sister (Genesis 12)

Peter - denied that he even knew Jesus - 3 times

This lesson is from a very old text - but it has never been more relevant or more needed than today. We have already seen in this letter we call 1st John - that those who claim to be in fellowship with God - and yet continue to walk in darkness are liars. God is pure light - in whom there is no darkness - and if we are in fellowship with God - we could not be living in darkness. In this next part of the text - those who claim to have no sin are addressed.

Read 1 John 1:8 and make notes:

The attempt of the false teachers to deceive others begins with their self-deception about being guilty of sins committed. If we do a literal translation of the phrase “to be without sin”- we get “sin we do not have”. So, if we claim that there is nothing we need to be forgiven of - or forgiven for - then we are doing something to ourselves - more so than to others.

1 John - 07 – Claiming To Be Without Sin

The meaning of “we deceive ourselves” - means “to lead astray, cause to wander, mislead, deceive.” This is that “something” that we are doing to ourselves - “we are leading ourselves astray”- “we are causing ourselves to wander off” - “we are misleading ourselves” - “we are deceiving us.”

There are some who suggest this “self-deception” arises from misunderstanding or confusion. But as we examine the other uses of this verb in 1 John - it seems to imply that more is in view here. These false teachers are described as “anti-christs” in 2:18 - just after another mention of “anti-christ” in 4:3. 1 John 4:6 - uses a noun that refers to them as having a “spirit of falsehood”.

Just a side note here: In God’s Word - Deceit is constantly associated with Antichrist and with the false teachers. If the people were to accept the false teaching and claim to be free from the guilt of sin, they would be deceiving themselves, and in this case it would be the result of accepting the claims of the false teachers. People who deny their sin are lying to themselves.

Some people today actually say the same thing that some in John’s day were saying- “I do not need the Lord to remove any sin”. They thought that they did not have any sin. This simply was not true back then - and it is not true today - and even the claim itself is a sin. Sadly, many people are deceived in this area - that’s why so many groups say “its not your fault”.

Just so that we can give credit where credit is due - Who is the master of deceit? (Satan).

Many cults and some churches who claim to worship Jesus - deny sin and deny the existence of hell. They teach, Hell is something of your own creation. Many of them teach a variety of versions of the statement that says, “sin is relative to one’s personal perception” - “there is nothing that is inherently sinful itself.”

1 John - 07 – Claiming To Be Without Sin

The Bible has a very different view. According to God's Word there are some things that are sin – regardless of who the person is that is participating in them. Sin just is not a popular topic these days! Because Sin is not popular - we try to dress sin up in the verbiage of political correctness:

As a drug addict we're chemically dependent.

As a drunk we have a "sickness".

If we're obese we're gravity challenged.

Flunk a class and the teacher had it out for me.

It appears to be something of a national attitude these days to try to blame someone else! "The buck stops here" isn't true in most places anymore, - even at the highest levels of our government; taking responsibility for our actions is not popular. We want to call sin something besides what it is, - we want to pass the responsibility somewhere else - (I was born this way).

But the Bible says if we think we're not to blame - First - the truth is not in us; and Secondly - we are deceived. We are lying and we are deceived - Period. Bottom-line.

There are very few people today who think they are "sinlessly" perfect, - yet not many really think of themselves as sinners. Many will say "I make mistakes" or "I'm not perfect" or "I'm only human," - but usually they say such things to excuse or defend their actions. This is different from knowing and admitting - "I am a sinner" or "what I did was wrong."

The Holy Spirit - speaking through John – has introduced the ideas of walking in the light and being cleansed from sin. But he did not for a moment mean that a Christian can become "sinlessly" perfect. To think this of ourselves is to deceive ourselves, and to say this of ourselves is to lie – and the truth is not in us.

Our deceitful heart reveals an almost Satanic shrewdness in self-deception. If we say we have no sin we have achieved a fearful success, we have put out our own eyes, and perverted our own reason! When God manifested Himself – Truth became alive in Jesus Christ

I realize some people are tempted to protest and say, “what’s the big deal about someone denying they don’t have any sin to be forgiven” - “they are probably wrong about other things as well.” If we don’t see the problem in denying our sin - Then we are in great danger, because that attitude itself indicates we are in darkness of understanding.

There are 3 problems with Denying that we sin - I want to give them to you in reverse order:

#3 - We Are Self-Deceived

If we say that we have not sinned - If we deny the presence of sin - we are self-deceived and denying God’s word. Sin is always present, but so is its remedy - so there is no reason that sin should be allowed to be a hindrance to our relationship with God.

The idea that His word is not in us is related to the idea that Jesus is the Word of life (1 John 1:1); if we refuse to see sin in us, we show that Jesus is not in us. If we say that there is no sin in us. That would be false. That would be saying we are already perfect.

Those who say this have chosen to forget their sin. They refuse to agree that all people have sinned. It is human to sin. They do not live by the truth that God has shown us. They deny the basic fact of their sin. Truth as a principle of life is not in them. They do not share in the reality of God. Jesus showed us that God is the truth. The truth of God is not in these persons.

#2 - Denial Of Sin Puts Us In A Dangerous Place

The problem with denial is that it keeps us from receiving, the Grace and the mercy of God. His forgiveness and cleansing requires from us not denial - but confession. We must learn that if we are ever going to get to where God wants us to be we must face ourselves - and to do so regardless of how bad we may appear, we must confess the truth so that God can make something different and new from what we had before.

To say that we have no sin puts us in a dangerous place, because God's grace and mercy is extended to sinners. God's Grace and Mercy is not extended to "those who make no mistakes" - or to those who say "I'm only human" - or to those who say "no one is perfect" people.

No, God's Grace and Mercy is extended to those who acknowledge they have failed and need His help, His forgiveness, and His cleansing. We need to realize the victory and forgiveness that comes from saying, "I am a sinner - even a great sinner – but I have a Savior who cleanses me from all sin."

#1 Problem - We Can't Be Saved

If we don't acknowledge that we are a sinner, we can't be saved. An incident occurred which is recorded in Matthew 19:16-20 - a young man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds to his inquiry by saying that he must obey the commandments. At this point the young man responded that he has kept the commandments since his youth. What? Excuse Me ?

A really honest answer would have been "I can't keep them no matter how hard I try." Anyone who believes they can keep the ten commandments needs to review what Jesus said about them in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5). This young man didn't want to admit he was a sinner; and anyone who won't admit they are a sinner - and won't admit that they have no ability to save themselves - simply can't be saved.

To deny one's sin is ultimately to deny the need for Christ's atonement. This letter of John answers the claims of these false teachers that they are sinless by stating they are self-deceived. They are not merely confused, but are deceived by the greatest lie of all, the lie of the anti-Christ.

Although sin appears to put one into darkness, it is actually the claim to be without sin that nails down the fact that one is in darkness. In fact, the very claim to be sinless shows that a lie, and not the truth, is at work within those who make it such a claim. God's truth is not served if we simply cover up the truth about ourselves. God's truth must be manifested in an accurate understanding of God and of ourselves.

1 John - 07 – Claiming To Be Without Sin

Denial is our fleshly way of making ourselves feel “Okay.” We know deep down inside who we are. So, does denial really make us feel better? No, actually the opposite takes place inside. We become hardened so that we do not want to know the real truth about us. We desperately look for ways to justify if only in our mind - our actions, our words, and our attitudes. We become defensive, “I don’t want you or God, or the Word of God” - “to tell me the truth about myself” – I want to be comfortable like I am without change!

The Holy Spirit through John, is addressing people who have sinned, warning them that they cannot claim to be free from the guilt of that sin. The person living in darkness of understanding – living in spiritual darkness – doesn’t even understand what sin really is. They tend to see the way they are living as just fine. And if someone comes along and finds fault with their lifestyle – they usually think you are the one with the problem – “because I know I am okay”.

These people do not see their actions and attitudes as sinful because they are in spiritual darkness. That is the point the Holy Spirit is making through John – because they are so deceived, they think they are having fellowship with God while they participate in the lifestyle they do. But they in reality do not have any fellowship with God.

Please hear and take note of what I am about to say: No one ever has - and no one ever will be kept out of heaven because of their confessed sins – regardless of how bad these sins were. But a great many have - and a many more will be kept out of heaven because of their professed goodness.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the last lesson, we looked at man's natural tendency to deny our sin. Man, by his fleshly nature, will usually say one of three things about himself in regards to sin:

1. We don't really care about sin or holiness
2. We don't believe we have a sin nature and become prideful.
3. We don't think we ever sinned and become hardened.

This is where we begin to have problems with some of the modern evangelism methods. Today, instead of presenting God in His holiness so that the sinner might be convinced of their sin, we present man's goodness and God's love for him and expect this to make the person feel better about themselves.

What should we expect to happen when a person meets God? Applause for having made a great decision? No!

Many people actually try to run for their life when they meet God. We try to hide. In our denial we try to escape God's holiness. How do we break the bondage of Denial? We must recognize we can't do it on our own - and so many of us have tried – haven't we? And this brings us to the next text from 1 John.

Read 1 John 1:9 and make notes:

There are those who teach that this verse is talking about the "original sin" of man in the garden. And others teach that this verse is talking about the continuing sins of man in our everyday life. The verb used in the original text occurs 4 times in the Gospel of John, 5 times in 1 John, 1 time in 2 John, and 1 time in Revelation. In all of the other instances, the object is always Christ; - "confessing Christ." But in 1 John 1:9, it is the "confession of sin". And this "Confess" is in the present tense; meaning that we should keep on confessing our sin - instead of referring to a "once-for-all" confession of sin at our conversion.

As we have pointed out in the discussion on verse 7 - the Holy Spirit is not worried about the initial justification of the people to whom he is writing. He is concerned with the members of the Christian community and their daily walk.

This verse says “when we confess.” Confession is the key to becoming free from the bondage of denial. Confession is not like we are telling God something He doesn’t know – God Already Knows! When we confess our sin, we are willing to say the same thing about our sin that God says about it.

Jesus’ account of the religious man and the sinner who prayed before God illustrates this; the Pharisee bragged about how righteous he was, while the sinner just said “God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18:10-14) The one who confessed his sin was the one who agreed with God about how bad he was.

Real Confession is personal; saying “God, if we have made any mistakes, forgive us” isn’t confession. There are several reason why such a statement is not confession. When we say “if we” – that says we are not convinced that we have sinned. When we say “if we made ANY” – that says we want to keep it general and not specific so we don’t have to be accountable. And when we say “mistakes” – we aren’t being honest and that’s not calling our sin the same thing God call our sin.

It is said that confession is good for the soul. How is “confession good for our soul”? Here are 4 ways in which confession is good for our soul:

#1 - Confession gets our soul into agreement with God.

Confession is the acknowledgment of sin - not the acknowledgment that there is sin, or that sin is wrong, but it is the acknowledging that “we have sinned against God in thought, word, and deed.”

#2 - Confession keeps our soul out of the darkness.

Confession means that we know God as light, as the measure of truth and righteousness by which we fall short.

#3 - Confession gets our soul into a place where we can get saved.

When we confess our sin, we adopt a stance of dependence toward God. It is precisely the refusal to confess our sin that will keep us from the saving work of God – just as it did for the people in John’s day.

#4 - Confession turns our soul toward God seeking His help.

Confession implies a turning to God. It shows a desire to conform ourselves to God’s character. Confession is not us saying, “I did it again; that’s just the way I am.” Confession is saying, “Forgive me, for I have done it again; but I don’t want to do it again. Confession includes the attitude of , “Please help me to live within the light of God’s truth.” Confession is a resource to bring our whole life into conformity with God’s will.

So how do we do this thing called “confession.” The precise manner or method of confession isn’t specified. If the method was all that important – I just can’t help but believe that the Holy Spirit would have spelled out how we should go about confession – but He didn’t. There are at three basic methods of confession that are taught:

1. privately confess sin in prayer to God;
2. a privately confess sin to another believer;
3. publicly confess sin to the Christian community, possibly in the context of a worship service.

Concerning Method #1 – where we only confess privately to God. And Method #2 – where we go to a confessional booth. There are some sins that one of these is probably the appropriate way to confess for several reasons. But it would be such a loss – if all sins were confessed only privately. There are 2 really positive things that come from public confession:

Consider Miss “A” sitting in the congregation who is struggling with a secret sin – Petrified of even the thought of confessing their sin – afraid of how others would reject them if they knew. Then Miss “B” comes forward and confesses their sin – and it happens to be the same, or very similar to the, secret sin of Miss “A” in the congregation. What an encouragement that confession becomes to Miss “A.” Especially when they witness the other people forgiving and accepting this confessed sinner.

The second thing we get from public confession is release from the threats of Satan. When Satan comes to us and threatens to reveal our secret sin if we don’t do what he says, - we usually give in. But when he comes and threatens to reveal our sins – and we respond “I’ve already confessed that sin – people already know – and they still love me”- It takes away a lot of Satan’s power over us.

Many of us, by experience, have learned that we don’t have to go to a confessional booth to confess our sin. When we are baptized, we are confessing our sin by saying we needed to be cleansed and reborn. When we receive communion, we confess our sin by saying we need the work of Jesus on the cross to take our sin away.

But of course, we need to confess our sin in the most straightforward way: by admitting to God that we have done is sin, and asking for His divine forgiveness, based on what Jesus has done on the cross for us. In the final analysis it is probably fair to say that the fact of confession of sin by the believer is what was important, not the method of confession.

So, what happens if we do admit our sins? Something significant happens when we confess our sins because God is Faithful and God is Just!

If we confess, God is faithful; our job is only to confess it. We don’t need to do works or follow a set of rules to be saved, We need only to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. If with a penitent and believing heart, we confess our sins, he is faithful.

God is not only perfect in love. He is also perfect in justice. The Bible says that righteousness and justice are the very foundation of his government (Psalm 97:2). There is justice at the heart of this universe. That means that if we are to be forgiven, someone has to accept the consequences for our wrongdoing.

In a manner that passes human understanding, Jesus Christ accepted that responsibility. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you and me to God...” (I Peter 3:18).

God is Faithful and Just – Both to forgive us our sins – that includes taking away all the guilt of our sins. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness – That is to purify our souls from every kind and every degree of it. God forgives us when we confess our sins. And this is a major contrast between the Christian and people who say that they have sinned.

Although sin is present, it doesn't have to remain a hindrance to our relationship with God. We will find complete cleansing (from all unrighteousness) as we confess our sins.

God's Forgiveness is the miracle of a new beginning. It is to start where we are, not where we wish we were, or where we wish the other person was.

Forgiveness may not take away the hurt. And Forgiveness does not deny the past injury. Forgiveness does not ignore the possibility and need for repentance and a change in the relationship. Forgiveness means being willing to take the initiative in dealing with any barriers that are hindering a restored relationship.

Our sins are not forgiven because we confess; if this were the case - if forgiveness for a sin could only come where there was confession - then we would all be forever doomed, because it would be impossible for us to confess every sin we ever commit. We are forgiven because our punishment was put upon Jesus, we are cleansed by His blood.

As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance.

Forgiveness and the need for Forgiveness is not a new concept – many in the Old Testament era understood this. Look at what David had to say in Psalm 32:5. When we see this – it becomes easy to see how David was such a powerful worshiper.

God is faithful and just to forgive us: Because of Jesus' work, the righteousness of God is our friend - insuring that we will be forgiven, because Jesus paid the penalty of our sin.

What did it cost Christ to forgive us? It cost him his life. Sins need to be confessed to God, and when this is done, the believer may be sure that God, because he is faithful - Both to forgive us our sins - To take away all the guilt of them - And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness – To purify our souls from every kind and every degree of it.

We must always remember that confession is both personal and corporate. In confessing our sins, we acknowledge our place in the company of confessed sinners. Together we stand, on common ground, before God who accepts and forgives all of us.

Confession can never be something by which we gain the upper hand over another brother or sister. It certainly is no mark of superiority to confess our sins. It is, rather, simply an acknowledgment of who we are.

What God wants of us, then, is sincere commitment to walk in the light and honest confession of our sin. The promise of 1 John 1:9 shouldn't lead us into sin, saying "Hey, I'll go ahead and sin because God will forgive me." It should lead us out of sin, knowing that God could only be faithful and just to forgive us our sins because the wrath we deserved was poured out on the sin.

Since each sin carries with it its own measure of wrath, there is a sense in which each sin we commit added to the agony of Jesus on the cross. There is no more sure evidence that a person is out of fellowship with God than for someone to commit sin with the idea, "I can just ask for forgiveness later." Since God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, we can rest assured that the person who commits sin thinking like this isn't in fellowship with God.

1 John - 08 – Confess Our Sin

Sin is something that affects all our lives. But sin does not have to spoil our unity with God. We should admit that we have sinned. When we do, God will forgive us.

God has promised to forgive us and he will keep his promise. He cannot just forget our sin as if it was not there. He is good and holy. Sin cannot remain with him. He had to remove it from his people. God achieved this by putting all our sin on the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus took the punishment for our sin. He died for this purpose. Now God can forgive those who confess their sins.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The Holy Spirit has told us that God is pure light - and there is no darkness in Him. The Holy Spirit tells us that God is Truth - and there is no “un-truth” in Him. The Holy Spirit tells us that those who claim to be without sin. Are walking in darkness – a place where God is not - and that they do not have truth in them.

Most Christians today – at least on some level - believe these statements. But have you noticed how comfortable we appear to be - while we know these statements to be true - and we can sit quietly by while others around us go about their lives – declaring that they do not sin?

Read 1 John 1:10 and make notes:

Verse 10 contains the last of the three “If we claim” clauses. Many see this as a repetition of the claim in verse 8. But verse 8 is different from verse 10 in a rather subtle way. Verse 8 uses the present tense while verse 10 uses the perfect tense. Verse 8’s expression refers to the “guilt of sin” or the “guilt resulting from sin” – verse 10 isn’t referring to the guilt that results from sin – but is referring to denying that any acts of sin have been committed.

The false teachers had developed a version of perfectionism by which they were able to deny that, as professing Christians, they could be convicted of sin. And once again, “if we claim” is followed by a negative statement giving the evaluation of the false teacher’s claims.

In the Gospel of John, we are told that it is sin to reject Jesus and/or to refuse to believe in Him (John 8). The Gospel of John also tells us that Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to take away the sins of the world (John 1).

At the most elementary level – the false teacher’s claim is revealing that they are failing to acknowledge that before a person comes to salvation in Jesus Christ they are a sinner – even if they are living a “good life” among men. However, as we have already pointed out in at least two of the previous lessons – These verses in 1 John 1 – are concerned with the daily walk of the Christian Believers right now. And not so much with their life and actions before becoming Christians.

Here in verse 10 – the Holy Spirit, speaking through John – very plainly declares that anyone who says they “have not sinned” is a Liar! And goes on to say – anyone who says this reveals that the Word of God has no place in their life. This is a parallel line to verse 8 which said the “truth” is not in such a person. To declare that the “truth” is not in a person – or to declare that the Word of God is not at work in a person – is a very serious charge.

These are people who are claiming to “know God” – these are people who are claiming to have “God’s Word and God’s Message” for others – these are people who are claiming that the eternal life revealed by Jesus Christ is residing in them. And the Holy Spirit says – none of this is so!

Do we want someone who does not know God to teach us about God?

Do we want someone who does not have the Word of God at work in their daily life teaching us about God’s Word and how to use it in our daily life?

Do we want someone who does not have eternal life themselves to teach us how to receive eternal life?

Anyone who denies that they ever sin – does not believe God’s Word. They may believe some part of it – but if we don’t believe all of God’s Word – we really don’t believe God’s Word.

God’s Word declares that we have all sinned – past tense – but then it says all “fall short of the glory of God” – present tense. And the Bible clearly declares that is why Jesus came to earth – lived a perfect and blameless life – and then died on the cross.

There are those who argue that as soon as we get saved – we no longer fall short of God’s glory – so this too becomes a past tense situation. But then we get into 1 John chapter 1 and we see all these words written to Believing Christians and they are talking about “present tense” sin in our lives.

Those who claim they have never sinned – cut themselves off from God – because such a declaration is opposed to God’s Word. In order for a person to make such a claim – they do not know God – and they do not believe His Word. They may be very good people by the world’s standards – but they cannot believe God’s Word and say this – and even if they do not know God’s Word – they cannot know God and say this.

In order to say “I don’t sin” they simply do not believe the simplest truths of God’s Word. And any such person is in a dangerous place as they march on toward eternity.

Do you notice in verse 10 that it says anyone who makes this claim is “making God out to be a liar”? How safe can that be – here we are marching into eternity – calling the Lord of eternity “a liar”!

Imagine you are walking into boss’ office – and as you walk through the door into their presence – you hear several witnesses declare that you have been calling your boss “a liar”! How safe would you be?

Imagine you are going in for an IRS audit – and as you walk into the presence of the IRS auditor - witnesses tell them you have been calling the IRS Auditor “a liar”! How safe would you be?

It is so very sad – but this is a small example of how these people are marching into eternity. Some of these false teachers – both in John’s day and in our contemporary day – are saying “well, sure, I sinned in the past, but I have arrived at a spiritual level where I no longer sin”

Read James 2:10 and make notes:

I will admit, that it is possible to convince some people that we never do anything wrong – that we never say anything wrong – we never even have a wrong thought or attitude – but do any of us really think we will be able to convince God that we never ever violate even one of His directives or instructions?

God has given us some instructions and guidelines to live by that apply to everyone – we will call them corporate directives. God also gives many of us some personal instructions and guidelines that only apply to us – we will call these personal directives. Is there any one of us who wants to try to make a case before God that “I have obeyed faithfully every corporate instruction and every personal instruction” – “I have been obedient in word, action, thought, and attitude”

In the book of Revelation, John is used of the Holy Spirit to send some specific messages to each of 7 churches. But here in the letter we call 1st John – this is a message to all churches – to all believers. There are those today who teach that we simply cannot know or comprehend that purpose of this letter. I believe that if we examine this letter in an attitude of simplicity – it is easy to see to the purpose.

God does not want us to be blinded by sweet tasting poison – it is so pleasing to our spiritual taste buds to think we can arrive at a spiritual plateau where we would not longer commit sin in words, deeds, or thoughts. But to allow such a teaching to come into our lives – immediately blinds us to the reality that we are cut off from God by it. Those who claim to be without sin – do not know God - They do not have His Truth within them – They do not have His Word at work in their lives.

Life must be difficult for those who are physically blind. But once they accept the reality of their blindness – they can learn to adapt and to function. Can you imagine what life would be like – and perhaps how short life would be if a person who is physically blind did not realize they are blind and they try to go about daily life? Magnify that a few hundred times – and it might be a good picture of the person who is spiritually blind – Believing they never sin.

Some may be tempted to think that this message about denial of sin has been drawn out too much. Some may think that this message has been hammered to death. I can understand that line of thinking – but I assure you – it has not! I didn't understand at first why God was directing me to pull this message out into several parts – because it seemed that it could be covered in one message. But as I studied it – meditated upon it – and listened carefully to His instructions – God impressed upon me that His people today simply do not take this very serious situation as being all that serious.

It is one thing to knowingly tell something that is not true. It is another thing to deceive ourselves to the point that there is no truth left in us. It is worse still to come to the place where we call God a liar!

WE – the community of Believers today – as a whole – do not understand just how dangerous this false teaching is – the one about coming to a place in our spiritual walk where we will no longer sin. This just may be one – if not the most – dangerous teachings we will encounter.

People who allow such a teaching to begin to take root in their life – are heading down a path to complete and utter destruction – and we cannot stand by and allow it to happen without calling out to them with a warning of impending danger.

It is one thing to face God's wrath for simply rejecting Jesus. It is another thing to face God's wrath for deceiving ourselves and others. It is yet still another thing to face God's wrath for calling Him a Liar! Are we at peace to allow others to go that way – without at least trying to get them to see?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Chapter 1 addressed some of the false teachings that were working their way into the church in John's day. And those same false teachings can still be found popping up in churches today. To summarize those false teachings:

1. we can have fellowship with God and still live in sin
2. we can become thoroughly righteous and be sinless on our own

If teachings like #1 - takes root in the heart or mind of man – there is a downward progression of sinfulness that will take place. If we try to fellowship with God and live in darkness at the same time – we will slowly, but surely, spend more and more time in the darkness and less and less time with God – Until one day – we are living in darkness all the time.

The goal of such teachings as #2 - is to allow us to think we can arrive at some level of sainthood and continue to indulge in the sinful activities of this world without having to experience the consequences of the sin.

The first chapter is written in a rather blunt tone – addressing the teachings of false teachers. Sin is sin – don't call it anything other than what it is. People who make certain claims – are liars. People who make certain claims – are calling God a liar.

Now we get to chapter 2 –

Read 1 John 2:1 and make notes:

This text is written as though a father is talking to his children. The phrase used in this text to address the readers – is clearly a term of endearment – or a term of affection. This is not written as a set of instructions from a manager to their subordinates. This is not written as a set of instructions from a professor to their students. This is not written as a legal order from a judge to the plaintiff.

While it is written with a tone indicating the author has some spiritual responsibility over the readers – It is written as from one who holds the readers in high regard. It is the desire of the father that his children should not sin.

The message is not that the readers should refrain from being habitual repetitive sinners, and that occasional sins are acceptable. The message is that the readers should work toward living their daily lives without sin. This is very much in line with Jesus' teachings found in the Gospels: Jesus told the man he healed in John Chapter 5, and the woman caught in adultery in John Chapter 8 – “go and sin no more.”

The purpose in writing this letter is to help his children be able to live their lives without sin. But this father realizes that his children are weak. So, after telling the children that “I do not want you to sin” – “I want you to live without sin” - He goes on to say, “but if you find that you have sinned.” Jesus speaks to God the Father on our behalf - “there is someone ready to help you” - “my children, God has provided a remedy for sin” - “my dear children, there is a person who is able and ready to speak to God on your behalf.”

This person is Jesus Christ – He Himself has never sinned. Jesus has always done what is right – even though He has been tempted in every way that any of the rest of us has. Jesus understands the things we have to face – and he understands God. Jesus, as God's obedient and faithful son, has a special place and special favor with God. God will hear what Jesus says on our behalf. There is power in the wonder-working blood of the Lamb!

Just an interesting note for those who like to do word studies: There are several places in the Gospel of John where the Holy Spirit is said to be our “advocate.” Here in 1st John, the same word is used to say that Jesus is our advocate before the Heavenly Father. Jesus told his disciples in John 14 that the Father would send them “another – of the same kind.” So we get the idea that Jesus had been an advocate during his earthly ministry. So, it should not seem strange to us – that Jesus would be an advocate before the Father in His Heavenly ministry. After all, Jesus, like the Father, does not change.

Read 1 John 2:2 and make notes:

The Greek word translated “atoning sacrifice” carries the idea of turning away the divine wrath. When we realize we have sinned and then repent - Jesus does not say to the Father that we are innocent. If we sin, we are guilty. God has to punish sin.

Jesus died for our sin - He took all our sin to himself. Jesus has suffered and died on our behalf. He offered himself as the sacrifice for our sin. And by his death, Jesus satisfied God’s law.

God accepted what Jesus Christ had done. He proved this when he raised Jesus from death to life. Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross made it possible for us to receive forgiveness for our sins. Therefore, Jesus Christ is able to ask God to forgive us and God will do it.

This next part is very important – and many people who profess to be a Christian – act as though they don’t know this. Christ did not die **only** for the Christians. Jesus died for the sins of **all** people. His death is sufficient for all the people who live in the world. This does not mean that God will forgive everyone automatically.

Each person must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They must accept what he has done for them. Then they will receive the benefits of Christ’s death. So, what is it that we should take home with us from this text?

Probably, the great majority of people accept the attitude that “sin” is just a normal part of human life – so, all Christians sin. Maybe most even accept it as fact that Christians continue to commit sin. We start getting into trouble when we take that a step further and say that since it is so common – then it just doesn’t matter. God also knows it is common, and He is faithful to forgive.

1 John - 10 – Everyone Can Be Forgiven

Friends - Sin does matter. Christians should strive toward living their life without sinning. Christians are actually expected to work toward the goal of not continuing in willful sin. Sin is the enemy that works at moving us away from the light. One of the primary goals of sin is separate us from the light – separate us from God. Un-confessed sin is completely incompatible to fellowship with God. Christians are instructed to recognize their sin as such and to confess it – repent of it.

It is true that a person cannot live without committing sin. But it is also true that a person can live without sin.

The person who is living without sin is not a person who never does anything wrong. This is the person who recognizes their sinful actions, words, or thoughts, and refusing to live with sin in their life – confess it as quickly as they realize it has happened and ask for forgiveness.

We cannot do anything to persuade God to forgive us. But God himself planned the way of escape for us. He sent his only Son Jesus for this purpose. He used up all his anger against sin on Jesus – upon that cross. So, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, God will forgive us because of him.

We are not Christ-like – if we do not take the message of forgiveness to the people around us. If our message is only about the sins – and how they will be punished – then we are not Christian. An important part of the authentic Christian Gospel is to call sin what it is – and not to allow it to be excused away. But the other important part of the authentic Christian Gospel is that Jesus paid the price for that sin. We are not truly Christian if our message excludes some person, or group of people, from the salvation of Jesus. We are not truly Christian if our message excludes the sins of man from the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ.

Let us not hold some person – any person – in an attitude that they cannot be forgiven. Let us not hold any group of people – in an attitude that they cannot be forgiven. And let us not hold any sin that is common to man as being unforgivable – because Jesus paid for all!

1 John - 10 – Everyone Can Be Forgiven

Let us make part of our goal – that we would not live with sin! And we will encourage others – not to live with sin. Let us be known as Christians whose message includes the important part - that “you too –sinner, regardless of how bad I think your personal sin is” - “you too can be forgiven by Jesus Christ” - “and be able to no longer live in sin.”

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Has anyone noticed that there seems to be a serious lack of discernment regarding right and wrong in our current society? Why does it appear that the ability to tell right from wrong at an all-time low in this generation? There are several answers to this particular question - but at the root of these answers is this: We have lost the clarity of God's Word.

When understanding of God's Word declines, discernment becomes very difficult at best. Biblical thinking is important. To think Biblically, one must search the Scriptures thoroughly, - and we must test everything by the Bible to determine between truth and error.

The tendency in our day is to call a person a Pharisee if they start demanding doctrinal clarity. To love the truth is a far cry from legalism. The love for truth – leads to a desire to plunge deep into God's Word - to seek understanding and direction based on the Truth of God's Word. The key phrase being “love for truth.”

Read 1 John 2:3 and make notes:

The person who knows God - obeys his commands. This is how we know God. To know God is to walk in the light. To walk in the light means to live as God demands. To love God is to obey the commands of God. If we obey God, then we can be sure that we know him.

We can have an experience of God. We can know the unity with God that John spoke about in 1:4. We only know God if we obey him. We do not know God by what we do. We know him by believing in Jesus Christ. If we know God, we will want to obey his word. We may not manage to do all that God says. However, we will desire to do it. And we will strive to do it !

Read 1 John 2:4 and make notes:

The person who does not obey God's command does not know him. The person who continues to disobey God - may say that he knows God. But that is a lie. What he says is false. He does not know God. He does not know the truth that God gives. If he did understand the truth, he would obey God.

Our most valuable asset is truth. The greatest threat - is anything that opposes this truth. The threat to truth must be dealt with as sharply as possible. The best defense against error is an emphasis placed on the truth of God's Word. There are various ways and means by which error will come forth. It can come from a man, from a group, or from a system of belief.

All faithful servants have been given the responsibility of guarding the truth. A servant of the Lord must always proclaim the truth. Doctrinal purity must be maintained with a passion by those who faithfully preach and teach the Word of Life. The work of the devil continues to hold the same pattern as it did in the outset of Genesis 3. Eve was given over to doubt because of a twisting of the truth. Truth always involves doctrine.

Read 1 John 2:5 and make notes:

The person who obeys God really loves him. What God has said is more than his commands. God still guides his people. Today we must do what he says. The person who obeys God - really loves him. Obedience to God is an indication that the love for God has grown and is becoming complete. As a person continues to please God, - their love for God will increase. As their love for God grows – their desire to please God will grow.

God’s love for that person has achieved its purpose. True love for God is not just to say words. Because of our love for God, we should also do what God wants. The proof of our love is when we are loyal to God and to his word. We can know that we are alive in unity with God. We know this because we want to obey him. We can be certain of this if we live like Jesus.

The common element in many “church-growth” methods today is to make unconverted sinners feel comfortable with the message of truth. The strategy is to entertain and excite unbelievers rather than to confront their unbelief.

Charles Spurgeon said, *“I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the Gospel and the opening of men’s ears to hear it.”* Today, most Christians appear more interested in making a sinner feel comfortable than they are interested in making sure the sinner hears the truth.

Our goal should not be to make a sinner feel uncomfortable. Our goal should be to make sure they hear the truth. And if the truth makes a sinner uncomfortable – then leave that between them and God.

When we think of obeying God’s Word – Perhaps the most common thoughts run along the lines of doing what is right – and refraining from doing what is wrong. But obeying God is more than simply refraining from doing sinful acts and engaging in righteous acts.

One of the things God has told every believer to do – is to go and make disciples – and the average Believer today – including ministers of all kinds – simply isn’t interested in making disciples. We may be very interested – and even very active – in providing “programs” of many different kinds - But we don’t seem to have any interest in “making disciples” – let alone a passion to do so.

1 John - 11 – Loving / Obeying God

I am so glad that we as a people are trying to avoid sinful actions and attitudes. Let's take a little inventory:

“how long has it been since I tried to share the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ with another person?”

“how long has it been since I tried to help and encourage another person to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?”

When will our Love of God lead us to point of obeying the God we love? I don't know how long it will be – but it will happen when our love is both genuine and mature!

Let's pray for our local church family –

“Lord, please don't allow us to simply be a congregation of people who say with words that we love God.” - “O, Holy Father in Heaven, please help us to grow and mature in our love to the point that we will seriously desire to do what you want more than what our flesh wants.”

When we get to this place of desiring to be obedient to God – that won't be all there is to the revival God wants to give us – but it will be an integral part of the revival – because if our love of God does not grow and mature to the place of obedience to Him – then there simply isn't any revival!

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

There has been quite a bit of teaching through the years stressing that the Christian can experience Freedom from sin. If the emphasis were to be on sins of “omission” rather than sins of “commission”- I would be inclined to say this is good teaching. But unfortunately, like it was in John’s day, some teach it from the standpoint - That we can arrive at a place where we no longer commit sin.

It is not likely that our physical bodies and physical minds will ever get to the place that no sin is ever committed again. Accepting this as a reality – then what is expected of the Christian?

When Jesus lived on earth, he pleased the Heavenly Father. He did all that the Father asked him to do. And the devil did all that he could to tempt Jesus. But Jesus did not sin at all.

Read 1 John 2:6 and make notes:

If any of us say that we live with God - then we ought to live our daily lives as Jesus did. We should not sin. In fact, this text says we “must” walk like Jesus, this is not an option. For the Christian to “walk like Jesus” – is a requirement.

The life of Jesus is the pattern that we must follow. This is not to say that we can achieve the same standard as Jesus. But that we must make every effort to walk as He did.

Read 1 John 2:7 and make notes:

The command to love has always existed. This can refer to the command that the Lord Jesus gave (John 13). Jesus said, ‘I give you a new command - You must love each other. We should love even as he loves us. It was not now a new command at the time this letter was written. This is how Jesus lived. The command to love is an old command. And Jesus gave it to those who followed him.

It is old because the command to love is in the Old Testament. Jesus spoke about the 10 commands as love for God and love for other people (see Exodus chapter 20 and Matthew 22:37-40).

The people who received John’s letter already knew about this command. These people knew that they should love God and they should love each other. This was part of the gospel of Christ. All of those who received this letter have known this command since they first believed in Jesus.

Some of them, those who were Jews, had known it before believing in Jesus. They had heard this command through the Law and the Prophets. Any one of them had at least heard it from their teachers when they first became Christians. Love is an essential part of the gospel message. But remember, some of them did not know this before believing in Jesus – they were Gentiles - it was new to them.

Read 1 John 2:8 and make notes:

The command to love is also a new command. The law of love was old. However, there is a difference now, and the difference makes it new.

It is new because God has shown his love for us. One way this is new is because Jesus obeyed all the law. Love completes the law. So the command to love is new because of Jesus. He makes it possible for us to have a new life with God. Jesus loves us so much that he gave himself to die for us.

Those who do not know God - cannot obey this command. But those who do know God - can obey it. Christians can love both God and other people.

A second way this is new is because there is now a higher standard. Jesus called this the new command. John calls it the new command too. The Lord Jesus showed us what real love means. His love was so much more than the love of average person. It was a different kind of love. And today He still gives the same kind of love to those who know him. So that They too can begin to know what love really means.

The love that Jesus has is also in Christians today. They are able to love God and each other with this new kind of love. They can love as Christ loved. They can see the effect of the new command. They can see the effect in themselves. The darkness is getting less. The true light shines stronger in them.

By darkness, John means sin and error. As they love God and each other, the true light grows in them. This true light refers to changes that happen in the Christians. As they love the Lord more - they grow to be more like Jesus. That is an indication that the process of love has begun in them.

A third way this is new is that it is no longer restricted to the people of Israel. Before Christ came to live on earth – this commandment was known only to the Jews. Jesus came in a physical body and proclaimed it now applies to everyone.

Read 1 John 2:9 and make notes:

A real Christian loves other Christians. Some people in John's day said that they had special knowledge of God. They had the light and they knew God. But their lives showed that they were wrong. Because they did not live as Jesus did. They did not love either him or other Christians, as they should. This reveals that they did not really know God at all.

To walk in the light is to love each other. When the love of God is in a person – it will express itself in actions.

Hate is the absence of this love. Anytime we hear a sermon, or a teaching, promoting “hate” – we can be sure that sermon, or teaching, is not coming from God! A person who does not love a brother or a sister is likely to come to a place where they hate. John is here talking about the love that Christians ought to have for each other.

Someone who hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Those who love the Lord should love other people. They should love people whether those people believe in Christ or not.

It was true in John’s day and it is still true today – there are some people who hate other people.

These people may think that they are in the light. But they are still in darkness.

The person who “hates” another person – is living in darkness. The person living in darkness cannot find their way out of the darkness without help. And this person will remain in darkness until they discover Jesus and repent.

Read 1 John 2:10 and make notes:

The Christian who loves other Christians will be in the light. Where there is light there can be no darkness. In the light, one can see. In the light, there is nothing to cause sin or error. When we are living in the light – we can see the stumbling blocks and the pits – and can walk around them.

The person who “loves” another person – will put up with a great many annoyances for the sake of unity. The person walking in the light of “love” with another person is not going to succumb to the temptation to do wrong to this other person.

Read 1 John 2:11 and make notes:

But, for the Christian who hates another Christian, there is no light. We are wrong when we hate another Christian. We are not obeying the command and we are in error. We are like someone in the dark. A person who wanders in the dark has lost their way. They do not know where they are. They do not know where they are going.

If they are in the dark for too long, they may become blind. They will come to the place where their eyes can no longer see the light. The person who hates other people is like someone who walks in darkness. Living in hate will make this person's eyes blind. What they do is wrong. And they cannot see where they are going. This person will lose the sense of unity with the Lord. They will arrive at a place where they can no longer find their way back to God – on their own.

And there is another part to this message. We have already stated that the person who hates another – is walking in darkness and does not know where he is going. The person walking in the darkness of hate is going to Hell – and is quite ignorant of this fact. Perhaps they have heard someone say so, but they don't believe it or they don't accept it as applying to them.

It isn't that they are going to hell because they walk in the darkness of hate. They are going to hell because they have refused Jesus. A person has to refuse Jesus in order to continue to walk in this darkness.

People who are taught to find their way in the wilderness are taught some things that have a good application to our spiritual walk. Let me give you an example: If you find yourself without a compass and you are in a heavy mist or fog so that you cannot see – it is best to stay put – don't wander around – until the fog clears and you can see clearly where you are going and what is ahead. It is not that you would use up all your strength going around in circles because you can't see that you are not going straight. When you cannot see the surrounding terrain and you cannot see what is ahead, you just may step off into something that can cause serious harm or death.

The picture of a person walking around in the dark or in a heavy fog – so that they cannot see where they are going is a fairly good picture of the person who is moving about through this life with hate toward others!

What should we take home with us from this lesson?

Today, we have a number of church groups who spent most of their teaching and preaching on the things a person MUST NOT do in order to be a Christian. They have many rules of what you cannot do – where you cannot go – what you cannot wear – what you cannot eat or drink.

Most of us understand that any kind of perversion is darkness - so when anyone begins to walk in, or walk with, perversion, they are walking in darkness. Under the Covenant of Law, it was a morally acceptable thing to love your friends and to hate your enemies. Jesus said things are changing - now we are to love our enemies, we are to do good to those who hate us.

One very important characteristic of “walking in the light” is walking in love. In the darkness – there is much that cannot be seen! In the darkness – we can fail to see a reason to love a particular person – or perhaps a group of people. In the light – we will see a number of reasons to love someone.

The passion of love and the passion of hate cannot both remain within a person. As long as the passion of Love burns within us – it will prevent the passion of hate from igniting. We have to turn out the passion of Love in order to light the passion of Hate. And as long as the passion of Hate burns within us – it will prevent the passion of love from igniting. We MUST extinguish the passion of Hate if we want the passion of Love to burn within us.

There are basically three ways we “live in God”:

1. by faith
2. by hope
3. by love

When people who observe our daily life look at us - Do they see any one of these in our lifestyle? “Being in Christ” and “Living in Christ” can be regarded as synonyms. If we want to honestly claim that we “live in Christ” we must look at how we walk out our daily lives. Our walk is the real evidence of whether we do or do not live in Christ – or whether we are “with Christ”.

The earthly life of Jesus was an example that we are expected to follow. Many people have a religious experience – and a religious experience is all that has taken place. An experience with Christ Jesus will produce a lifestyle that reflects the example of Jesus.

Let us ask ourselves a question – and let us answer honestly – Has our religious experience been nothing more than a religious experience? Or has it brought about lifestyle changes or attitude changes that are apparent to those around us?

It isn't simply the absence of sin in a person's life. It is the presence of Love in a person's life! Our Spiritual Life is to be characterized by Love toward others - rather than allowing our life to be a series of making sure that we do not “commit” acts of sin. Our life is to be constantly displaying acts of “commission” regarding love. And If we are truly Christian, then it will!

1 John - 12 – Love Others

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: